

**Telling the China Story Well? The Party-State's Legitimation Quest and Creative Policy
Paradox across the Literary Apparatus**

Peter Goff

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Leeds
School of Languages Cultures and Societies
East Asian Studies**

24 April, 2023

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Peter Goff to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Professor Frances Weightman and Dr. Sarah Dodd for their wonderful support, deep insights, patience and positivity over the course of this project. Their deep knowledge and thoughtful engagement helped make this a highly rewarding research experience.

I am also grateful to Karen Priestley and her colleagues in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures for their tireless work and kind support. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge all those involved with the Centre for New Chinese Writing at Leeds, and the wider East Asian Studies community, from whom I learned so much over the past few years. Sincere thanks are also due to Professor Claire Squires and Dr. Caroline Fielder for their detailed and insightful engagement throughout the examination process.

This research would not have been possible without the support of all the people I interviewed and who answered queries over the course of this project who gave so generously of their time. Due to the sensitives involved many of these are anonymous but I express my heartfelt thanks to them here. My deepest respect goes out to those writers and publishers in China, and elsewhere, who continue to dedicate themselves to their craft under difficult political conditions.

Finally, a large debt of gratitude is due to friends and family for their support, in particular to my beloved Sabrina and Cara for all their love and understanding.

Abstract

The Chinese government has poured significant resources into supporting the nation's writers, publishers and booksellers since Xi Jinping (习近平; b.1953) became general-secretary of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in 2012. The initiative is ostensibly aimed at China becoming a literary superpower by 2035. At the same time, the Party-state is ever-developing a highly elaborate censorship and control apparatus that is aimed at promoting national cohesion, securitisation, political stability, social harmony, smothering any semblance of dissent, pushing favourable narratives and bolstering the CCP's legitimacy. This presents a paradoxical scenario where the state is simultaneously stimulating and stifling its publishing industry.

Through the prism of the contemporary literature scene, this research analyses the policies and practices of the CCP, how officials approach the sector and how they manage multiple objectives, which are at times conflicting. To observe and analyse this phenomenon I developed the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF), an overarching theoretical structure to observe the governance of the creative publishing sector in China and the constant cycle of Party-state objectives, inputs and outcomes. As part of this framework, the Party Moat-Building (PMB) concept was devised to refer broadly to the self-protective actions and mechanisms of the Party-state observed in this environment. The key research questions investigated in this thesis are: Through the prism of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework and Party Moat-Building, what are 'the uses of literature' in Xi Jinping's China, and what does 'Telling the China Story Well' mean in reality for the nation's writers and publishers?

This research puts a spotlight on the intersection between politics, literature and business in China, and on a wider level can be viewed as a microcosm of Chinese contemporary governance, examining how the CCP manages, controls and develops one aspect of society, outlining and assessing its policies, perspectives, practices and priorities in a fluid environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
ABSTRACT	IV
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	X
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	XI
 CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
 1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 LINK’S ‘USES OF LITERATURE’	2
1.3 XI JINPING INTRODUCES “NEW ERA” FOR CHINA AND THE NATION’S WRITERS	3
1.4 STRENGTHENED IDEOLOGY, SECURITY AND ADHERING TO THE “MAIN MELODY”	6
1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEORY	8
1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	11
1.7 METHODOLOGY	13
 CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	15
 2.1 INTRODUCTION	15
2.2 PARTY MOAT-BUILDING TO PROTECT POLITICAL STATUS QUO	18
2.3 THE LEGITIMACY CONSTRUCT	20
2.4 GERSCHEWSKI’S THREE PILLARS OF STABILITY	25
2.5 LEGITIMACY INTROSPECTION IN CHINA.....	28
2.6 OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN LEGITIMACY	30
2.7 SECURITISATION AND CULTURAL SECURITY	33
2.8 SOFT POWER, AUTHORITARIAN IMAGE MANAGEMENT AND PROPAGANDA	37
2.9 CONSISTENT INCONSISTENCIES AND FRAGMENTED AUTHORITARIANISM	42
 CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL FICTION: OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA’S WRITERS FROM MAO TO THE XI JINPING ERA.....	46

3.1	INTRODUCTION	46
3.2	BRINGING MARXISM, LENINISM AND MAO THOUGHT TO THE MASSES	49
3.3	POLITICAL CHILLS AND THAWS IN PUBLISHING	50
3.4	CULTURE AND LITERATURE AS REVOLUTIONARY TARGET	53
3.5	IDEOLOGICAL PURGES IN THE REFORM ERA	56
3.6	‘MATERIAL CIVILISATION’ AND MARKET FORCES IN THE REFORM ERA	59
3.7	ADMINISTERING THE SCRIBES.....	62
3.8	JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS NUMBER	66
3.9	OFFICIAL TAKES: THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS ON LITERARY DEVELOPMENT	69
3.10	XI JINPING ON THE USES OF LITERATURE	72

CHAPTER 4: THE BOOK CLUB: THE CHINA WRITERS ASSOCIATION’S ROLE IN LITERARY PROMOTION AND CONTROL

4.1	INTRODUCTION	76
4.2	THE PARTY AS PATRON OF THE LITERARY ARTS	83
4.3	‘THEME’ WRITING AND PROPAGANDA VALUES	87
4.4	INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM	90
4.5	FANG FANG: BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM	92
4.6	WEB LITERATURE’S CHALLENGE TO THE SYSTEM.....	95
4.7	PUBLIC CRITICISM OF CWA.....	97
4.8	INTERVIEW COMMENTS ON THE CWA	103
4.9	THE CWA: A NEST OF CHICKENS THAT DO NOT LAY ANY EGGS?	106
4.10	SUMMARY OF CWA.....	108

CHAPTER 5: ON THE SAME PAGE: POLICIES TO CATCH AND GUIDE THE READERS’ EYE.....

5.1	INTRODUCTION	110
5.2	ELEVATING AND ENLIGHTENING THE POPULACE FROM THE TOP DOWN: THE READING FOR ALL PROGRAMME ...	110
5.3	EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF READING PROJECTS	113
5.4	READING FOR ALL SUMMARY	117
5.5	BUILD IT AND THEY SHALL READ: STATE SUPPORT FOR SELECTED BRICKS-AND-MORTAR BOOKSHOPS	118

5.6	STEMMING THE TIDE OF BOOKSHOP CLOSURES	121
5.7	PARTY GUIDANCE AT CORE OF BOOKSHOP STRATEGY	123
5.8	POLITICALLY CURATED BOOK SUPPLIES	127
5.9	CONCLUSION	129

CHAPTER 6: CONTROLLING THE NARRATIVE: CENSORSHIP, SELF-CENSORSHIP AND AGENDA-SETTING

132

6.1	INTRODUCTION	132
6.2	WHAT IS CENSORSHIP?	133
6.3	THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	138
6.4	CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP ON A DAILY BASIS	140
6.5	THE OFFICIAL DRIVE TO KEEP CONTENT POSITIVE AND UPLIFTING	143
6.6	CARROTS “RULE BY BRIBERY” AND STICKS “RULE BY FEAR”	145
6.7	INTERVIEWS WITH CHINESE AUTHORS ON CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL.....	150
6.8	DEALING WITH THE PUBLISHING HOUSES	153

CHAPTER 7: EXPORTING THE CHINA STORY: GOING GLOBAL WITH SOFT POWER AND HARD EDGES

162

7.1	INTRODUCTION	162
7.2	CHINESE PUBLISHING INITIATIVES OVERSEAS	166
7.3	WESTERN PUBLISHERS SELF-CENSORING	178
7.4	CHINESE MEDIA AND FILM GOING OVERSEAS	179
7.5	UNITED FRONT: CHINA’S OVERSEAS ‘MAGIC WEAPON’	186
7.6	CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AS PART OF CHINA’S PARTY MOAT-BUILDING AND SOFT POWER PROMOTION	191
7.7	THE EXPORTATION OF THE PARTY’S CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL	193
7.8	SOFT POWER WITH A HARD EDGE.....	196
7.9	OVERSEAS POLICIES: SECURITISATION SUPERSEDES CULTURE.....	199

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

202

8.1	INTRODUCTION	202
8.2	WRITERS, READERS AND THE QUEST FOR LEGITIMACY	203
8.3	THE ROLES OF CENSORSHIP, SELF-CENSORSHIP AND AGENDA-SETTING	205
8.4	INTERNATIONAL SOFT POWER INITIATIVES.....	206
8.5	RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS	209
8.6	CONTRIBUTIONS TO LEARNING	212
	APPENDICES	215
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	225

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Telling the China Story Well? The Creative Policy Paradox Framework.....**17**

Figure 2: Key Indicators from the China National Reading Survey Report: 2011-2022.....**114**

List of Abbreviations

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CBI	China Book International
CCP	Communist Party of China
CI	Confucius Institutes
CIL	Chinese Internet Literature
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CPPF	Cultural Policy Paradox Framework
CSC	Chinese Scholarship Council
CWA	China Writers Association
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
OECD	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PMB	Party Moat-Building
PRC	People's Republic of China
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Under Xi Jinping's (习近平; b.1953) leadership, the Chinese authorities have invested vast resources into supporting the nation's writers, publishers and booksellers. The initiative is ostensibly aimed at the nation becoming a literary superpower by 2035, while also elevating the cultural and literacy levels of the populace. At the same time, the Party-state has developed an extensive censorship and control apparatus aimed at promoting national cohesion, political stability, social harmony and smothering any semblance of dissent. This presents a paradoxical scenario where the China state is simultaneously stimulating and stifling its publishing industry.

This thesis will examine the relationship between Chinese creative writers, their publishers, and the wider literary apparatus in China with the one-Party state and the CCP's leadership. It will consider on-the-ground realities as the Party exhorts the nation's writers and publishers to 'Tell the China Story Well' (*jianghao zhongguo gushi* 讲好中国故事). In this context the term "well" has never been officially defined. The Party-state establishes itself as the arbiter on what it could and should mean. But officials are highly cognisant of the fact, this thesis argues, that how the China story is told impacts on social stability, the Party's legitimacy and its capacity to govern. The question mark in the title of this thesis 'Telling the China Story Well?' speaks to the challenges and apparent shortcomings in the national plan to achieve cultural superpower status from a literary perspective as part of the realisation of Xi's dream.

In 2012, the same year Xi Jinping became general secretary of the CCP, Mo Yan (莫言, b.1955) won the Nobel Prize for Literature, much to the joy of China's literature fans. Around this time the nation's writers found themselves saddled with a new yet vague responsibility of reinforcing Xi's 'China Dream' and delivering the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Walsh, 2022). Ambitions were set high. Under Xi, the Central Committee of the CCP placed cultural construction as a priority and announced the goal of establishing China as a major cultural power by 2035 (CCP CWA Party Group, 2021).

Reattaining cultural superpower status is crucial to the CCP. China, the 'Middle Kingdom' that stands at the centre of all civilisations, has been a dynamic superpower throughout much of history – an economic and manufacturing powerhouse, a high-tech exporter, a paragon of civilisation and a throne to which "all under Heaven" bowed in deference.

The Chinese self-perception of exceptionalism – that their civilisation is superior and thus deserves to be on top of a world hierarchy – has been a constant through much of its history (Goff, 2020). In his analysis of Chinese history and Beijing’s current outlook on the world, Schuman (2020) argues that while China has regained much of the economic, military and geopolitical might it once had before being subjected to two centuries of foreign domination and humiliation, on a cultural and civilisation level the country has not regained the ground it lost. It is no longer a cultural superpower that others stand in awe of and come to pay tribute to a superior civilisation. That perception is something that drives the Xi administration to rectify the imbalance and steer China’s literary and cultural world back to days of glory. The Chinese Dream is Xi’s vision for China’s national rejuvenation that seeks to restore the nation to its rightful place as world leader, another imperial restoration where the Son of Heaven is ascendant once more. Party-state legitimacy, both at home and abroad, would be greatly enhanced by a global perception that China had once again resumed its position as a world-beating cultural power.

1.2 *Link’s ‘uses of literature’*

In a seminal work considering how China’s literary society functioned in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Link identified the multiple “uses of literature” of the time, referring to “different purposes that people who wrote, read, edited or criticised literature wanted literature works to fill” (2000, p.11). Under consideration in Link’s literary study were “social-document”, “literary-dissent” and “artistic-value” approaches (2000, p.12). This research will focus similarly on the official uses of literature in the Xi Jinping era to date, with a particular focus on the relationship between writers and the Party leadership. Link found in the Socialist literary world of the time that Party theorists referred to the “engineering of readers’ souls”, borrowing from Stalin, and spoke of writers as “screws in the socialist machine” (Link, 2000, p.66), a phrase adopted from Lenin. In the term “uses of literature”, Link referred to the different purposes various entities and individuals wanted literary works to fill. Chief among these uses was to teach correct political attitudes, to signal shifts in state policy, to set history right for the sake of posterity and to explore new ideas in a vicarious context. Providing readers with entertaining fare and the writers and publishers with income were also commonly cited practical uses. Other “uses” of literature officials might consider that Link and others identify include helping to shape narratives, portray the leadership positively, further official agendas, avoid criticism or negativity, and instil a sense of patriotism and national identity, as well as

cultivating soft power overseas. Additionally, the development of the industry can encourage emotional and intellectual development among the populace and serve to bolster economic growth. Emotional and intellectual development feeds into population quality (*suzhi* 素质) discourse, a concept that emerged in the 1980s as part of China's modernisation programme that is centred on the idea the legitimacy of the Party-state is partly based on its historic promise to improve the condition of the population (Murphy, 2004).

These elements or “uses” listed above can serve to underscore the legitimacy of any type of government, but could be considered of particular value to those in one-party systems that do not derive legitimacy from multi-party elections or have the societal checks and balances of independent media, judiciary or civil society in place. This enhanced legitimacy in turn instils a sense of national cohesion, and reduces the risk of social unrest and challenges to authority, cultivating a more stable political environment for the Party-state to navigate.

Engaging in the complex task of attempting to engineer souls, Link found that writers and officials in socialist China ran into at least three perennial questions: Was it possible to plan literary inspiration? Would efforts to engineer souls produce the intended effects or others? And, could literary ambiguities be eliminated? A softer version of the engineering theory at the time claimed only politically and morally correct literature would lead to a better attitude among readers. In terms of the writers' response to official commands, Link found that some complied fully, others resisted, while most did a mixture of the two, at times subconsciously reflexive. Moreover, despite trying conditions, some produced good literature. China has changed dramatically since the time Link put its literary world under the microscope, modernising at a frenetic rate and establishing itself in the interim as an economic and geopolitical powerhouse. On the other hand, we witness some constants on fundamental and political levels. The extent to which the environment has altered for the nation's writers since Link, or has remained static, is explored in this research, assessing in particular the inputs and outcomes of Party-state engagement with the literary world.

1.3 Xi Jinping introduces “New Era” for China and the nation's writers

By the time Xi came to power he was arguing to Party colleagues that liberal democracies and capitalism were in crisis mode, still reeling in the wake of the 2008 financial crash. To him, the flaws in the Western political systems were now evident, which presented China the historic opportunity to show the superiority of its socialist system and play a leading

role in global affairs (Gore, 2022). Existential threats to the Party hovered on many fronts, however. The Party leadership has long been haunted by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in particular, and Xi was determined China would not suffer a similar fate (Tai, 2022). Following China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, deepening globalisation, technological advances leading to the rapid flow of information and increasing Western influences threatened to undermine China's ideological orthodoxy. 'Colour Revolutions' from 2003–2005 in post-Soviet countries, and the 'Arab Spring' protest movement were developments that caused further unease for the Party leadership, as did the Edward Snowden disclosures in 2013 of mass US surveillance operations in China (Fürst, 2021).

A chain of policies since Xi took the helm would bring significant impact to the cultural and literary sectors. Ideology was Xi's primary weapon of choice to battle any threats, and within weeks of assuming office he was celebrated in the state media as heralding a glorious future when he announced the Chinese Dream of Realising the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation (*zhonghua minzu weida fuxing* 中华民族伟大复兴), which was to be realised by 2050. The Sixth Plenum of 2011 set the ideological agenda, indicating intentions to tighten control on areas such as education, culture, the internet, literature, religion and across wider society (Parton, 2021). Xi was positioned at the 'core' of the Party's leadership in a way not witnessed since the Mao era. Xi's elevation to the pantheon of Party ideologists was rapid and the process of the canonisation of his Xi Jinping Thought started as soon as he was appointed secretary-general at the 18th Party Congress in 2012. By comparison, it took decades before Mao Zedong (毛泽东; 1893-1976) Thought and Deng Xiaoping (邓小平; 1904-1997) Theory were included in the national and party constitutions, while Jiang Zemin (江泽民; 1926-2022) and Hu Jintao (胡锦涛; b.1942) were only granted contributions to Party theory that did not carry their names after a decade in power (Holbig, 2022). Xi introduced an assertive nationalistic approach. The formula of 'Three Self-Confidences' (*sange zixin* 四个自信) was created in 2012, encompassing self-confidence in China's own development path, self-confidence in the Party's political theory, and self-confidence in the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Finally, and of particular import to the nation's writers and publishers, cultural self-confidence was added as a fourth pillar in 2016, driven by Wang Huning (王沪宁; b.1955), Xi's propaganda czar (Holbig, 2022).

Ahead of the 19th Party Congress in 2017 Xi introduced the concept of the ‘New Era’, explaining that the country had experienced an historic phase by standing up under Mao, and then growing rich under the successive stewardships of Deng, Jiang and Hu, and would now be getting strong under Xi in this new era (Holbig, 2022). From the publishing perspective, ‘getting strong’ meant building an august socialist literary power. That Congress approved the incorporation of Xi Jinping Thought into the CCP’s constitution, while in March 2018 the National People’s Congress included it in the state constitution. The meeting also passed a set of constitutional amendments to remove term limits for the president and vice president, meaning Xi could legally remain in power for life (Phillips, 2018).

Further enshrining Xi Jinping’s elevated position and legitimacy are the phrases ‘Two Establishes’ (*liangge queli* 两个确立) and the ‘Two Safeguards’ (*liangge weihu* 两个维护). The ‘Two Establishes’ establishes Xi as the unquestionable ‘core’ leader of the CCP, and Xi Jinping Thought as the CCP’s ideological bedrock for the new era. The ‘Two Safeguards’ identify the need to safeguard the ‘core’ status of Xi within the Party, and the centralised authority of the Party itself. The ‘Two Establishes’ was included in a Party resolution at the 6th Plenum in 2021 on the CCP’s major achievements and 100-year struggle. The resolution was only the third of its kind in CCP history and underscored Xi’s paramount position (Bandurski, 2022). Bremmer and Kupchan (2023) refer to Xi’s leadership as ‘Maximum Xi’, where he emerged from the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 with the Politburo Standing Committee stacked with his allies, no dissenting voices to challenge him and a mandate to rule indefinitely. Maximum Xi has a rigid hold on power unrivalled since the days of Chairman Mao. That power has been felt intently in the nation’s literary circles. In March 2018, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television was abolished and replaced by the National Press and Publishing Administration (NPPA). Importantly, while the previous body had been under the control of the State Council, the NPPA was put under the direct supervision of the central Party propaganda department, meaning the Party had taken direct control of the day-to-day management of the publishing sector (Yun, 2018, Beach, 2018). This is one of many examples where Xi has introduced institutional reform, bringing organisations under direct Party oversight and centralising power. Increasing direct control and operational responsibilities, the Party seeks to be “everything, everywhere all at once” (Ma, 2023). The omnipresent approach brought a new intensity to the monitoring and control of the cultural sphere.

1.4 *Strengthened ideology, security and adhering to the “Main Melody”*

Official ideology had weakened in the reform era prompting Xi to make ideological adherence a key priority, particularly among the Party members, utilising an intense top-down approach. With 95 million Party members and 4,860,000 Party organisations across the country, ideology was a linchpin that could keep the rank-and-file loyal and obedient (Gore, 2022; Fitzgerald, 2022). Xi also launched a sweeping anti-graft campaign, which aside from keeping officials in line also helped redeem the one-party system’s image in the eyes of the public, gave Xi an opportunity to purge foes and potential threats, and played a part in a counterintelligence offensive (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2020). While these inspections (*xunshi* 巡视) generally focus on curbing corruption, Carothers and Zhang (2023) identify how under the Xi administration the scope, intensity and frequency of the inspections had increased greatly. Embracing a wider remit, recent investigations have also been aimed at promoting loyalty to the Party, fostering ideological conformity and upholding the Party’s leadership. One such investigation, discussed in Chapter 4, was launched recently into the China Writers Association after writer Fang Fang published her *Wuhan Diary* overseas. Much to the chagrin of Party officials, the non-fiction title was a critical take covering the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak in China. While the writing had been well received when it was published domestically, publishing it overseas crossed a line and sparked a major inspection. These lengthy inspections, which can result in severe punishments, are another weapon deployed against the literary establishment when Party allegiance is perceived to be on the wane.

Along with ideology and legitimacy, securitisation became another key national preoccupation. Since the reform era under the consecutive administrations of Deng, Jiang and Hu, development was the key national priority, but Xi Jinping elevated security to the primary focus. National security was given laser-focused attention with Xi tightening controls across the board domestically and contending the greatest threats lay in internal, non-traditional and political areas, rather than traditional external threats. In 2013, the Central National Security Commission, or CNSC (*zhongyang guojia anquan weiyuanhui* 中央国家安全委员会) was created, a centralised security system that was also placed under the aegis of the Party rather than the state (Tai, 2022). Cadres were instructed to be prepared for danger at all times as Xi identified 11 distinct areas of national security, including the cultural sector. Along with culture, politics, territorial management, the military, economics, social affairs, technology, information, ecology, natural resources and nuclear development were also highlighted as

national security risk areas. Evidently, risks and challenges to the Party itself and its hold on power were central to the intensified security concerns. A follow-on guide for officials published in 2022 stated that protecting the Party leadership was the most fundamental security, stating that if political security could not be maintained the country would collapse and national rejuvenation would never materialise (Wuthnow, 2022).

To refer broadly to the self-protective actions and mechanisms of the Party-state observed in this environment, I devised the term Party Moat-Building (PMB). The moat concept is drawn partly from the water-filled ditches of imperial times that offered protection from assailants (Huo, 2010), while it also echoes the idea in a corporate context first promoted by businessman Warren Buffet where company ‘moats’ afford an enduring competitive edge (Kim, 2018). Similarly, the Party is motivated to both protect itself from would-be assailants and enshrine competitive advantages, motivations that impinge directly upon literary life. Incidences of Party Moat-Building are identified throughout this research, where actions are initiated primarily as official Party defensive mechanisms or to secure commanding positions, and at times running counter to other official policies.

The focus on cultural security has had a significant influence on the publishing world. The 1990s first saw academic references to cultural security (*wenhua anquan* 文化安全) with a focus on strengthening state ideology and reinforcing national cultural heritage and national identity to combat the globalisation and cultural dilution threat. Xi emphasised the cultural security threat from the time of his rise to power and the establishment of the CNSC, later adding “ideological security” (*yishi xingtai anquan* 意识形态安全) as a related issue (Fürst, 2021). In defending China’s ideological security, Xi argued that hostile Western forces had shifted their ideological infiltration focus to the Internet, which he said challenged China’s political and cultural security and had become the main battlefield in the public opinion struggle (Ma and Hao, 2018).

Xi’s speech at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work in 2018 introduced the concept of ‘Xing culture’ (*xing wenhua* 兴文化), a term meaning a prospering culture as a mission for the new era of socialism. Xi said this repositioned and prospering Xing culture would require improved management and cultural production standards to adhere to the Party leadership’s policies, abide by laws and regulations on morality and good taste, and to promote the correct views of history, nationality and the state (Fürst, 2021). Cultural producers were increasingly urged to adhere to the “main melody” (*zhu xuanlü*

主旋律). This term first emerged in China in the 1980s in reference to film and the official desire to promote propaganda productions, but the phrase has taken on a wider meaning in contemporary CCP discourse to refer to the need to ensure the Party's messaging is dominant and clearly presented across media and the arts. A media example presenting this discourse was an article on the front page of the *People's Daily* that appeared three months after the June 4, 1989, crackdown that blamed the student-led protests on "incorrect guidance of public opinion" and failure of elements of the press to adhere to the main melody as the movement was escalating (Chen, 2022).

Traditional culture has also been harnessed in the propaganda and ideological work. While the Party had shunned traditionalism in the past, Xi has embraced China's traditional culture and presented the CCP as their successor and guardian of the heritage (Buckley, 2014). He advocated utilising ancient philosophy and political approaches in cadre training and anti-corruption initiatives (Schuman, 2015). Discourse hegemony intensified and while the Party faithful were digesting Xi's Socialist Core Values, Western values were being increasingly attacked and delegitimised. The Party Central Committee leaked Document No. 9 in 2013 entitled 'Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere' that forbade the concepts of "universal values", "civil society", "media freedom" or "constitutionalism" in public discourse. Historical nihilism was also put off limits, referring to any perceived criticism of the historical role of the CCP. Foreign textbooks were banned in schools and universities, indicating a further narrowing of the discourse (Holbig, 2022). The securitisation of all aspects of China's governance, including culture, heralded a tightening of the state's control of public space and a raft of institutional and legislative measures legitimised by security concerns that has extended the authority of the state and reduced the parameters for freedom of expression (Fürst, 2021). Meanwhile, despite these myriad political issues, official expectations remain high for China's publishing world to establish itself as a strong socialist literary power.

1.5 Problem statement, research questions and theory

While extensive work has been published on areas relating to this thesis, such as on censorship in China or the country's soft power aspirations, there is a gap in the literature tying the multiple strands together showing how policies and practices, both those aimed at control as well as development, impact the sector overall and the writers within it. Taking a holistic view, this research examines key historical developments in the sector, the role of the Writers Association, policies aimed specifically at readers, how the censorship system

functions and impacts on a daily basis, and initiatives to promote the literature overseas. The insights garnered from this comprehensive approach facilitate a more vivid understanding of the convergence points between the Party-state and the literary apparatus, and how official interventions in the Xi era impact the nation's writers and publishers. Through the prism of the contemporary literature scene, this research will analyse the policies and practices of the CCP, how officials approach the sector, how they manage objectives – which are at times conflicting – and how they deal with sensitive issues. Using the creative publishing sector as a case study, this research will cast light on the CCP's motivations and management of dynamic contemporary governance issues. This theory draws from case studies and connects cultural production, 'the uses of literature' (Link, 2000), 'telling the China story', legitimacy, securitisation and stability.

I have developed a new framework to observe and analyse this phenomenon, which I refer to as the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF). I devised this framework, explored in Chapter 2, as an overarching structure to observe the governance of the creative publishing sector in China and the constant cycle of Party-state objectives, inputs and outcomes, under which at select junctures in the cycle the research draws on established theories to explore the concepts and practices at play. The inputs can be initiatives designed to promote literature and culture, or manifest themselves as the self-protective Party Moat-Building. Among the contributing theories, securitisation, stability, ideology and legitimacy theory are paramount in this context as the primary policy drivers. The concepts of conflicting objectives and fragmented authoritarianism, which considers inconsistent policy implementation, serve as pivots – or plot twists – in the paradoxical framework, while aspects of theory relating to narrative control, nationalism/patriotism, soft power, repression, co-optation, censorship, propaganda, regime security and authoritarian image management are also examined at points in the cycle. I developed the Creative Policy Paradox Framework for the purposes of this research as existing frameworks did not offer the simultaneous, cyclical structure required to reflect the objectives, inputs and outcomes under analysis in this study.

The main research questions investigated in this thesis are: Through the prism of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework and Party Moat-Building, what are 'the uses of literature' in Xi Jinping's China, and what does 'Telling the China Story Well' mean in reality for the nation's writers and publishers?

The government's historical relationship with and views on the management of the literary sphere shall be examined in Chapter 3, with an overview of key developments from

the 1940s before the CCP took power to contemporary times. In terms of key published policies and objectives relating to literature, recent Five-Year Plans will be assessed, as will Party secretary-general Xi Jinping's personal relationship with the literary world and public comments on the sector. The perquisites and perils of engagement with the China Writers Association will be analysed in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 will examine government-instituted programmes such as those designed to support bricks-and-mortar bookstores and for the promotion of literacy and the habit of reading. Chapter 6 explores the concerns the Party holds with regard to writers, books, free expression and the creative publishing sector, and the official actions taken in terms of censorship and wider repression to address these concerns. Finally, Chapter 7, *Exporting the China story: Going Global with soft power and hard edges*, looks at how and why China is promoting its literature and other cultural products in international markets, and, along with it, often elements of its methods of governance.

In researching this thesis, a range of qualitative methods have been used including interviews or background discussions with more than 60 writers in China, as well as several publishers, literary translators, agents, booksellers and government officials. On a primary level this research aims to analyse how writers, publishers and the government interact in China and assess the contemporary “uses of literature” and how the China story is being told today. On a wider level it can be viewed as a microcosm of Chinese contemporary governance, examining how the CCP approaches and manages one sector of society, outlining and assessing its policies, practices and priorities in a complex and fluid environment.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

As a researcher for this project, I have considered any ethical implications arising from the research design, methodology, conduct, dissemination, and the archiving, future use, sharing and linkage of the data produced. The research was conducted according to the University of Leeds' principles of academic excellence, rigour, community, integrity, transparency, inclusiveness and professionalism and involved ethical considerations on voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and potential for harm.

A detailed research application for this thesis was reviewed by the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds and was issued a favourable ethical opinion on 6 April, 2018, Ethics Reference PVAR 17-086. A Fieldwork Assessment (Low Risk Activities) and Lone Working Assessment (Health and Safety Services) were undertaken. The committee also considered an Ethical Review Form, and a project Information Sheet and Consent form for interviewees.

In this research, I sought to analyse how the contemporary literary world in China functions and how writers, the authorities and the various strands of the publishing system interact. In this regard, over a period of three years I interviewed more than 60 people engaged in the sector, including writers, publishers, importers, distributors, booksellers and officials. In conducting this research the primary area of concern from an ethics point of view lay in the fact that the Chinese authorities often do not welcome criticism or dissent, and so interviewees could fear repercussions if they spoke negatively on certain sensitive topics, on the record, to an international researcher. A system of censorship, and more prevalently, self-censorship is often seen in contemporary China which could lead to potential interviewees avoiding answering certain questions if they were on the record. Consequently, I offered all interviewees the opportunity to speak off the record and took utmost care not to jeopardise sources in any way through the process of this research.

Informed Consent was sought from each research participant before any interview was conducted. An Information Sheet outlining the research focus was sent to all prospective interviewees as well as the Informed Consent Form (see appendices). In many instances, the interviewees signed and returned the Informed Consent Form, while others gave verbal informed consent. Interviews were recorded where permission was granted, while in other cases no recording devices were used and instead only notes were taken. Where requested, all

research data pertaining to certain participants was anonymised before being saved on a secured drive. This research did not involve the collection of personal data.

In several cases, interviewees did not request anonymity but I opted not to name them nonetheless. This decision was made in the context of a politically deteriorating environment in China, and an increasingly dangerous one for perceived critical voices, or citizens who speak to foreign journalists or researchers. While interviewees might have indicated they were comfortable making on-the-record comments at the time of the interview, I could not be certain they would not face damaging repercussions for their comments at a later point in time. Ongoing inspections into the China Writers Association and its members increased the risk and level of concern. Reflecting on the content and the contribution made by interviewees I decided to anonymise the majority of stated opinions. Anonymising opinions did not devalue this research in any way as the objective was to outline how the system functions and how the writers and Party-state interact in general, not to capture any specific individual views on the matter. Dealing with anonymous comments I was careful to present countervailing viewpoints, where available, and not just one side of any debate. While I originally intended to conduct 20-30 interviews, I expanded this to more than 60 in total to ensure I had a clearer overview of the range of opinions on key issues. Interviews were mostly conducted in Chinese, so any quotations are my Chinese-to-English translations. I made efforts to ensure translations were accurately rendered.

I have personally worked in the areas of bookselling and literary event management in China since 2005. During the course of this work, I have had a detailed engagement with writers, related government officials and industry practitioners. These interactions would certainly have helped build my knowledge and formulate my views on the sector. However, I have not cited any of these historical conversations directly in the research or identified any of the people I interacted with in my professional capacity. For the purposes of this thesis the comments utilised were all from interviews specifically conducted for the purposes of this research. In this connection, as I write about the interaction between bookshops and authorities in China in chapter 4, I added a note of disclosure to state for the record I was a co-owner of one of the bookshops referred to in that chapter. In all instances throughout this research, I took extreme care to ensure interviews and events were recorded accurately, to the best of my knowledge and in good faith.

1.7 Methodology

This research project explores the intersection between the Party-state and the literary apparatus in China and examines how official interventions in the Xi Jinping era impact the nation's writers and publishers. Through the prism of the contemporary literature scene, this research analyses the policies and practices of the CCP, how officials approach the sector, how they manage objectives and how they deal with sensitive issues. Using the creative publishing sector as a case study, I aim to cast light on the CCP's motivations and management of dynamic contemporary governance issues. This theory draws from interviews and connects cultural production, 'the uses of literature' (Link, 2000), the concept of 'telling the China story well', legitimacy, securitisation and stability. The main research questions investigated in this thesis are: Through the prism of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF) and Party Moat-Building (PMB), what are 'the uses of literature' in Xi Jinping's China, and what does 'Telling the China Story Well' mean in reality for the nation's writers and publishers?

In terms of a positioning statement to present personal background information pertinent to this research, I first moved to China in 2001 to study Chinese and work as a Beijing-based journalist. In 2004, in conjunction with some associates from Europe and the United States, we established the Bookworm, a literary and cultural events space with venues in Beijing, Chengdu and Suzhou. It was in this role that I began to have a deep engagement with members of China's literary apparatus, including writers, publishers, agents, literary event coordinators, government officials and representatives from the China Writers Association. In this context I was deeply involved in year-round literary events, as well as feature events such as the Bookworm International Literary Festival, the EU-China International Literary Festival and the Literary Salons at the Beijing International Book Fair. This experience developed my network of contacts in the sector and gave me an insight into how the Party-state and literary world interacted, which sparked my interest in this area and led ultimately to me researching and writing this thesis. The Bookworm venues in Suzhou and Chengdu were closed down in 2018 and 2019 for commercial reasons. The Beijing Bookworm was forced to close in November 2019 amid an official crackdown on illegal structures, a development that is referenced in Chapter 5 as part of the focus on official engagement with bookshops.

Further to this research, primary data was collected from official government documents and circulars, while secondary sources included news stories, journal articles and books. A key focus was on interviewing practitioners in the field, more than 60 in total, under the categories of: writer, publisher/editor, writers' association official, government official, bookseller, book

importer/distributor and literary event curator. An effort was made in the sampling to include a diverse group of interviewees considering geographical spread, gender, age, career phase and broad political leaning. With regards to publishers and bookshops, I canvassed the views of both large entities and small operators.

Utilising observations and data in inductive research generating theory and adopting interpretivism as the philosophical approach to observe and analyse, I used a largely structured interview approach that included a semi-structured concluding element to allow interviewees to digress into unspecified areas. This qualitative data was assessed using narrative analysis to search for patterns and themes in codes across the respective interviews.

The research strategy was to continue conducting interviews with different types of interviewees on the focused topics until there were clear diminishing returns and no new major information or viewpoints were emerging. In terms of time horizon, this was a cross-sectional study, and the data was collected between January 2019 and July 2022.

In terms of limitations and shortcomings, it was difficult to find Writers Association officials and government officials to agree to participate in interviews, even off the record. In many cases, requests were not responded to or applications were passed on to other offices that either ignored the interview requests or rejected them. I did however ultimately get eight interviews under this category and found it to be sufficient as to a large extent the opinions they expressed closely were similar and reflected the published official policies. Additionally, given the pandemic restrictions in place, while a lot of the research I had initially planned was ultimately conducted, several conferences and literary events that I would have liked to attend were cancelled, thereby reducing the opportunity to meet relevant sources and listen to related public discussions. To address this limitation, I extended the interview phase of my research and conducted more one-on-one interviews over a period of more than three years.

In summation, evaluating my research objectives I found the choice of methodology was effective in practice and results were conclusive in that I garnered a clear understanding of the contemporary official policies and practices and how they were perceived by and impacted on the industry practitioners.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis examines the Chinese political leadership's policy approach to the state's contemporary literary apparatus, assessing ongoing and varying objectives, inputs, outcomes and inherent contradictions. From a theoretical framework perspective, as a prism through which to observe and analyse these phenomena, I have developed the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF). This framework was devised as an overarching structure to assess the constant cycle of objectives, inputs and outcomes in the Party-state's relationship with the sector, under which at select junctures in the cycle other established theories are invoked. Among these contributing theories, securitisation, stability and legitimacy are paramount in this context as the primary policy drivers. The concept of conflicting objectives, borrowed from the realm of macroeconomics where observers agree not all objectives can be simultaneously achieved, and fragmented authoritarianism theory, serve as pivots in the paradoxical framework. Aspects of theory relating to ideology, narrative control, nationalism/patriotism, soft power, repression, co-optation, censorship, propaganda and authoritarian image management are also examined as points in the cycle. This theory draws from the thesis's case studies and connects cultural production, 'the uses of literature' (Link, 2000), 'telling the China story', securitisation, stability and legitimacy.

Figure 1 (below) offers a graphical overview of the continuous circular flow of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, including objectives/ inputs/outcomes under observation for this research, plus theories utilised to assess key points in the loop under the framework. I developed this framework in the absence of any established academic structure that could illustrate and encapsulate the dynamics under review in the literary sphere. In this research I assessed official literature-related policies, statements, processes and practices, and contrasted that with practitioner interviews – on-the-ground perspectives from writers, publishers, other industry professionals and officials. The results presented a gulf between the aspirational and the actual. The CPPF offers a visual representation of official initiatives, actions and results that can be pinpointed in the framework. The framework is circular and simultaneous, with inputs varying at points in time to greater or lesser degrees.

In short, the Party-state, aware of the potential 'uses of literature' and the benefits of "telling the China story well", launches and funds a range of initiatives aimed at building a literary superpower. These projects are run across the country, via networks such as the China

Writers Association, and internationally as part of soft power pushes. As this cultural sphere starts to blossom, however, official concerns are raised about potential negative impacts the free expression of ideas and opinions might have on the Party-state, and restrictive programmes are instigated. Ongoing assessments note a relative lack of success on the literary front prompting more promotional and development initiatives. And the loop continues. Official actions are motivated firstly by the desire to achieve the stated CCP ambition of elevating the literary sphere to an elite level. Secondly, on the restrictive front, they are driven by what I have labelled Party Moat-Building, self-protective mechanisms. The pendulum swings from building a literary superpower to building protective moats, resulting in a dichotomy between policy and practice. The paradoxical approach is reflected in the circular nature of the framework. Ambitious objectives outlined in the CPPF involve supporting Xi's China Dream, establishing literary superpower status and burnishing the Party-state's legitimacy, while the outcomes include an oppressive landscape, demoralised writers and diminished legitimacy.

In the framework, the Inputs/Initial Actions include formulating central policies around the central Five-Year Plans, allocating budgets and a range of financial and social capital incentives, developing and deepening the network of Writers Associations, introducing policies to support publishers, literary translators, book distributors, bookstores and reading programmes, as well as building international promotional networks. While this is all progressing, however, elsewhere concerns are being raised about whether the China story is actually being told "well", or well enough in the official view. Storytelling and legitimacy concepts clash. Potential issues for officialdom include cultural security, critical voices, Party-state reputational damage at home and abroad, the state losing control of the narratives, stability concerns and challenges to authority, all of which feed into wider securitisation concerns. Where objectives conflict, the authority of the Party-state, its continued hold on power and social stability are prioritised. A range of repressive measures are introduced, censorship is tightened, propaganda domestically and internationally is intensified, and the Party-state's reach is extended.

Where stories are not being told sufficiently "well" in the eyes of officialdom, it is deemed better they are not told at all. Legitimacy concerns suppress unwanted narratives devised to avoid or minimise any undermining of the Party-state's image, reputation and ability to maintain rule. The key character 'hao 好', meaning well in this instance, is never officially defined, in what I would argue is an act of intentional ambiguity. The equivocation offers interpretative flexibility and places the onus of responsibility on the writers and publishers,

encouraging caution and self-censorship. While its definition is never articulated, it evidently holds a more ideological subtext for the CCP than for the nation's writers and publishers. From the theoretical perspective I present in this thesis, I argue that 'hao 好' (meaning good or well) is what I refer to as Party Moat-Building. In this context good/well means playing a vocal role in cheerleading for the Party-state and its ideology and paramount position in China's society, it means never undermining or challenging its policies or practices, and it means being at the vanguard of the mission to instil patriotism and civic pride in the populace. The ambiguity is arguably intentional in that it puts the responsibility on the nation's writers and publishers to decipher the meaning in oscillating political environments. With a high risk of negative repercussions for perceived ill behaviour, the natural tendency is to err on the side of caution and avoid precarious terrain. Loyalty is preeminent. In many ways, to 'Tell the China story well' is essentially instructing writers to "tell the Party story well".

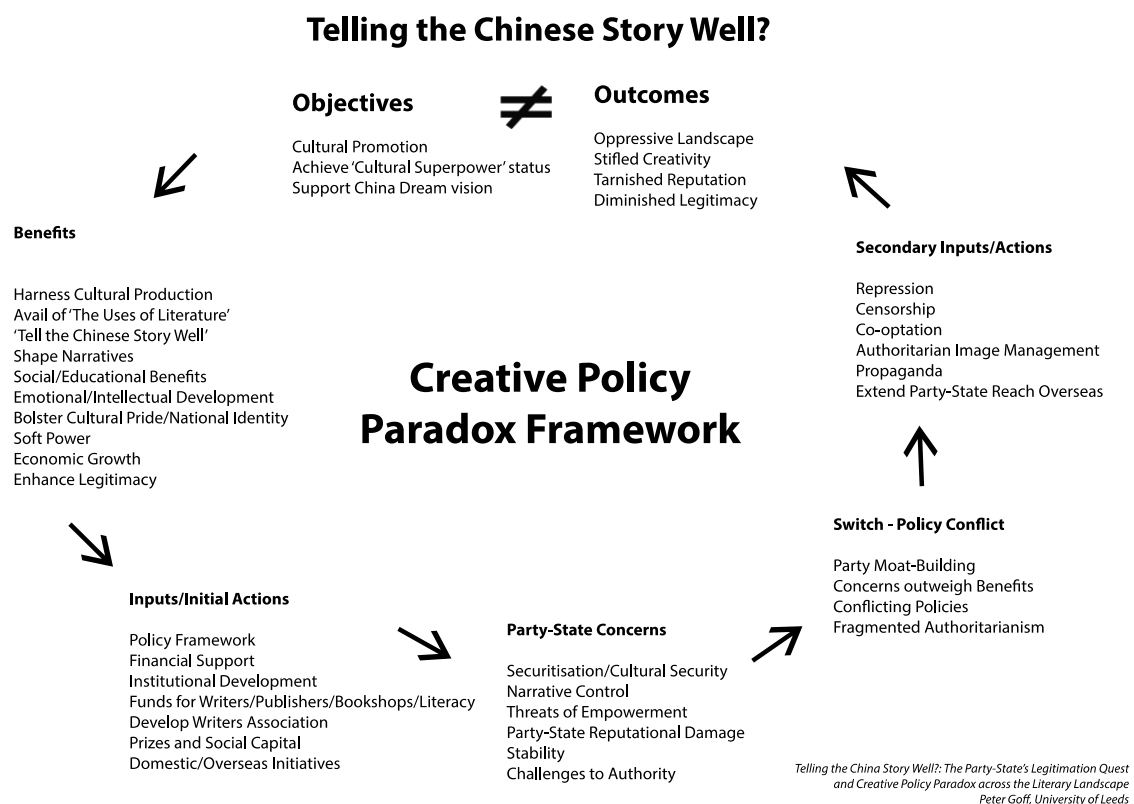


Figure 1: Telling the China Story Well? The Creative Policy Paradox Framework

2.2 *Party Moat-Building to protect political status quo*

Throughout the framework, Party Moat-Building (PMB) is in evidence. The moat-building describes policies, initiatives and actions that are taken to protect the one-party system and the Party's unchallenged hold on power. At times this moat-building is undertaken to the detriment of other policies, indicating regime security takes priority. I developed this as an umbrella term to refer to all these particularly self-protective policies, initiatives and actions identified in the research that were often ubiquitous in nature. Party Moat-Building is an analogy drawn from historical imperial palaces that would utilise deep moats to keep the marauding hordes and foreign devils at bay. The moat-building holds similar objectives in a contemporary context. As Huo (2010) wrote in a historical context, like the moats of old they offer more than just protection from assailants. Water from them could be used to douse a palace fire, or drawn for construction or other purposes, for instance, and lotus roots from the lilies grown in the moats would end up on imperial banquet tables. Moat-building could also echo the modern corporate parlance where companies build "moats" to generate sustainable competitive advantage, something the CCP aims to achieve vis a vis competing political systems. In the moat-building context, this includes co-optation, propaganda and soft power initiatives aimed at bolstering CCP legitimisation (Kim, 2018).

Moat-building actions might run counter to other policies, or appear paradoxical in nature at times, but can be understood in the wider context of prioritising CCP protective mechanisms. This official priority has long been made clear. While the CCP is constantly juggling multiple objectives and priorities, it considers the primary business of government as preserving its own status and has defined the preservation of the Party as the national number one core interest (Fitzgerald, 2022). During a Politburo Central Committee study session on taking a holistic approach to national security in 2020, two of the 10 key points Xi put forward referred to regime security and upholding the Party's absolute leadership (Pu, 2022). According to former Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd (2022), Xi Jinping has 10 concentric circles of core strategic interests, with the first and foremost being the centrality of Xi Jinping and the CCP. This axiom posits that to secure a prosperous future for China the CCP must remain in power indefinitely, and Xi is the only person capable of governing the CCP. The second priority identified was maintaining and securing national unity, while economic, environmental and military concerns followed behind. The Party's critics may argue this approach amounts ultimately to a power grab, but the CCP contends they are the entity best placed to run the country and therefore it is in the national interest to prioritise protecting the political status quo.

This reality motivates a wide range of securitisation and control initiatives – Party Moat-Building – designed first and foremost to secure the CCP’s hold on power. With the CCP focus on regime security, initiatives ranging from censorship to propaganda, rigid control to the promotion of positive and harmonious narratives impact the field of cultural production.

Party Moat-Building initiatives often have a negative impact on the field of cultural production. In terms of outcomes the secondary inputs generate low morale among creatives, stifled creativity, an oppressive landscape, and leave the Party-state with a tarnished reputation and diminished legitimacy. The loop is ongoing, with state-led efforts to both develop and suppress the sector running simultaneously, while levels of the inputs can vary depending on the current atmosphere and prevailing political winds. With securitisation across all aspects of society prioritised in recent years, the cultural landscape is scarred by tensions and controls.

While this thesis considers cultural production and the political impacts on creative writing in contemporary China, it does not engage with narrative theory or analyse individual texts and storylines. Rather it considers the socio-political aspects of the interactions between officialdom and creatives. From a theoretical perspective assessing this phenomenon, I refer to a series of established theories at points in the loop all linked together under the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF). Johannes Gerschewski’s (2013 and 2018) work is critical to this project with his three pillars of stability: repression, co-optation and legitimisation. The stick-and-carrot concepts of repression and co-optation are witnessed throughout the case studies assessed in this research, while legitimacy – and how it supports or undermines stability and regime security – plays a guiding role under the framework. These three pillars of repression, co-optation and legitimisation deliver the Party-state the stability to firmly maintain political control. In this research, I place a particular emphasis on the concept of legitimacy. While I also explore repression and co-optation, Gerschewski’s other two stability pillars that are perspicuous in the literary apparatus, legitimacy is a more nebulous concept and more complex to attain or control. Throughout the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, repression and co-optation are clearly evidenced at junctures, while legitimacy is a more amorphous and evasive concept. Repression and co-optation can be turned on and off like a tap, and the flow can be regulated at any point. In these regards, the CCP is in control. Legitimacy is a more nuanced matter, a concept that is complicated to accumulate and maintain, so one that warrants further scrutiny in this study. The research below establishes the Party-state is highly cognisant of the fact that legitimacy is critical to their political survival. That is clear. What is not so clear for the CCP as a political entity is how to generate this legitimacy, how to increase the existing

levels, and how to avoid legitimacy levels falling. At various instances in the CPPF legitimacy is invoked, with efforts aimed either at engendering or protecting it. Throughout this research, I survey the literary landscape in China and assess under the CPPF how the Party-state is utilising Gerschewski's three pillars of stability – repression, co-optation and legitimacy – in relation to the publishing world. Before examining Gerschewski's work I will first present an overview of the foundational literature on legitimacy theory drawn from in this research that forms part of the basis of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework.

2.3 *The Legitimacy Construct*

Legitimacy is a complex construct and central to any political order. The Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organisation that groups 36 developed economies, said state legitimacy matters because it provides the basis for rule by consent rather than coercion. Lack of legitimacy is a major contributor to state fragility because it undermines the processes of state-society bargaining that are central to building state capacity (OECD, 2010).

The concept has been identified as critical by theorists for centuries. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2002) warned back in 1762 that to sustain legitimacy a state must move beyond coercive tactics alone and move towards an incentives-based model. He argued that the strongest is never strong enough to be always the master unless they can transform strength into right and obedience into duty. Rousseau considered the relationship between master and the ruled to be a fundamental pact, one which did not destroy natural equality but rather substituted a moral and lawful equality in place of the natural inequality, so that although unequal in strength or intellect they become equal by convention and legal right. Under inadequate governments, however, he argued that any perception of equality would be illusory, serving only to keep the poor in their misery and the rich in power. To transform obedience into duty, he wrote that a citizen's love should be stimulated through rituals, public spectacles, moral education or civil religion that will make them love their duty.

Edmund Burke (1790) built on Rousseau's theory and added that flexibility and the ability to adapt were also essential for states to retain legitimacy. He argued that a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Furthermore, Burke wrote the state must adopt a complex, multi-faceted form of government to sustain relevance while referring to simple governments as fundamentally defective.

Weber added legitimate violence to the concept, arguing politics was about the organisation of legitimate domination. He offered a key definition of legitimacy when he wrote “the state is the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory” (1919, p.38). According to this interpretation, the state is regarded as the sole source of the right to use violence, and other organisations or individuals can only assert the right to use physical violence if the state permits them. Under this structure, those who are ruled must perceive that the state’s use of force is legitimate and submit to the authority of the rulers of the day. Weber presented three “internal” justifications that provided grounds in principle for legitimate rule. First, the traditional rule, “the authority of ‘the eternal past,’ of custom, sanctified by a validity that extends back into the mists of time and is perpetuated by habit” (1919, p.34). Second, he identified the charismatic rule of the extraordinary leader, where there is devotion to and trust in the presence, heroism or other leadership qualities of an individual. Here he identifies prophets, great demagogues and rulers chosen by popular vote as examples. Finally, there is rule by virtue of legality – rational-legal authority – by virtue of belief in the validity of the system and competence based on rationally constructed rules. This type of rule is found in the modern ‘servant of the state’ model, where there exists a willingness to carry out statutory duties obediently. Depending on the type of legitimacy, the authority is bestowed based on the sanctity of tradition, the charismatic qualities of the leader, or the rational-legal belief in the procedural correctness. In this way, Weber extended the concept of legitimacy beyond prior definitions.

According to Weber, it is not pertinent if people actually believe the justifications for the right to rule, but what is relevant is that it is socially valid – a “social fact” considered to be true that structures social action and is socially institutionalised. It is also subjectively valid, in that it concerns a belief in the legitimacy. Weber’s three “internal” justifications are counterbalanced by the “external” justification of the use of force for non-compliance. In this action-theoretical perspective, he examines legitimate domination and social order in terms of interaction between value-rational orientations, subjective action and institutionalised expectations. The expectations present the social facts that posit the ruler has the right to rule and the ruled has the duty to obey. Weber saw a generally observable need for any power, or even any advantage in life, to justify itself – every system of domination attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy. However, the mode of exercising authority will differ fundamentally depending on the type of legitimacy that is claimed.

While Weber argued power relations were legitimate as long as those involved in them believe them to be so, Beetham disagreed as it leaves the social scientist with no adequate means of explaining why people acknowledge the legitimacy of power of an authority at certain times and not others. He believed this misrepresents the legitimacy relationship, arguing a “given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be justified in terms of their beliefs” (1991, p.11).

A number of factors, operating at different levels, contribute to legitimacy, he argued. First, there is the legal validity of the hold on power; second, there is the justifiability of the rules governing a power relationship in the particular society; and finally, there is the evidence of consent derived from actions expressing that consent. “To the extent that they are present, it will be legitimate; to the extent they are absent, it will not” (1991, p.13). Consequently, he argued that the social scientist is making a judgment about whether a given power relationship is legitimate or not, while he says the Weberian definition amounts to determining whether power is legitimate or not by asking people whether they believe it was. Under Beetham’s framework, the concept of legitimacy is multi-dimensional and the three elements are qualitatively different from each other. Using this definition – one that I utilise in the CPPF and this research – power is legitimate to the extent that (1991, p.13):

- It conforms to established rules
- The rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate
- And, there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation.

Judgments will always be a matter of degree and may be eroded, contested or incomplete, but while the extent to which elements have adequate or sufficient justification to be considered legitimate will always be open to some interpretation, limits will be set by logic and the prevailing beliefs in each society. Within any power relationship, Beetham argues that self-confirming processes are constantly engaged in reproducing and consolidating legitimacy because the legitimization of power takes place within established power relationships, not outside them, and in the given social contexts, not in the context of abstract argument or under ideal conditions for consent. If legitimacy has faded away or is entirely absent, a power

relationship can still be kept in place with incentives and sanctions/coercion, a concept that Gerschewski addresses in detail and is utilised in this theoretical framework.

Where Weber saw violence and power as central, Lipset (1959) focused on the public's view of the system itself as appropriate. Lipset defined legitimacy as the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society. Economic development, while critical, is not the only key factor in delivering stability, but the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system are also vital. Effectiveness refers to actual performance, the extent to which the system satisfies the basic functions of government "as most of the population and such powerful groups within it as big business or the armed forces see them" (1959, p.77). Writing as he was in the 1950s, Lipset observed then that crises of legitimacy were a relatively recent historical phenomena that followed the rise of sharp cleavages among groups which, aided by technological advances in mass communication, were able to organise around different values to traditionally acceptable ones.

Lipset agreed with the view that legitimacy can be associated with all forms of governments, including oppressive ones. Autocracies legitimise power through use of neutral terminology that avoids evoking deeper values of voluntary consensus, fairness, and human rights. Tannenberg (2020) extended these ideas by pointing out two key features that challenge authoritarian rule. Firstly, there is no higher power an aggrieved party can turn to in the event of a dispute, meaning political promises made are unenforceable; and secondly, when conflict intensifies authoritarian politics quickly becomes violent. While in a Weberian legitimisation context the monopoly of legitimate physical violence always exists, in authoritarian contexts the threat of violence is more immediate.

For coercion to be effective, Beetham (1991) argues it must be much more extensive, and it is expensive to keep in place. He writes the coercive system of power only has force as its one line of defence, so it can therefore collapse rapidly if levels of coercion are insufficient or if there is a belief that those in power have lost the will to use it. The collapse of authority when legitimacy disappears is the most dramatic scenario that displays the relationship between legitimacy and obedience of subordinates, but more commonplace, and equally as important, is what the lack of legitimacy has on degree of cooperation. Where subordinates withdraw partial cooperation, in any number of ways, due to a decline in moral authority, it absorbs the time and energy of those in power, restricts their options as leaders and makes them less effective.

The vacuum of power may be filled temporarily by military force or by charismatic leadership but can only be filled permanently by political organisations. Whoever organises the politics controls the future (Huntington, 1968). Huntington also argued the most important political distinction among authorities was not their form of government but their degree of government. “The differences between democracy and dictatorship are less than the differences between those countries whose politics embodies consensus, community, legitimacy, organisation, effectiveness, stability, and those countries whose politics is deficient in these qualities” (1968, p.1).

He argued an examination of historical events showed that communist governments were no better than democratic governments in alleviating famine, improving health, expanding national product, creating industry, and maximising welfare. “But the one thing communist governments can do is to govern; they do provide effective authority” (1968, p.8). Ideology furnishes a basis of legitimacy, and the Party organisation provides the institutional mechanism for mobilising support and executing policy. China’s literary context supports Huntington’s assertions, with the CCP presenting a comprehensive, detailed, multi-layered, long-term governance system.

Huntington argues that the fact communist governments are born of revolution means they tend to be significantly stronger in terms of discipline. National discipline, proletarian discipline, party discipline, and revolutionary discipline “are all invoked in the revolutionary process... often to an oppressive degree” (1968, p.312). Communist Party legitimacy can be engendered through ideology, charisma and popular sovereignty, he argued and can be sustainable if these principles are ingrained in the party’s structure. In which case (1968, p.341):

Instead of the Party reflecting the state, the state becomes the creation of the Party and the instrument of the Party. The actions of government are legitimate to the extent that they reflect the will of the Party. The Party is the source of legitimacy because it is the institutional embodiment of national sovereignty, the popular will, or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Xi’s China intertwines the concepts of Party, state, nation and sovereignty, and while the Party seeks legitimacy it is also, as Huntington contends in general terms, the source of legitimacy as the physical embodiment of a nation’s sovereignty. While Huntington argued ideology furnishes a basis of legitimacy, Habermas (1976) posits a legitimisation crisis can arise through the possession of a cemented identity. He points out the concept of crisis was a widely

used medical term before its usage became popular in the social-scientific world. In the medical context it refers to the phase of an illness in which medics evaluate whether the organism's self-healing powers are sufficient for recovery. In political organisations he says that crises relate to steering problems, problems the driver is generally not conscience of, which can affect wider consciousness and endanger social integration. Social systems that cement identity can lose their effectiveness following any kind of rupture in tradition and they will lose that identity once younger generations no longer recognise themselves as part of that traditional establishment.

Similar to Lipset, Netelenbos (2016) notes there is nothing intrinsically good about political legitimacy in an empirical sense and it can favour the most non-democratic institutions, mask grave social inequalities, be built upon myths, or obstruct necessary institutional change. Politicians and authorities are constantly trying to legitimise their decisions and actions or the structures of political power in general, he argues, and if successfully legitimate, political rule amounts to more than merely the raw power of coercion or the strategic force of inducement.

Beetham (1991) observes that with the exercise of power by one person over another, or by one group over another, those who are subordinate experience it as constraining, often humiliating and sometimes life-threatening. If they had the opportunity to escape the clutches of the control many would do so. For those who actually hold the power, or seek it, Beetham said they were "frequently at odds with one another over the scope of their power and the control over their subordinates, with potentially damaging consequences" (1999, p.3). This conflict that Beetham points to underscores the conflicting framework of this thesis, where storytelling and legitimacy are also often at odds, as identified in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework.

2.4 *Gerschewski's three pillars of stability*

The concept of legitimacy is tightly connected to the idea of political stability, which underpins securitisation, a CCP priority. Johannes Gerschewski (2013) identifies key pillars of stability and examines why some autocracies remain stable while others collapse. Before examining his theory, I will first consider the concept of political stability. Ake (1975) contends political stability exists when members of a society restrict themselves to patterns of behaviour patterns that fall within the limits imposed by political expectations. Deviations beyond these limits would be considered instances of political instability. Dowding and Kimber (2006) discount this definition as insufficient on the grounds that a criminal act such as a

robbery, for instance, could also fall into this category. They define a stable political object as one that possesses the capacity to prevent its own forced non-survival. Margolis (2010) went beyond this definition and argues that political stability should be understood more as a pattern of political behaviour that centres on the relationship between the institutional representation of roles and structures and their social construction, which is constantly changing. In this context, political stability is the degree to which the formal and the informal collide and overlap, with the concept of stability focusing on reducing the gap between the two and securing maximum overlap.

In Gerschewski's theoretical framework that seeks to explain the longevity of autocracies, he identifies three key pillars of stability: repression, co-optation and legitimisation. He identifies repression as the punishment or deterrence of behaviour deemed to be potentially threatening to the authorities. Co-optation is a strategic process of engaging with relevant actors and developing a range of incentives – often delivered via institutions – to motivate and mobilise them in support of the government. He considers the aim of legitimisation efforts, at the very least, to ensure passive acceptance and compliance amongst most of the populace, while ideally – moving up the scale – the ambition is to stimulate proactive belief in the regime's ideology and right to rule indefinitely.

Gerschewski argues that reinforcement processes take place both within and between the three pillars. They take the form of an exogenous reinforcement process that is driven by the regime's material resources and power at its disposal; a self-reinforcement process, or endogenous process, that can propel path-dependency; and also, a reciprocal reinforcement process that works between the pillars and can lead to a complementary advantage. To have a stabilising effect, the three pillars need to become institutionalised over time, with multiple interactions crisscrossing within the arenas of legitimisation, repression and co-optation to the point where they become stable institutions and are understood as behavioural patterns. This institutionalisation process depends on external resources as a self-reinforcing mechanism, and if political regimes no longer have the resources or the funding to foster legitimacy, uphold a functioning repression apparatus, or distribute adequate benefits to co-opt strategic entities in a sufficient manner the institutionalisation process within the three pillars will slow and ultimately grind to a halt, meaning instability will likely follow.

Gerschewski's theory will form the basis for an assessment under the wider CPPF of how the Party-state uses the three pillars of stability in the context of creative publishing. It will survey the literary landscape in contemporary China, and assess how the CCP is utilising

repression, co-optation and legitimization in connection with the nation's authors, publishing sector and literary output. The research will show how repression is prevalent in terms of censorship, official investigations, threats and intimidation, among other measures. Co-optation in the literary realm manifests itself predominantly via the China Writers Associations (CWA) – an official coordinating membership body that functions as the link between writers and the Party-state – and the complex structure of incentives and benefits that such an apparatus offers to those who support, or at least do not actively undermine, the authorities. Co-optation is also seen through a series of grants and financial programmes for publishers, literary translators, bookshops and reading programmes that meet with official approval. Co-opting such a respected cohort as the country's literary elite is hugely beneficial to an autocratic regime. Considering literary output, not only is their writing not critical of the authorities but with sufficient buy-in also serves to underscore their legitimacy. Moreover, having the apparent support of respected creatives and public intellectuals, be that support explicit or implicit in nature, would be an influencing factor for the general populace and enhance the state's claims of legitimacy.

In line with Gerschewski's theory, this research argues that legitimization is a more nuanced and abstract pillar than repression or co-optation, and one the CCP has found difficult to achieve but crucial in its efforts to retain stability in recent years. The legitimization in the case of literature comes through myriad means – at its most direct by controlling the narrative of the nation's literature to ensure all content, at best, underscores the legitimacy of the CCP and, at least, does nothing to undermine it.

Beyond the actual texts, the ability to control and direct the people and the resources attached to this high-profile sector benefits the authorities in many ways and helps reinforce its overall legitimacy. The three pillars help authoritarian governments thwart the danger of upheaval or regime breakdown that would typically stem from one of three sources: from ordinary citizens whose non-compliance might take the form of a rebellion or popular uprising; from oppositional figures who could organise resistance movements; and from intra-elite splits where strategically important parties could deviate from the ruling elite's course.

Legitimacy has been theorised as a function of stability engendered by a range of subjective beliefs. The right to rule emanates from socially institutionalised normative expectations, and power relationships are typically defined, implicitly if not explicitly, by a melange of incentives and sanctions. External guarantees, such as violence, can be effective in varying measures, and while they do not guarantee the continuation of unchallenged authority,

their presence can be seen to enhance the likelihood of order and obedience. Legitimation, however, requires more than a cudgel-backed approach and is instead achieved with a multitude of factors coming together in any one scenario, all featuring to a greater or lesser extent, and none of which operates in isolation. In the CPPF context, these scenarios are examined as the Party-state seeks to enhance its legitimacy at times while at others seeks to take action to prevent its existing legitimacy from being undermined.

The next section examines academic engagement in China with the concept of legitimacy theory and political ramifications.

2.5 *Legitimacy introspection in China*

An ongoing and intense debate continues among scholars, cadres and policymakers in China as to how to maintain the legitimacy of the ruling CCP. The CCP has endured at the helm in China since 1949, surviving many crises in the intervening years. Unlike the Soviet Union and many of its satellite states, the one-party system has remained in place, and policies embracing market reform and capitalist enterprise have not opened the door to Western-style democracy. The CCP positions itself as the only political actor with the ability to govern China, oversee its economic growth, maintain social stability, and ensure state coherence (Laliberté and Lanteigne, 2008). The successive governments of China since 1949, acutely aware of the chaos and disorder that marked China's history, are sensitive to instability sparked by internal or external actors, with the potential to undermine the integrity of the state. Burton (2008) argues that in the Mao era the legitimacy of the rule of the CCP was based on the Marxian interpretation of history with the Party's rule presented as a necessary condition of China's revolutionary progress. Facing a raft of social and economic challenges in the subsequent years, the relationship between the Party and the people has become more ambiguous and regime legitimacy has decayed to an extent. Various international studies have found that the Chinese government enjoys high levels of political support (Chang, 2020), but research such as that conducted by Wu and Wilkes (2018) has found that political control can explain the hierarchical trust pattern in China. Robinson and Tannenbergs (2019) also found reasons to query surveys in closed political systems that indicated high levels of support for authoritarian regimes. In their follow-up experiments they found systematic bias where substantially more individuals state that they support the regime with direct questioning than when presented with indirect list experiments. Robinson and Tannenbergs identified this as a form of self-censorship

where a perceived risk exists that opinions given to surveys may be made known to the authorities or the public.

The ongoing legitimacy debate in China has its primary origins in Beijing's analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It spilled into public view in the early 2000s when a series of party pronouncements implicitly raised the question of the CCP's legitimacy as a pressing, and sanctioned, topic of discussion. Since then, a remarkable proliferation of academic articles, conferences, and research projects in China has been visible that have tackled this challenge. Gilley and Holbig (2009) analysed 168 articles published in China between 2004 and 2008 on the question of regime and party legitimacy (*hefaxing* 合法性). In their research, they found that the Chinese scholars cited mostly Western authors of theoretical works related to the concept of political legitimacy, with the main references being Jurgen Habermas, Samuel Huntington, Max Weber, Seymour Lipset, David Easton, Jean-Marc Coicaud, Rousseau and Aristotle. They found all these Western authors, plus several others who wrote on the question of legitimacy, had already been translated into China by the early 1980s. Among their key findings was that while 30 per cent believed the CCP already faced a legitimacy crisis, a larger proportion (68 per cent) believed that legitimacy was under some form of challenge or threat. Identified as the key sources of legitimacy challenge were changing values (63 per cent), changing interests (61 per cent), the exhaustion of revolutionary-historical legitimacy (51 per cent) and globalisation (34 per cent). The Gilley and Holbig research indicated that 50 per cent of all authors mentioned economic growth as a crucial component of a legitimisation strategy, while over 35 per cent stressed the importance of social equality. As far as institutions and governance were concerned, the main emphasis was on the rule of law (62 per cent), social incorporation (44 per cent), and the control of corruption (38 per cent). Their study found that ideology remained a leading strategy of future legitimisation for the CCP alongside better-known strategies of institution-building and social justice. They also found that liberalism, while less often proposed, remained a potent critique of regime legitimacy.

More recent research (Zeng, 2016) showed how fractured the literature has become in terms of the variables that underlie legitimacy in a Chinese context. Building on the Gilley/Holbig study, Zeng identified and analysed 125 Chinese academic articles that focused on legitimacy published between 2008 and 2012. Zeng's follow-on study found that changing values remained a leading perceived legitimacy threat, but he identified several other priority shifts. Socioeconomic inequality, corruption and incapability of bureaucratic systems were listed as the main threats, compared to changing interests and the exhaustion of revolutionary-

historical legitimacy in the earlier research. And in the later study, propaganda, rule of law and promotion of equality were the most frequently mentioned strategies to maintain legitimacy, compared with the earlier research which prioritised rule of law, economic growth, propaganda and building better party organisations. Zeng found that Western scholars still dominated the debate, with only 2 per cent of the articles analysed considering Chinese philosophies. Zeng pointed out this was noteworthy as it would seem to go against the Beijing elite way of thinking of China as in some way exceptional and built on different philosophies to Western states.

While international academics tended to explain political legitimacy in terms of economic prosperity, Chinese intellectuals had already realised that economic growth alone would not guarantee the CCP's ruling position. Many of the articles Zeng reviewed warned about the fleeting nature of performance legitimacy and the necessity of establishing more solid legitimacy foundations, especially Weberian rational-legal legitimacy. Zeng found that Chinese academia was at a near consensus that the state should find sources of legitimacy other than economic performance. The research identified a significant cleavage between the international perception of the Chinese state and the view among Chinese intellectuals, in that the international view tended to perceive that the CCP was not facing major legitimacy threats but the Chinese writers were much more pessimistic. Zeng put this discrepancy down to a mixture of two factors: on the one hand Chinese scholars had more insight into China's society so had more information to bring to their research, while on the other hand, international scholars were looking at China comparatively so might perceive the normalcy of China's situation. With levels of concern high among cadres and scholars in China, the Party-state has used myriad means to maintain and bolster legitimacy over the years. This official concern, at times tantamount to paranoia, drives the Party Moat-Building concept outlined above and prompts the multi-directional flow featured in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework. Legitimacy can stem from the promotion of the literary world, such as in the generation of soft power, and officials can try to protect existing legitimacy by clamping down on the same sector, by removing critical discourse, for example. In this way efforts to both stifle and stimulate the literary sphere are driven by the same legitimacy ambitions identified in the framework.

2.6 *Official efforts to maintain legitimacy*

Holbig argues the CCP has shown “much evidence of an unusually agile, responsive, and creative Party effort to maintain its legitimacy through economic performance, nationalism, ideology, culture, governance, and democracy” (2011, p.33) as defined in terms

of popular sovereignty under the leadership of the party. While ideology, culture, and governance seem to be relatively durable, Holbig observes that their other sources of legitimacy were vulnerable in varying ways. As the CCP moved away from traditional Maoism, it sought to maintain its commanding role in Chinese political life despite a growing number of challenges, from political and non-political actors alike, to its claim that it is the most effective force to keep the country together. The Party has not opted for retrenchment but has rather looked for ways and means to adapt to the contemporary political reality, based largely on the claims that only the CCP is able to ensure economic growth, provide social stability, and defend national sovereignty (Laliberté and Lanteigne, 2008).

As shown above, there is a widely shared view among scholars that economic growth is insufficient to deliver long-term legitimacy. Economic growth can generate rising expectations, shifts in social values, and deliver social inequalities, which in turn can fuel a sense of injustice. Environmental degradation is also a side effect that can ultimately generate a host of legitimacy issues for the government (Smith, 2020). In line with Zeng's research (2016), Brady (2009) argues the CCP has evolved and now bases its legitimacy on both economic growth and a renewed emphasis on persuasion, or what in Chinese terms is known as propaganda and thought work. Absorbing the methodology behind political public relations, mass communications and social psychology, China's contemporary propaganda system is high-tech, market-friendly, and light on political rhetoric. Repnikova and Fang (2018) note that under the Xi administration, the management of information by the CCP has been increasingly shifting away from crude and explicit tactics to a more subtle online presence involving authoritarian persuasion that takes on an increasingly participatory role, one often calling on netizens to repost, share and create officially approved content. This authoritarian persuasion, witnessed across the CPPF, embodies co-opted support and self-censorship among a range of relatively subtle approaches designed to ensure cultural content is aligned with the main melody. Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2017) note how the CCP has been adaptive and flexible in legitimating itself online, while simultaneously censoring alternative perspectives. The modern persuasive approach is presented in the name of harmony, stability and social progress, but as with the more traditional approach of bluntly stifling dissent is also ultimately exercised to assert the CCP's hegemony. Comparing the contending conceptions of ideology in four communist countries, China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba that shared similar starting conditions in the 1970s, Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2020) found that China and Vietnam had

both harnessed a more flexible legitimisation strategy while Cuba and North Korea had adopted a comparatively rigid legitimisation approach.

Soon after Xi Jinping became China's leader he proposed the China Dream as the vision where China would be rejuvenated and become a rich and powerful nation. Miao (2020) argues narratives such as this aimed at underscoring CCP legitimacy focus on romanticising and homogenising both the imperial and the socialist past, as well as projecting a sanguine future. Along with nationalism, the party has always considered ideology central to its hold on power. In the aftermath of the mass protest movement in 1989, the Party leadership argued the protests would not have occurred had the state's ideological and political education been sufficient (Chen, 2022). In their review of Chinese scholars writing about legitimacy, Gilley and Holbig (2009) found that many of the scholars reviewed believe that the weakening of ideology is one of the main challenges to party legitimacy. This was due to a range of factors including the fading of memories of the communist revolution, the still-clear memories of the disastrous Maoist campaigns, the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, financial hardships encountered in a more market-driven economy, and the increased ideological pluralisation that came with globalisation, new technologies and marketisation.

Beetham (1991) posits that in authoritarian systems the solution to the problem of normative pluralism is ideology. In communist party regimes, ideology has to provide the normative foundation for the rightful source of political authority; to justify the government's performance in the light of the 'common interest'; and to serve as a stimulus to mobilise popular consent or, at least, assent. Holbig (2013) argues that ideology still plays an indispensable role in the quest to legitimise authoritarian rule in contemporary China, and that it does so precisely due to its high degree of adaptability. Ideology in contemporary China should be analysed not as a matter of belief, Holbig writes, but of playing by the rules of the official language game, where ideology is deployed as a set of practices and incentives for the proper performance of the political elite. The rapid canonisation of Xi Jinping Thought has shown the emphasis the Party is now putting on its ideology to generate popular support and enhance its legitimacy (Holbig, 2022). Gore (2022) writes ideology is essential in forging the bonds between the masses and a communist regime that relies on pledges to deliver an ideal future society to win the hearts and minds of the populace rather than elections. Speaking to this point, Yang (2022) contends that while the Party was aware Marxism was no longer fit for purpose from an ideological perspective, they could not reject it altogether for fear of undermining the Party's past. Consequently, the Party ideological focus in recent years has

been on the Sinification of Marxist ideas. As the vanguard of the proletariat, a Leninist party such as the CCP believes they are not subject to popular elections because the Party has a superior command of Marxist theories and the laws of history, contends Gore (2022). The general population is backward by comparison, the leadership believe and relies on the Party's wise counsel. In this regard, Xi has always stressed democratic centralism, where individuals obey the Party, subordinates obey superiors, and the whole Party obeys the Party centre. In a similar vein, Fitzgerald (2022) contends as a vanguard Party the CCP believes it does not need to consult with aggrieved people on constitutional processes because it derives its legitimacy from Party doctrine not from popular consent. Under this perception, Chinese people made their choice in 1949 to step aside as the CCP overthrew the Nationalists.

Beyond doctrine, Fitzgerald (2022) argues the Party uses the motif of historical national humiliation at the hands of foreigners as leverage and the claim to avenge national humiliation is a claim to legitimacy. Many scholars point out that the CCP turns to nationalism as a source of legitimacy in the absence of other credible claims that could generate spontaneous or voluntary obedience to the Party. However, there is concern among the Party elite that public displays of nationalist sentiment can create blowback against the Chinese state itself (Hays Gries, 2004; Mitter, 2020). Nationalist appeals are typically founded upon ethnicity, language, history, or tradition and are employed to create a sense of solidarity among often quite disparate populations (Hays Gries, 2004). Barmé (1999) argues the role of Chinese nationalism since the 1990s has its source in the growing disenchantment with the West in the wake of the Soviet collapse. Several authors coalesce around the idea that present-day nationalism is a complex mixture of both state and popular nationalism, where mechanisms of top-down and bottom-up mobilisation are closely interrelated (Barmé, 1999; Hays Gries, 2004; Mitter, 2020).

2.7 *Securitisation and cultural security*

Under Xi Jinping, practically all areas of domestic governance have become securitised. The securitisation reflects an underlying existential unease in the Party about its own security in the face of a range of internal and external challenges (Wuthnow, 2022). This unease motivates Party Moat-Building across all aspects of society. In relation to culture, Xi's China Dream involves a vision of national rejuvenation and the delivery of a renewed Chinese spiritual civilisation (Fürst, 2021). Fürst argues Xi's politicisation and securitisation of culture go beyond preserving unique cultural values but is censorship aimed at protecting the political

status quo and the Party's monopoly on power. According to Buzan and Waever (2003), securitisation is a process where an actor identifies a threat and is able to justify exceptional measures to confront this threat. Securitisation combines threat design with threat management, and under securitisation theory the term security does not only describe a scenario but also has the capacity to transform social reality (Balzacq et al., 2015).

Xi (2014) shone the national spotlight on cultural security in a high-profile speech he delivered. In light of this cultural security threat, he said the country had to grasp the new trends in the security situation and embark on a national security path with Chinese characteristics. Li et al (2020) define cultural security as the ability of a state to maintain its cultural nature, develop its cultural function and protect its cultural interests from threats and violations. They argue a clear cultural security threat to China exists in contemporary times, particularly in a more globalised world, and there is always a danger that a national culture such as China's could be assimilated, swallowed up or eliminated in a scenario where a weak culture engages with a strong culture. Surveying the writings of several Chinese scholars on the subject, they concluded that China's cultural and ideological security had been threatened in part due to the fact that its traditional culture had been distorted, national values had been misled, and innovations in education ideology in China had been insufficient. For the Party leadership, cultural security is a vital aspect of security that helps to protect Chinese values and culture from outside threats and also enhances China's ability to compete for international influence by promoting its culture and values abroad (Fürst, 2021). Surveying the cultural landscape, Xu (2012) argues that China was the main target of Western ideological subversion aimed at undermining Beijing, and Marxism was the most important ideological weapon at China's disposal. Consequently, Xu advises the Party-state to consolidate its Marxist guiding position, with a stronger central authority, to safeguard Chinese cultural security.

While Xu (2012) argues cultural security is a threat to the Party-state, Fürst (2021) contends it is seen in Beijing's corridors of power as an opportunity. Using the cultural security threat, the state's control has been tightened through integrating internal and external security agendas, and a trend of restrictive reforms has been legitimised on state security and cultural security grounds. He notes a regressive trend that actively excludes Western contributions in an effort to purify the Chinese national identity and claims the CCP has exploited the concept of cultural security to forward an increasingly centralised agenda and revive anti-Western narratives and attitudes. The new restrictive policies based on cultural security concerns have been introduced in China in the fields of education, the civic and non-governmental sector,

policies pertaining to ethnic minorities and religion, as well as across the arts in literature and film (Fürst, 2021). Lynch (2013) argues the tendency for Chinese foreign policy elites to securitise culture in international relations and present it as an area of intense competition, similar to economic and military arenas, suggests that China's rise internationally will continue to be combative. Wuthnow (2022) writes that as Xi perceives the most dangerous threats to his rule as internal, non-traditional elements, the balance between development, security and sovereignty has been adjusted. Further to this point, Gore (2022) contends that Xi has misconstrued the reasons behind China's success since reform and opening up and the items that are on top of his agenda now – Party ideology, internal discipline, fighting corruption, curtailing freedom of expression, beefing up state-owned enterprises, tightening information control and clamping down on dissent etc – did not play a role in China's meteoric rise over the past three decades. They may well bolster the Party's position, but at the cost of economic dynamism and social vitality. Pu (2022) also argues that Xi's relentless pursuit of absolute security damages China's openness and social dynamism. This points to a potential paradox, identified in this study's CPPF, where the securitisation policies could hamper economic growth and innovation, in which case the security measures would end up actually weakening the foundations of the CCP's security apparatus.

Culturalism is another means Chinese leaders use to legitimise party rule that has gained increasing currency in recent decades. Culturalism can be seen as the claim to represent the legacy of cultural traditions of society. It resembles national sovereignty claims in that it is also subject to a complex interplay between bottom-up and top-down mechanisms of mobilisation (Holbig, 2011). Sun (1995, p.18) noted that academic and political discussions in China on the reconceptualisation of socialism are frequently linked to what is referred to as cultural reconstruction – the reconstruction of Chinese cultural values. While the CCP has in the past displayed ambivalent attitudes toward the revival of various traditional elements of Chinese culture, they did notably embrace the renaissance of Confucianism. This serves the Party-state's objectives given traditional elements of Confucianism such as acceptance of hierarchy, devotion to family, respect for stability and social order are all elements that underscore the legitimisation of authoritarian rule (Holbig, 2011). Wu (2015) examines the state-supported "modernisation" of China and argues while there was no evidence that Confucianism would enter the theoretical heart of the Party, behind this revival was an intention to institutionalise Confucianism to consolidate the leadership and ideological control of the CCP. Cong (2013) believes that in many respects Confucianism was revived and co-opted to enable

the Party to develop in a direction that stood apart from the dominant Western trajectory. Confucianism and other traditional elements of Chinese culture were seen by CCP officials as replacement sources of legitimacy in place of Marxism (Laliberte and Lanteigne, 2008; Holbig and Gilley, 2009).

Facing a serious Party image problem in light of endemic cadre corruption, Xi Jinping drew on China's cultural and traditional heritage to indicate a commitment to improving the morality and performance of the rank-and-file membership (Buckley, 2014). Referencing traditional moral values and ideals allows the CCP to realign itself with societal expectations without revisiting the ideological foundations of the Party-state (Kubat, 2018). In this regard, Wu and Devine (2018) contend that tapping into Confucian self-cultivation appealed to societal traditional values and through the principles of differentiation and community interest serves to enhance CCP legitimacy. The utilisation of traditional heritage evokes moral leadership and a societal and political governance narrative, while establishing a normative lineage between China's philosophical and historical heritage and the contemporary CCP-controlled political realm. Similarly, traditional political theory such as the 'mandate of heaven' has been revitalised and adapted by the Party to help construct its legitimacy (Miao, 2020). Utilising this framework, the CCP seeks to establish a foundation for its rule by highlighting its performance in governance to shape a new legitimacy.

Callahan (2015) contends that Xi's narrative involves an ideological transition that is not from communism to nationalism but rather to a combination of socialism and Chinese civilisation. It is one that is involved in a global competition of social models pitting China against a common enemy: liberalism, the West and, in particular, the United States. The Beijing Consensus is one such narrative engaging ideological transition aimed at enshrining CCP legitimacy. Also known as the China Model or Chinese Economic Model, the Beijing Consensus was coined in 2004 to frame China's economic development model as an alternative to the Washington Consensus, which Turin (2010) argues is an appealing alternative to states that have not benefited from the existing Western-dominated international power structure. Fürst (2021) argues while these policies are designed to exclude Western cultural contributions in a bid to purify Chinese identity, they work as a regression of the cultural complexity and ultimately undermine China's cultural potential and soft power opportunities.

While shunning Western-style democracy, the Party has experimented with policies at a grassroots level, and local semi-competitive elections and recourse to the state-controlled judicial process can be seen as efforts to boost legitimacy in authoritarian states such

as China. Geddes (2018) writes that semi-competitive elections and the encouragement of litigation by citizens against local and regional officials help the regime monitor and control local officials whose behaviour might otherwise alienate the populace and stir popular unrest. While society under autocratic regimes might see some benefit from local elections or access to the judicial process, Geddes argues these benefits are counterbalanced by the reality these institutions make to the prolongation of the status quo. Whiting (2017) argues the Party-state's project of legal construction and granting ordinary citizens access to the judicial system to some extent enhances regime legitimacy. She also noted, however, how China uses law to enshrine substantively restrictive rights and to establish legitimacy of these restrictive laws, amounting to rule by law rather than rule of law. Technology has also played a role in adjusting how vanguard parties interface with the public. Gueorguiev (2021) explores the relationship between political inclusion and political control in China and identifies a process of regime maintenance utilised by the CCP that he labelled 'Retrofitting Leninism'. In this process, he argues authoritarian regimes can undercut calls for genuine democratic reform by utilising technological advancements to engage with the public. Where societal issues can be identified promptly using technology and handled efficiently, the CCP and other authoritarian administrations can argue legitimacy is enhanced while maintaining a Leninist control approach across society and without recourse to democratic reforms.

2.8 *Soft power, authoritarian image management and propaganda*

The Party-state's urging to 'Tell the China Story Well' has domestic as well as international implications. In international markets it invokes the use of soft power (Nye, 1991), propaganda and the wider concept of authoritarian image management (Dukalskis, 2020), as it is referred to in the literature. Chinese leaders have long contended that power and legitimacy derive from both the physical and the cultural domains, and that physical power cannot be sustained without supporting discursive power (Rabinovitch, 2008; Barr, 2011; Shambaugh, 2013; Edney, 2014; d'Hooghe, 2015; Hartig, 2016). Garnaut (2017) argues that it was natural for modern Chinese leaders to lean towards the concept of soft power and the use of culture as they sought to expand their influence around the world as the idea is enshrined in classical Chinese statecraft that says there are two tools for gaining and maintaining control – the first is 'wu 武' (weapons, violence), with the second being 'wen 文' (language, culture).

Soft power is of particular significance for a country like China where a key component of its legitimacy stems from the regime's capacity to burnish the international status

of the state (Edney, 2015). Chinese officials and academics expressed the importance of China's culture in the 1990s and early 2000s, but soft power was explicitly referenced in national government policy for the first time at the 17th National Congress in 2007 when Hu Jintao said the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture (Klimes, 2017). This formulation, tying culture to the country's place on the world's stage, echoed other core principles from Chinese leadership at the time, such as China's "peaceful rise" and its vision of a "harmonious society". Various Western scholars (Barr, 2011; Hartig, 2016) further argue the CCP's foreign soft power and propaganda machine seeks to construct and market an international image that it hopes will help to generate acceptance and support of China's political system and policies. The efforts are aimed at ameliorating the "China threat theory" and what it perceives as Western bias against China – a negative image over China's human rights record and one that has been in place internationally for many since the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen protests. Klimes argues China was looking to improve its image and reputation with a mix of soft power and propaganda to present an image of a successfully developing country in transition. The transition presented was based on the Beijing Consensus concept that focuses on economic development but one that does not necessarily involve any political liberalisation, Klimes contends, with China's overseas initiative designed to present the CCP's narrative on relevant discussions and silence or side-line opposing views. Barr (2011) notes that underlying this hope was a belief among Chinese analysts that the more the world got to know China the more they would understand it and empathise with its leadership. He argues, however, increased awareness of China's policies and practices could also have a detrimental impact on its international standing.

Nye's (1991) concept of soft power identifies culture, political values, and foreign policies as sources of national attractiveness and argues that soft power, as opposed to hard power, is a state's ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction, centring around the ability to co-opt rather than coerce. Soon after Nye introduced his concept of soft power, extracts were translated and published in China by the *Military Affairs Translation Press*, whose editors informed Chinese readers that Nye was proposing to increase the ideological and cultural inflows into China, the Soviet Union and other countries in a bid to subtly instil the American values system around the world (Hamilton and Ohlberg, 2020). However, with Chinese leaders paying particular attention to their own international image considerations, Chinese academia was quick to embrace Nye's work for a Chinese framework. In 1993, Wang Huning, then a professor at Fudan University, wrote a paper that suggested

culture, in particular Chinese traditional culture, could be a major source of soft power for China. Highlighting the political priority given to the concept and its ramifications for China, Wang was moved to Beijing to serve the government where he worked closely with three successive presidents and ended up in the very highest echelons of power as a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo (Patapan and Wang, 2018; Luo et al, 2019). The study of soft power became extremely popular in China, with a 2010 internet search on the Baidu search engine showing more than 14 million websites containing the term '*ruan shili* 软实力', the most common Chinese term for soft power (Luo et al, 2019). The Chinese terminology is worth noting in that the most common Chinese term was '*ruan shili*' (soft capacity) rather than '*ruan quanli* 软权力' (soft power), which Luo et al (2019) argue underlines the state-dominated public diplomacy role in building up national soft power capacity much, in the same way, a government would build up military or economic capacity.

A 2015 search on a digital collection of Chinese language journal articles showed 1,777 articles had been written since the year 2000 that contained a reference to soft power in the title (Xie, 2015). Moreover, by that time there were up to 50 government think tanks and university centres in China focusing on soft power and related concepts, most of which had been established after 2000 (Flew, 2016). The number of articles that referenced soft power in the title peaked in 2012, the year Xi Jinping took control of the CCP. This does not indicate soft power became less of a priority at that point for the Chinese leadership, but rather the soft power concept was incorporated into and became an integral part of Xi's China Dream discourse (Callaghan, 2015; Edney et al, 2019).

The CCP's contemporary argument for Chinese culture brings together a reverence for the country's culture and the party's binding ideology of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 中国特色社会主义) Klimes (2017) argues this use of culture for political ends was not exceptional in that while the CCP has conceptualised culture in many ways since Mao's 1942 speech in Yan'an it has always continued to utilise culture as a way of fulfilling political objectives. The CCP uses culture as a means of legitimating its regime both domestically and internationally, he contends. On the domestic front, cultural work is a key part of propaganda work in instilling ideational order and acceptance of the CCP's rule, while on the international front cultural diplomacy efforts seek to establish cultural soft power and win acknowledgement of the regime.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CCP conducted a major study into how they might avoid the same fate as their Soviet counterparts. One of their

conclusions was that the Soviets had undervalued and underutilised soft power, particularly when compared to the United States (Barr, 2011). Barr argues considering such studies the CCP made a concerted effort to boost its image at home and abroad, enhance its global image, legitimise its domestic policies, and solidify its grip on power. Klimes (2017) also notes that China's leaders argue that culture, and both domestic and foreign cultural work, must be part of a nation's domestic ideational order as its degradation can lead to the collapse of the regime, justifying an intense focus. He adds the CCP leadership views domestic cultural security and efforts to develop international soft power as a single ideational concept that boosts reputational prestige at home and abroad and helps maintain the Party-state's legitimacy and ultimately its hold on power. Edney (2015) also contends that Chinese analysts view soft power as a tool that can assist the CCP on the domestic front by enhancing regime legitimacy and national cohesion. Pointing to the fact that China spends more on its domestic security apparatus than on military spending (Martina, 2014), Edney argues that a lack of legitimacy and a lack of national cohesion are two important sources of regime security that still remain problematic for the CCP so the concepts of soft power and cultural security are utilised in a bid to reduce these threats. He notes the CCP faces a range of challenges to national cohesion, such as from social unrest and discontent in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, and de facto independence in Taiwan. The soft power of other actors is also relevant in this regard to China's regime security as it can constitute a threat to the CCP's legitimacy and national cohesion, such as soft power exhibited by Taiwan promoting its democratic values and system, or by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exiled community countering the CCP narratives.

China's intentions to counter Western discourse has become a serious test for the Party-state's communication abilities. Edney (2014) argues the CCP's domestic propaganda efforts seek to shape and control society within China itself while the external propaganda seeks to manage international discourses on China. The Party-state's desire for political and social cohesion within China, and the way it uses propaganda to exercise power domestically, shapes how it uses propaganda to increase China's overseas influence. Internationally China's propaganda practices involve a key tension between the CCP's desire to showcase a range of views that foreign audiences may engage with and the need to ensure all views are in line with the official narrative and do nothing to undermine the Party-state's legitimacy, Edney points out. This results in the Party-state focusing more on delivering a unified voice than an influential one. Barr (2011) also argues that Chinese soft power and accompanying propaganda efforts are both inward and outward looking, with cultural revitalisation a key part of the

concept in the eyes of Chinese officials and scholars. The comprehensive efforts are part of Beijing's nation-building initiatives aimed at instilling loyalty to the CCP brand and strengthening its legitimacy, both among its domestic population and with international audiences. Edney builds upon that and theorises Chinese propaganda as a collection of power practices and defines Party-state propaganda as the ability to articulate and disseminate its own official narrative, and also to prevent other actors from articulating counter views. He argues the Chinese propaganda system is designed both to control the ideas and information that appears in the public domain, as well as to influence the way people think about key issues such as the legitimacy of the CCP, China's historical experience and the future of its political system.

Internationally, Chinese citizens with overseas connections are encouraged to toe the party line and sing with one voice, argues Brady (2018), with Xi Jinping tightening the information environment to bolster CCP legitimacy and influence how China is promoted and perceived in other nations. In these efforts, propaganda plays a key role. Propaganda is a mechanism for authoritarian regimes to burnish the government's image abroad and forms one part of authoritarian image management, which Dukalskis (2020) defines as comprising efforts by the state or its proxies to enhance or protect the legitimacy of the state's political system for audiences outside its borders. This includes external propaganda, public diplomacy, extraterritorial censorship and repression, all designed to shape the state's image on the international stage. From an external security perspective, the CCP's motives include preventing democratic diffusion, enhancing other foreign policy objectives, and influencing international norms, while internal security concerns include combatting issues that might boomerang back to a domestic audience, as well as discrediting challengers abroad.

Dukalskis (2020) proposes four sets of mechanisms to explain how authoritarian image management can work to portray states in a more favourable light, present the official, state-sanctioned narratives, reduce critical or negative commentary about the state and allow it to operate with less international criticism, opposition or pressure. Promotional/diffuse mechanisms disseminate positive messaging about the state internationally with the aim of presenting the state in a more positive light. Obstructive/diffuse mechanisms protect the state's narrative by censoring, obscuring, or refuting unfavourable information circulating in international public spheres. Promotional/specific mechanisms focus on foreign elites or specific groups in the hope they can act in the state's interest. And fourth, obstructive/specific mechanisms take aim at individuals or groups beyond its borders that are critical of the state.

Tying in closely for the Party-state with soft power and image management is the concept of cultural security, Dukalskis argues, an unconventional security threat that, as outlined above, has become a high priority for Chinese policymakers in recent years.

As can be seen, academics and political leaders in China have been paying a great deal of attention to the concept of legitimacy in recent decades and have developed numerous strategies to maintain and bolster the Party-state's own legitimacy, including, as will be explored specifically in this thesis, in the realm of publishing and creative writing.

While legitimacy, securitisation and stability are the core elements in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework developed for this research, a range of other theoretical concepts are also utilised to identify inputs in the analysis. Below, additional theories and ideas introduced under the CPPF in the China context are explored along with related key literature.

2.9 *Consistent inconsistencies and fragmented authoritarianism*

Having described the above in specific terms, it is also important to note that China's policies are not necessarily cohesive or uniform. The fragmented authoritarianism model (Lieberthal and Oxenberg, 1988) argues authority below the very peak of the Chinese political system is fragmented and disjointed. This can help explain aberrations, dichotomies or conflicts in policies and practices. The authors' study reveals a fragmented bureaucratic structure of authority in which the decision-making and consensus-building is central, while the policy process is protracted, disjointed, and incremental. The fragmented authoritarianism model does not present the centre as helpless, the bureaucracies as unable to cooperate, or the locales as all-powerful, but it does seek to identify the causes of fragmentation of authority among various bureaucratic units, the types of resources and strategies that provide leverage in the bargaining that evidently characterises much decision making, and the incentives of key individuals in various units. The structures that link the top and the bottom of the system – in order to function – require negotiations, bargaining, exchange, and consensus building. Fragmented authoritarianism finds wanting both strictly top-down and bottom-up views of Chinese politics. This model, rather, focuses attention on the effects of the interactive processes among the constituent elements of the Chinese polity. In so doing, it finds that the system is somewhat but not totally fragmented. The fragmentation has not reached the point where its constituent parts have the legitimate autonomy characteristic of a pluralist system. This model depicts a Chinese system that is largely functional, but it does go some way to explain inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the system. In the Chinese publishing world this

model can be adopted to analyse a system that is broadly in concert but contains an array of variables evident throughout the apparatus.

Continuing on with the focus on inconsistencies, this thesis will also adopt conflicting objectives theory to identify on-the-ground realities when practices clash with policies. Conflicting objectives are inherent in any kind of policy-making and practice. To develop a definition for such conflicts in the political science realm Grimm and Leininger (2012) borrowed a concept from macroeconomics where objectives or goals may have an inverse relationship. An example would be the macroeconomic goal of a low inflation rate and the goal of a high employment rate. If a government tries to reduce unemployment by lowering interest rates or increasing public spending, the resulting lower levels of unemployment will push wages up and lead to higher prices. On the other hand, if a government tries to control inflation with interest rate hikes and reduced public spending, levels of consumer spending and investment will fall and lead to job losses. Pursuing particular objectives can have unintended consequences. In light of this idea, Grimm and Leininger defined conflicting objectives as “the clash of two competing goals, whereby the achievement of one goal is impaired by the achievement of the other goal” (p.397).

In this research one key point that emerges from the case studies is a somewhat paradoxical situation in the inherent conflict the Chinese Party-state faces in its management of cultural affairs. On the one hand, the polity claims China is intent on elevating the standards and output of the sector with a view to becoming a literary superpower. On the other hand, the CCP is prioritising securitisation and is evidently concerned about the potential power of the cultural sector and how that power might be harnessed to undermine its own legitimacy. In the case studies presented, it can be seen the authorities are investing a huge number of resources in the area of literary promotion, and present it as a national priority. However, given the securitisation concerns the sector is curtailed by a rigid regulatory and policy framework. A prime example is the ongoing censorship of the very same writers the system is investing huge sums in developing and promoting. Another example would be with the recent reduction by up to 30 per cent of the number of ISBNs – book identification numbers – that the authorities issue each year. In this instance, despite all the efforts to promote the sector, the authorities then chose with this policy, in an effort to tighten control of output, to decimate the publishing world and significantly reduce the annual creative production each year, imposing an arbitrary cap on the number of books that can be published. This cap and state-imposed reduction on output, something publishers say they have not witnessed in any other book market, was imposed in

China purely so officials can keep tighter political control of the books that are being published, according to multiple industry sources. This paradoxical approach is not unique to the publishing world. Goldman (1991) writes the Party-state held a contradictory policy towards all kinds of intellectuals throughout the 1970s and '80s, for example. She documents how on the one hand Chinese intellectuals were curtailed and had official ideology imposed upon them, while on the other hand they were celebrated by cadres who would attempt to stimulate their creative productivity. This conflicting policy resulted in oscillations between periods of repression and periods of relative relaxation. Similar oscillations are identified in this research in the creative publishing sector in recent decades.

Conflicting objectives theory and fragmented authoritarianism provide plot twists in the 'Telling the China Story Well' story, where the narrative can start off in one direction and then take a sharp turn. While creating a vibrant and world-class literary apparatus is the expressed intention of Xi Jinping and other political leaders, policies show the priority is on cross-society securitisation, legitimacy protection and Party Moat-Building. Invoking fragmented authoritarianism and conflicting objectives theory the research observes and positions what I refer to as 'consistent inconsistencies' under the overall framework.

Referring back to Figure 1 above, the Creative Policy Paradox Framework illustrates the ongoing policy and practice cycle in the literary sector. Objectives to develop China's literary world are set out, the national benefits of 'the uses of literature' and 'telling the China story well' are identified and a raft of supporting programmes are initiated, but before they can ever take off securitisation and stability concerns take hold and the sector feels the tug of restraint. The perceived threats to security, stability and legitimacy evidently trump desires to establish a literary superpower.

Through the case studies and practitioner interviews, this research uses the CPPF to tie together the various theories that are invoked throughout the research. Gerschewski's three pillars of stability – repression, co-optation and legitimacy – and Party Moat-Building serve as primary prisms through which the research is assessed, while soft power, propaganda, authoritarian image management and cultural security also come into play at appropriate phases, with fragmented authoritarianism and conflicting objectives highlighting dichotomies and systemic inconsistencies.

Visually the CPPF acts as a map. Issues identified in interviews, policy statements, official actions etc can be pinpointed theoretically on this map as they occur. Often occurring synchronously, the circular flow is the constant that is identified. While the starting point

involves lofty objectives such as achieving a cultural superpower state and supporting the China Dream vision, the outcomes include stifled creativity, a tarnished reputation, an oppressive landscape and diminished legitimacy. Paradoxically, an elaborate initiative designed to bolster legitimacy ends up diminishing it.

Through this research the CPPF distils the objectives, inputs and outcomes and presents the evolving “uses of literature” and the ongoing cycle of “telling the China story well” as the Party-state faces a legitimization quest and a creative policy paradox across the literary apparatus.

Chapter 3: Historical fiction: Official engagement with China's writers from Mao to the Xi Jinping era

3.1 Introduction

China's literary apparatus has been a high priority for the CCP leadership since Mao was preparing to take control of the country. This section considers some of the major interactions, conflicts and points of governance between the authorities and the Chinese publishing world from the period just before the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 to the present day, and how they tie in with the theoretical Creative Policy Paradox Framework presented in this thesis. The publishing sector has been through immense changes and transformations since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. However, regardless of the prevailing political, economic or social conditions of the time the industry as cultural producers in a socialist set-up has always been seen primarily as a propaganda tool of the Party-state and has faced stringent repression and co-optation initiatives from the outset (Link, 2000). Moreover, as much as the Party-state has always considered that with directed narratives the wider publishing world can serve as a potent asset that can be used to strengthen control and bolster legitimacy, it has also always been acutely aware of its potential power and capacity to challenge or undermine its authority and threaten regime security. Consequently, the sector has been constantly held on a tight rein over the past 70-plus years, with the grip tightening or loosening at various times in line with the political environment of the day. Averting challenges to the Party-state, maintaining stability and upholding legitimacy have always been priorities, as illustrated through Link's (2000) 'uses of literature'. Gerschewski's three pillars of stability – repression, co-optation and legitimacy – have arguably been invoked since the founding of the PRC, simultaneously and to varying degrees, as officials engaged in Party Moat-Building to protect and strengthen the CCP and the socialist one-party system. The utilisation of these pillars has evolved over time. While the Xi era is the focus of this study, the section below will first plot the major developments in this sphere in the earlier phase of the PRC's history.

Several years before Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power in 1949 the Party was already building an apparatus to manipulate and control press and publications. The Central Party Press Commission of the CCP was established in 1937 and consisted of a publishing and

distribution section. Mao's Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (*zai yan'an wenyi zuotan huishang de jianghua* 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话) in 1942 set the framework for how the Party planned to interact with the nation's writers and publishers, presenting policies on mass culture and revolutionary culture. Link's 'uses of literature' were evident from the offset, with the key diktats from the meeting being that art should, above all, serve politics and the advancement of socialism, and that all art should consider the working classes as the primary audience and their lives should be reflected in the art works (McDougall, 1980; Perris, 1983). In Yan'an the Party learned how to harness the power of the arts to arouse citizens to enthusiastically join the revolutionary cause, and Mao instituted a systemic thought reform of the artists, lecturing them on how to use their art for propaganda, arguing that popular unity would only come through class struggle and artists must give that struggle a voice (Kraus, 2004).

By early 1949, the Xinhua Bookstore publishing and distribution system was already established in Communist-controlled areas, and the Party even had shadow entities in operation in places not controlled by the Party, such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, masquerading as privately-run businesses. As soon as the Communists came to power on October 1, 1949, publishers associated with the Guomindang/Nationalists were commandeered and the Party began a process of eliminating other private publishers. The Xinhua Bookstore performed the role of distribution section of the party Propaganda Department (Yun, 2018). Mao largely adopted the Soviet publishing model and introduced a range of Soviet practices such as price controls on books, state control on payments to authors, restrictions on subject areas publishers were allowed to address, as well as the writers' association structure which was modelled on the Soviet Writers Union (Link, 2000).

On October 3, 1949 – on only the third day of the People's Republic – Mao inscribed the words “Conscientiously do a Good Job in Publishing” (*Renzhen zuohao chuban gongzuo* 认真作好出版工作) and convened the Nationwide Xinhua Bookstore Publishing Work Conference in the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing. Mao's words echo Xi Jinping's exhortation decades later to “Tell the China Story Well”. Both urgings contained the key character ‘hao 好’ – meaning ‘well’ or ‘good’ – and as with Xi's slogan, Mao's was also never officially expanded upon. It was left open to interpretation. Intentionally so, I argue, to instil a conservative, self-regulating approach across the sector, and one that is premised on the concept of Party loyalty, or

at least acquiescence. Theoretically, maximising compliance levels and augmentative behaviour drives the circularity in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework.

Mao's literary plans were swiftly introduced in the days after he took control. The General Administration of Publishing went into operation on November 1, 1949, and on March 25, 1950, issued the Decision about Unifying the Xinhua Bookstores Nationwide which demanded accelerated efforts to eliminate private publishers to bring the nation's publishing industry under Party control (Fan, 2019). Propaganda and ideational work were given priority status, with the Party's initial resolution stating "From the beginning, it starts with propaganda work", before going on to stipulate the propaganda requirements. Echoing that theme at the time, Mao stated "the Communist Party can defeat the enemy only if it holds a leaflet in its left hand and a bullet in the right hand" (Wang, 2022).

Work began immediately on formally structuring the sector. Publishers were encouraged to specialise to avoid duplication and waste, and as a subject usually fell within the remit of a particular government ministry (for example, People's Literature Publishing House was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture; the People's Education Press by the Ministry of Education etc) publishers were assigned a government department to act as their sponsoring organisation and supervise their activities. This arrangement evolved into what is known in the industry as the "sponsoring system" (*zhuguan zhuban zhidu* 主管主办制度), a tight system of monitoring and control, and the assignation of ultimate responsibility, which is still in force today (Yun, 2018).

The initial focus was to strengthen control over private publishers. As an early mechanism of control, private publishers were required to establish a dedicated editorial branch in order to be licenced, a requirement that was prohibitively expensive for most small operators. Printers were forbidden from printing books for unlicensed private publishers or self-publishers. Authorities instructed state-controlled publishers to compete with private publishers for the most popular authors, and authors employed by the state in any way were instructed to publish only with state-owned presses. The state-run banks were instructed to restrict their loans and services to private publishers. By the end of 1950 the state-owned People's Education Press had already achieved a monopoly on textbooks, an area of key ideological concern to the Party (Yun, 2018).

3.2 Bringing Marxism, Leninism and Mao Thought to the masses

Publishers were instructed to be vigilant against the class nature in books, imbue their publications with Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and improve their sense of political responsibility (Link, 2000). To bolster political campaigns, huge numbers of propaganda books were “sold” with the assistance of compulsory distribution. The socialist planned economy faced many shortages, including paper. Given the shortage, people were forced to sell their old book collections to paper mills in order to ensure sufficient paper supply for the propaganda tomes, and to eradicate the “poisonous feudal legacy” (Yun, 2018. p.153).

Priority was given to textbooks and propaganda titles, resulting in additional constraints on publishers. With the focus on propaganda titles, big financial losses were inevitable and even with prices for these titles set at extremely low levels to encourage sales there was often a large amount of unsold stock. In June 1952, for instance, more than half of Xinhua’s total inventory was made up of unsold, largely redundant titles (Yun, 2018). With a stringent focus on thought work, politics and echoing the Party line, editors tended to reject any texts deemed ideologically risky in any way. Many authors stepped away from writing and publishing at that time, either unable to get published or concerned about potential repercussions if their work was not looked upon favourably by the authorities (Yun).

Despite the government’s designs on full control, in the very early days of the new China private publishing managed to flourish for a brief period. In 1950, China had 163 publishing houses and that number grew to 356 by 1952, most of which were based in Shanghai, before intensive rectification policies were introduced. By the end of 1956, the state had completed the socialist transformation for the private publishing sector with the number of publishing houses totalling 97, including 80 state-run entities and 17 public-private partnerships (Fan, 2019). The process of eliminating private players was quicker in the newspaper publishing industry, with the private entities eradicated by 1952. It took the state four more years to eliminate the private book publishing industry, presumably as news publishing was considered more politically sensitive (Yun, 2018).

The Party was proud of the accelerated publishing output in the years after the formation of the People’s Republic. It announced that between 1950 and 1956 a total of 129,000 books had been published. Of these 28,700 were published in 1956, 2.4 times the number in 1950. Top of the publication charts, somewhat predictably, were the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin

and Mao. Also featured were the writings of Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936) and other famous authors from the May 4 Movement; revolutionary tales such as *The Sun Shines over the Sanggan River*; titles on the war against the US in Korea, like *Who is the Most Loveable Person?*; and occasional works of Soviet literature in translation, including *How the Steel was Tempered*. China's "four classic novels"—*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* also featured prominently, as did books in the languages of some ethnic minorities, such as Tibetan, Uyghur and Mongolian (Fan, 2019).

3.3 Political chills and thaws in publishing

The period from 1949-1966 was highly unpredictable at times for writers, with occasional signs of relaxing policies then met with tight clampdowns. In the early days of Mao Zedong's control writers felt that the main thing they had to avoid was what the writer and first chair of the CWA Mao Dun (茅盾, 1896-1991) called 'compradore culture', which was the idea that "the moon shines brighter abroad than here at home" (Spence, 1981, p.322). However, it soon became apparent there were many other red lines and that writers who were perceived to have crossed them would be dealt with harshly. Hu Feng (胡风, 1902-1985) was a celebrated writer and literary critic who championed artistic freedom in China in the 1950s, only to be jailed in July 1955 and purged. In 1954, he had presented a report to the Central Committee blaming what he saw as the intellectual sterility of China on the Party's literary watchdogs. His rehabilitation was only signalled by the official media in 1981 when he was named to a committee to commemorate the birth of Lu Xun (*The New York Times*, 1985). In 1956 Mao put forward the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" (*Baihua qifang, baijia zhengming* 百花齐放, 百家争鸣) encouraging the literary, artistic and intellectual communities to be more outspoken and productive. This Hundred Flowers campaign was partly a response to the demoralisation of writers and intellectuals who felt side-lined in the new China. The movement encouraged open discussion of Party-state policies, and there was much vocal criticism against the centrally planned publishing industry raised in meetings convened by the Ministry of Culture. The movement was very short-lived, however. On May 25 that year Mao put his foot down, warning delegates to the Youth League Congress that "all words and actions that deviate from socialism are completely mistaken" (Spence, 1981. p.322), and on June 8, 1957, the CCP launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign against its critics. The campaign, which extended into 1958, resulted in

hundreds of thousands of citizens being rounded up and publicly criticised and between 400,000 and 700,000 intellectuals being sent to the countryside or to factories for reform through labour (Roberts, 1999; Short, 2000; Fenby, 2008; Keay, 2009). Ding Ling (丁玲, 1904-1968), who was vice-chair of the China Writers Association, was among them. She had been demoted during the Yan'an Talks after she was seen to be critical of the Party. She was later reinstated but was then once more stripped of all her positions again during this campaign, accused of being a bourgeois individualist (Goldman, 1987).

The abrupt reversal of literary policy between the Hundred Flowers of 1956 and the anti-Rightism of 1957 drove home the lesson that a writer in China cannot trust literary weather to hold (Link, 2000). This two-year period sharply illustrates the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF) outlined in the preceding theoretical framework section, and the circular and contradictory flow of the respective objectives, inputs and outcomes. Decades before the phrase “telling the China story well” was coined, it was clear to officialdom the China story was not being told sufficiently “well”, or as they would have it told. It was also apparent the CCP had from the outset a clear idea of what ‘the uses of literature’ could and should be, with writers expected to, in essence, play the role of Party propagandists. At the outset there was a view the Party-state would benefit from encouraging writers and intellectuals to “bloom”, to speak their minds and robustly critique the world around them. That feeling changed rapidly, however, in the face of uncensored commentary. The Party-state felt its legitimacy was being undermined and reacted with repressive and co-opting tactics – key pillars in Gerschewski’s stability construct. It can be argued that since then Party Moat-Building has ensured such challenges have not been able to surface to anything like the same extent, and while there have been political oscillations, freezes and thaws, the starting point is highly conservative, and shifts are slight.

As the 1957-1958 anti-rightist drive ended, sweeping changes were introduced to the literary realm. Mao’s culture tsar Zhou Yang (周扬, 1908-1989) said the country’s ultimate goal was to obliterate the boundary between mental labour and physical labour, and officials announced cultural work must be led by amateurs who have mastered Marxism-Leninism (Lovell, 2006). The Great Leap Forward campaign – called officially The Three-Years of Natural Disasters (*san nian ziran zaihai* 三年自然灾害) – lasted from 1958 to 1961 and led to dire consequences. The establishment of a centrally planned economy had placed great power in the central government

ministries and Mao was dissatisfied with what he called the unhealthy tendencies in the Party and across government, and with the slow pace of economic growth. He decided to accelerate growth through mass mobilisation. To facilitate this, considerable powers held by the central government were devolved to local Party branches and local governments (Roberts, 1999; Fenby, 2008). Publishing was also brought into the plan. In March 1958, the National Publishing Work Leap Forward Conference held in Shanghai called for provinces to build more publishing houses, distribute more publications, and shorten the time from manuscript to publication (Fan, 2019). Metrics were key and quantity was valued over quality. Book publishers, along with every other sector in the socialist centrally planned economy, were instructed to greatly increase output. Quantity was valued over quality. In 1958, records show the output of book publishing increased by more than 65 per cent in terms of the number of titles, 87 per cent by number of copies printed, and 45 per cent in the levels of paper consumption. Competition between provinces and publishing houses was fierce and many books were published in an extremely short period of time. It was reported at the time that the Commercial Press produced 11 new books in just five days and Shanghai People's Publishing House produced 15 new books in six days (Yun, 2018). The total number of poems published during 1958-59, largely in response to production quotas, was reportedly more than were written in all Chinese history before then (Link, 2000). The metrics were often meaningless in literary terms, but similar to contemporary times were used by the Party-state as tools to monitor, motivate and manage the sprawling bureaucracy.

With the establishment of People's Communes in rural areas across the country, many commune bookshops sprouted up to facilitate the distribution of the increased supply of titles. But with politics in command many of the books were simply collections of propaganda articles. Increasingly publishing houses turned to the "masses" as their primary source of authors, but the quality of the publications was often poor. With paper in short supply, preference was always given to Marxist-Leninist propaganda books and textbooks, with literary titles a long way down the priority list. By the time the movement was called to a halt in 1961 most commune bookshops were shut down and huge quantities of unsold books were shipped back to Xinhua bookshops (Yun, 2018).

Ideological struggles continued to intensify and between 1963 and 1965 a number of literary, artistic and academic works were highlighted for public criticism, resulting in a growing rigidity in the sector and an almost complete absence of foreign academic or literary publications

(Fan, 2019). In terms of metrics, however, the sector had enjoyed a prolific few years and according to official figures a total of 231,300 book titles had been published across the country from 1957 to 1965. Mao Zedong's work was already very much to the fore by this stage, with the first four volumes of his selected works coming out in Chinese and the ethnic languages of Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Kazakh and Korean, as well as in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, plus a Braille edition (Yun, 2018).

3.4 *Culture and literature as revolutionary target*

Mao's radical approach surfaced once more during the decade-long Cultural Revolution, formally known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, during which culture and book publishing became once again a key target in the ideological and political struggles. In June 1966, Jiang Qing (江青, 1914-1991) and Zhang Chunqiao (张春桥, 1917-2005), two members of the radical political alliance known as the Gang of Four, issued document No. 66 pertaining to what became known as the Cultural Revolution (Roberts, 1999; Fenby, 2008). A large number of famous Writers Association cadres were seized and criticised and the work of the of the association and the newspapers and periodicals was paralysed. Across the country, every branch of the CWA was closed from August 1966 to December 1977 (Fan, 2019). In August 1966, the legendary Beijing writer and vice-chairman of the CWA Lao She (老舍, 1899-1966) was called out of his office at the Writers Association and dragged to the Confucian temple where religious relics were being burned in a bonfire. He and 28 others were forced to kneel down in front of it for three hours, their heads were shaved, and black ink was poured over them. Lao She was beaten until he fainted. He was released that evening and told to return to work in the association the next day wearing a placard of shame. When he returned home, he found his house had been ransacked and his manuscripts and art collection were destroyed. The next day, instead of going to work he sat by a lakeside all day. The following day his body was found floating in the water, with several poems written by Mao Zedong scattered about him (Johnson, 2013).

The Publishing Office of Chairman Mao's Works was established in May 1967 and operated as a government institution, and control of the Xinhua Bookstore was taken over by the Red Guards, Mao's uber-zealous foot soldiers. While censorship and repression had long been part of the publishing profession, the fundamentalist ideology fuelling this movement brought the crackdown to a more intense level. The revolution ushered in a period of extreme politicisation

and rigid controls, and during the initial stages many publishers were merged or closed, and many employees in the publishing industry were sent to a cadre school for re-education. Nearly all Xinhua Bookstore's key employees were sent to a cadre school in April 1969 (Yun, 2018). In the first year of the Cultural Revolution, the number of book titles available decreased from more than 11,000 to about 3,000, while out of 191 periodicals in operation in 1966 only 27 were still functioning a year later. Many foreign titles and other books the Red Guards found offensive were burned (Fan, 2019). By the end of 1970, 7,870 titles amounting to more than 80.3 million copies published by national publishers were prohibited for sale and were locked away in a warehouse in Beijing. Before the Cultural Revolution, there were 87 publishers across the country employing a total of 4,570 qualified editors, but during the turbulent decade that dropped to 53 publishers with 1,355 qualified editors (Yun, 2018).

The primary task of publishers at this time was to support the promotion of the personality cult surrounding Chairman Mao, with reportedly 10.8 billion copies of his works and portrait posters printed during this decade (Yun, 2018). The print run of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* alone – commonly known as *The Little Red Book* – was in excess of one billion copies. From 1970, the publishing of model plays became another key priority for book publishing. In less than two years, the total number of copies of six model plays produced by publishers in Beijing surpassed 31 million (Fan, 2019). The publishing of other books was often restricted in order to save the paper for Mao's works. The distribution of these huge volumes of propaganda books did not rely on individuals making voluntary purchases, but rather was based on a form of compulsory distribution, an expansive system arranged through a network of Party and government organs (Yun, 2018). Mao earned significant royalty sums from the print runs and by 1960 he was receiving more than 230,000 yuan annually from this source. By comparison, his official salary at the time was only 400 yuan per month (Link, 2000).

Even with the tight repression and extreme ideology in place, the state's control over literature was not complete. Illegal copies of books were passed around and pieces of fiction were copied by hand (*Shouchaoben* 手抄本) and circulated among the urban population and the educated youth who had been sent to work in the countryside (Link, 2000). A thaw of sorts came into the air when the State Council established the publishing agency in May 1970, and the following year Premier Zhou Enlai supervised the publication of the revised Xinhua dictionary. In September 1973 the publishing agency was revoked, and the National Publishing Bureau was

established, the centrally planned book publishing system and provincial bureaus were restored and several previously established publishing entities were allowed to resume business. On October 6, 1976, it was declared the Cultural Revolution had come to an end and the publishing industry moved in a bid to quench the public thirst for quality publications (Fan, 2019).

In 1977, a year after Mao's death, signs of a political and literary thaw could be seen with the gradual reappearance and exoneration of key literary figures. The Guangdong branch of the Chinese Writers Association was the first to announce its reopening in December 1977, followed closely by the Shanghai branch. Within two years all other branches were back up and running in a similar fashion to how they had been operating in 1966 (Link, 2000). With the slight relaxation of ideology, a few classic Chinese and Western literary works that had been prohibited for some years were reprinted in 1978, often selling out extremely quickly due to the pent-up demand (Yun, 2018). In March 1978, the National Publishing Bureau announced it would reprint 35 Chinese and foreign classics, including works by Guo Muruo (郭沫若, 1892-1978), Mao Dun, Ba Jin (巴金, 1904-2005), Cao Yu (曹禺, 1910-1996), and on the international front Maupassant, Shakespeare, Chekhov and Ibsen. On May 1 that year huge queues formed in all the major cities and towns outside bookshops to sate their reading appetites (Fan, 2019). Deng Xiaoping instructed the People's Publishing House to translate and publish a series of Western academic books on political thought (Yun, 2018). In early 1979, the government announced that the public could once again buy and read a certain list of 19 classics of Chinese literature, including *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Three Hundred Tang Poems*, and 16 foreign classics, including titles such as *1001 Nights* and *Anna Karenina*. On the day they first went on sale there was a queue two miles long outside the Xinhua bookstore in Beijing's Wangfujing, and the store sold its entire stock of 800,000 volumes within a week. Brawls kept on breaking out between those queuing and the store reported that after they found about 20 pairs of shoes customers had left behind in the chaos (Link, 2000). In other signs of a political thawing, China Encyclopaedia Publishing House purchased in 1980 the copyright from Encyclopaedia Britannica to publish their large-scale reference books, and going in the opposite direction, Pergamon Press purchased the English copyright of the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* in 1984, bringing his theory to the West for the first time (Fan, 2019).

Though the situation improved for the publishing sector after the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, writers were still heavily censored and expected to fully support the Party-state in their creative endeavours. The official tone was exemplified by the Party's secretary general Hu

Yaobang (胡耀邦, 1915-1989) in a speech at a conference on playwriting in 1980 where he condemned what he referred to as poisonous weeds in the publishing world and stressed writing should uphold public morality and support the stability of the CCP rule. A new official slogan was launched after the conference that read: 'Literature and art should consider social effects' (Link, 2000). While understated, for writers the slogan bore menacing implications. Again, the slogan echoes the contemporary instruction to 'tell the China story well'. It adds a layer of responsibility on writers beyond artistic creativity and self-expression, and prompts policy pivots on the CPPF where the primary objective is established as being something other than the creation of art.

3.5 Ideological purges in the reform era

In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the CCP's 11th Central Committee made the pivotal decision to introduce Reform and Opening Up, a move that had a significant impact on the publishing world with the official focus shifting from class struggle to economic growth. It was only after these reforms that the Party-state was willing to relax its grip slightly on the nation's publishers and booksellers to allow for the introduction of market forces into the sector (Fan, 2019). In December 1979, a meeting called the National Publishing Work Symposium was held in Changsha, Hunan that agreed to overhaul the approach and base efforts primarily on the local conditions, with publishing houses specialising where appropriate. Soon after the meeting some publishers who had been closed reopened and new ones came into the market (Fan, 2019). Deng abandoned several of Mao's tenets, including that intellectuals should engage in struggle against their bourgeois educations, and the Party resolved long-standing ambiguity about the status of intellectuals by declaring them members of the working class. Their new status was symbolised on bank notes that featured a middle-aged intellectual man alongside a male worker and a female farmer. Missing on the new notes was the soldier, pointing to the military's diminished political status under Deng (Kraus, 2004). In the 1980s the Writers Association began to welcome writers who were previously considered underground or unorthodox into its fold. This arrangement suited both parties, for practical and ideological reasons, attempting a temporary and superficial harmony despite their many differences (McDougall, 2003).

While the extremes of the Cultural Revolution were in the past, the environment was still highly tense for the nation's cultural producers. In the decade after 1978 when the CCP opted to gradually move away from militant socialism towards economic reform, Deng Xiaoping

oversaw six major cultural-political purges (Barmé, 1999). In March 1979, an anti-liberalisation campaign was launched, several democracy activists were arrested and a ban was imposed on non-official publications. In 1980, the CCP propaganda chief attacked the negative social effects of some artistic products and called on the nation's writers and artists to be more socially responsible. In 1981 and 1982 a campaign was launched against screenplay writer Bai Hua (白桦, b. 1930-2019), in particular, and against the wider trend of what the Party saw as bourgeois liberalism seeping through the arts. In 1983 the anti-spiritual pollution campaign was launched to combat perceived Western influences undermining the Party-state. Deng Xiaoping intervened to end the campaign at the end of 1983 (Barmé). The Fourth National Congress of the Writers Association held in late December 1984 and early January 1985 was seen by many of its 800-odd delegates to be an exercise in goodwill and cooperation between writers and the Party in the aftermath of the campaign. The keynote speech was given by Politburo Standing Committee member Hu Qili (胡启立, b.1929) with Hu Yaobang looking on, in what appeared to be an implicit repudiation of the campaign against spiritual pollution. Ba Jin, widely respected because of his refusal to take part in the campaign, was re-elected president, and new council members included new writers Shu Ting (舒婷, b.1952) and Jia Pingwa (贾平凹, b.1952), both of whom were criticised during the campaign (McDougall, 2003). Wang Meng (王蒙, b.1934) became Culture Minister in 1986 in what became known as a year of explosive creative energy and independence with the new cultural leadership promising flexible policies to support writers. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo¹ (刘晓波, 1955–2017) sprang to prominence that year for his fresh approach to literary criticism (McDougall, 2003). The creative exuberance was short-lived however and in 1987 the anti-bourgeois liberalisation campaign was initiated after the fall of Hu Yaobang and ensuing student

¹ Liu Xiaobo (1955–2017) was a Chinese writer, rights activist and philosopher who called for political reforms and was involved in campaigns to end communist one-party rule in China. He was incarcerated as a political prisoner. On 26 June, 2017, he was granted medical parole after being diagnosed with liver cancer and he died on 13 July, 2017.

demonstrations. In June 1989 a sweeping cultural purge followed the crushing of the student-led protest movement centred around Tiananmen Square on June 4 (Barmé, 1999). In the aftermath of the crackdown the Party rescinded many of the freedoms that were introduced in the 1980s and re-established an ironclad grip over the press and the publishing industry. Many writers were jailed or exiled, huge quantities of books and publications were seized, and censorship policies became increasingly rigid – a state of affairs that continued for several years afterwards before any signs of a thaw appeared (Lim 2014; Zhang et al, 2001).

Within one year of the June 4, 1989 crackdown, a government campaign had closed 12 per cent of all newspapers, 13 per cent of social science periodicals, and 7.6 per cent of China's 534 publishing companies. The government also claimed to have seized 32 million copies of contraband books and 2.4 million music and video cassettes. More than 80,000 individuals were punished for media-related activities. Official figures showed that between the end of 1990 and March 1991, 6.8 million copies of illegal publications were seized. The government closed more than 3,000 illegal publishing facilities and about 3,000 unlicensed private book retailers (Pei, 1994).

After the events of 1989, it soon became a reality that the Party had lost the support of the intelligentsia and had brought its own legitimacy into serious question (Barmé, 1999). A number of the country's best-known writers and intellectuals fled into exile. In the 1990s the Chinese leadership began to see the advantages of sending its dissident writers into exile, but they were very reluctant to admit to the policy publicly. When Liu Binyan (刘宾雁, 1925-2005), Wang Ruowang (王若望, 1918-2001), Su Xiaokang (苏晓康, b.1949), Zheng Yi (郑义, b.1947) and others were banished in 1994, border officials were ordered to memorise and then destroy the copies of the directive that was sent to them (Link, 2000). The sixth plenum of the 14th Party Congress in October 1996 reasserted the Party's intention to control spiritual pollution, targeting literature and the arts, the mass media, and public morals in general. To reinforce the message, the sixth Congress of the Federation for Writers and Artists (the first since 1984) was held in December along with the fifth Congress of the China Writers Association. Despite the renewed emphasis on ideology in literature, prominent writers such as Wang Meng, Wang Anyi (王安忆, b.1954), Li Rui (李锐, b.1949), Su Tong (苏童, b.1963), Tie Ning (铁凝, b.1957) and Fang Fang (方方, 1955) chose to remain affiliated with the CWA (McDougall, 2003. p.234).

3.6 *‘Material civilisation’ and market forces in the reform era*

In line with political shifts, the publishing sector became increasingly market-oriented. Book sales, in line with the overall economy, increased after the Cultural Revolution and showed a 39 per cent increase in 1978 over 1976. The expanding book market alleviated some of the concerns of the National Publishing Administration Bureau about competition among publishers, so restrictions on local publishing houses were loosened. Up until that point, publishers and Xinhua bookshops would remit their profit to the central authorities who would automatically cover their overhead. A contract responsibility system was gradually introduced for publishers which meant publishers and booksellers could retain part of their profits after submitting a fixed portion and taxes to the government, which turned them into more market-oriented, profit-seeking business entities (Yun, 2018). While Xinhua welcomed the new business in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, it was much needed as the entity was to all intents and purposes insolvent, due in no small part to the fact they had to carry so many propaganda titles. By June of 1979, the Xinhua warehouses contained 450 million volumes of Mao and Marxist-Leninist titles, apparently accounting for 27 per cent of the entire inventory at the time. The stocks had been published with the help of huge bank loans which Xinhua could not pay back, meaning the government had to grant major subsidies or bailouts on a few occasions (Yun, 2018). Even by 1988, the Xinhua bookstores still reportedly held 1.7-billion-yuan worth of books by Marx, Mao and other Chinese political leaders in their inventories, amounting for about 40 per cent of their stock. Despite this ratio, managers complained that nobody dared make the decision to dispose of this unsaleable stock. With many Xinhua bookstores struggling to survive by the late 1980s, some were converted into dance halls and restaurants, others used their retail space to sell clothes, furniture, appliances and toys, while some sublet their floor space to tenants (Pei, 1994).

With the Party-state having to rapidly reform itself in order to regain any legitimacy following a string of disastrous initiatives, market forces were gradually introduced into the publishing sector, albeit with tight Party control, leading to the development of a hybrid state-and-market system (Yun, 2018). Prior to reform, the government was the largest customer of Xinhua bookstores as it purchased books for its industrial enterprises, bureaucracies, schools, universities and institutions. After reforms kicked off in 1978 this started to change and by 1981 private individuals bought, in value, twice that of the government (Pei, 1994). To encourage authors to increase their output, a one-off payment system was resumed in October 1977, and in 1980 the

system of calculating payment based on book length and print run, which had been abandoned during the Cultural Revolution, was restored (Yun, 2018).

The socialist system had established central and provincial literary magazines, editorial boards of prescribed political composition, an administration that reviewed publishing plans and rationed paper, a Writers Association that set down rules about writers' pay and privileges, and much more. The system remained fairly vital throughout the 1980s but by the early 1990s extreme disillusionment with the socialist bureaucracy and the rapidly increasing role of commercialisation made the establishment increasingly irrelevant at the time. This was reflected in declining sales data. In 1980, the circulation of the main literary magazines was half a million or more. Print runs for some novels ran into the millions. But by 1986 the CWA had to convene an urgent meeting to study why the subscriptions to nearly 700 of its literary periodicals were dropping so steadily. From 1984 to 1985 alone, nationwide subscriptions dropped 27 per cent. *Shanghai Literature*, as an example, had 500,000 subscriptions in 1980 but by 1986 that number had plummeted to 30,000 copies (Link, 2000).

A privately controlled network of book publishing flourished in the late 1980s before the authorities started to crack down. These private rings had developed a long reach, as illustrated as late as 1991 when the authorities shut down one major illegal publishing group that it said had established a nationwide network involving 257 publishing houses, printing facilities and bookstores. In that one closure, authorities confiscated 1.3 million copies of 230 different titles of illicit publications, that officials called anti-socialist, pornographic or superstitious (Pei, 1994).

With the restoration of the national higher education entrance examination after the Cultural Revolution there was a huge demand for textbooks and supplementary learning materials, but a dire shortage of paper. In the 1980s, with the party ideology gradually shifting it was finally decided to pulp millions of Mao books to make more paper available for books the people actually wanted. Many other propaganda titles then found their way to the pulping centre, with the losses borne by the central government in order to enable the centrally planned publishing system to continue functioning (Yun, 2018).

On June 6, 1983, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Decision on Strengthening Publishing Work", the first decision issued centrally on the issue since the founding of the People's Republic. Clarifying the status and role of publishers, it said that the development of the industry was not only an important aspect of socialist civilisation advancement

but also an important condition of material civilisation. In September 1986, the first Beijing International Book Fair took place and was attended by publishers from all over the world, an event that helped end the book shortage issue (Fan, 2019). To support book distribution, publishers were permitted to open local bookshops or sell via post, and the book distribution business was also opened to private capital. By 1987 it was estimated there were 28,000 non-Xinhua bookshops and 13,000 book stands across China (Yun, 2018). Due to the increased economic growth, the relaxation of restrictions and the new arrivals into the sector book publishing became more vibrant, with the number of new titles in 1989 at about 75,000, compared with 17,000 in 1979 (Yun, 2018). By 1991, the number of publishing houses around the country reportedly increased to 465, which was more than six times the number operating in 1976. In that year 90,000 books were published – seven times more than in 1976 – printing a total of 6.1 billion copies (Fan, 2019).

While more books were being published, there were also new restrictions. In an effort to control book output, the central government administrative department issued a regulation in 1994 limiting the number of International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) that could be issued to publishers (Yun, 2018). ISBNs were introduced internationally in the 1960s as a unique book identifier to be used to facilitate book distribution, but in China it was adopted as the sole legal identity of books. Accordingly, acquiring an ISBN for a book in China is similar to acquiring a license for that book to be printed, published and distributed.

China started to apply to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1986, the WTO's precursor, and reached a bilateral agreement with the US in 1999. The prospect of WTO entry added additional pressure on the Chinese government to push forward the conglomeration of publishing to make the homegrown enterprises more competitive in the face of any new competitors that might enter the market after accession. At this time the Party-state pushed forward a national process of conglomeration in the publishing sector which can be seen primarily as a realignment of the relationship between the Party, the government, and the publishing industry (Yun, 2018).

Even as publishing entities took a more business-like approach, the government was clear that this would not mean a loosening in political control. The “four unchangeables” remained the bedrock upon which the industry developed. These principles stated that the media is the mouthpiece of the Party and the people; the Party controls the media; the Party controls the media's cadres; and the media has a key role in correctly guiding public opinion. As publishing houses

corporatised, key personnel often came from Party or government positions and appointees had to be approved by the overseeing Party propaganda department. Even in the cases where publishing entities were listed on the stock exchange, the majority of shareholdings were controlled by a state-owned company (Yun, 2018).

In December 2005, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council promulgated several opinions on deepening the reform of the cultural system. To encourage investment in the sector they declared that all publishing institutions had been transformed into for-profit enterprises, with a few exceptions, including the People's Publishing House and presses and bookshops catering to ethnic minorities (Fan, 2019). By September 2012, the government announced that 580 publishing houses operating across the country and 3,000 Xinhua bookstores had been transformed into enterprises (Fan, 2019).

Following China's World Trade Organisation accession in 2001, foreign players have not come into China on any scale. Entrants would face a very uneven playing field and extensive censorship. The lucrative textbook market is monopolised by Xinhua, leaving areas such as the highly competitive, and low-margin mass market to contend for. Additionally, on the retail front, Xinhua bookstores are heavily subsidised and often have free or low rents in high-street locations. In many situations, they manage large properties in which they run a Xinhua superstore and sublet the remaining space for high rents (Yun, 2018). Censorship and book importation regulations are also extremely tight, restricting stock options. The German publishing company Bertelsmann entered China in 1996 but retreated in 2008 after making a huge investment in the book market and ultimately giving up (Li, 2021), as did Rupert Murdoch's News Corp on the media scene, which initially entered the China market in 1993 but had fully withdrawn by 2013 (Parker, 2014). While foreign players struggled with China's restrictive terrain, from Beijing's perspective joining the WTO did open new market and soft power opportunities to 'tell the China story well' overseas. A big official push was put on exploiting these opportunities, which is explored in Chapter 7.

3.7 Administering the scribes

In terms of governing administration, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT), under the leadership of the State Council, was established in 2013 when the government merged the General Administration of Press and Publication and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television. SAPPRFT controlled who could be a

publisher, where, and what areas they could publish in, as well as guiding ideological and political direction, controlling book importation, supervising distribution and combatting piracy (Yun, 2018). In March 2018, SAPPRFT, which was controlled by the State Council, was abolished and the National Press and Publishing Administration (NPPA) was established. Rather than remaining under State Council control, the NPPA was put under the direct supervision of the central Party propaganda department, meaning the party had again intensified its ideological control and also taken more direct control of publishing groups (Yun, 2018, Beach, 2018).

The regulatory framework ensures publishing stays firmly in the hands of the Party-state. Although the regulations do not openly prohibit the establishment of private publishing houses, the requirement for every publishing house to have a sponsoring organisation, which must be a state agency or a state-controlled organisation, effectively excludes the private sector. The system means all publishing houses are under the control of the Party-state, which can control the industry by issuing directives and instructions to the sponsoring organisations. Furthermore, internally in most publishing groups the Party propaganda departments have taken direct management control (Yun, 2018). Although publishing houses now are profit-seeking enterprises this can be seen to be part of the Party-state's efforts to develop the cultural industries. Overall, despite the shift to commercialisation the Party-state still retains a very high degree of control over the sector, and securitisation, political and ideological control remain a key focus and are tightly implemented.

Patronage from the Party-state is also still of huge importance to the sector, with monopolies and lucrative contracts relating to the production of textbooks, for example, and also by availing of the various subsidies on offer to produce “theme” (*zhuti* 主题) books – essentially propaganda titles – that support government policies and the one-party socialist system. Publishers report to the administration every two years and failure to pass this assessment could result in the suspension or cancellation of the publisher's license. All editors who work in publishing have to hold the state-sanctioned qualification, which aside from editing skills also instructs on the political and ideological approach an editor should adhere to. The administration releases lists of sensitive topics that publishers should either avoid or gain government and Central Party Propaganda Department preapproval for if any book touches on the area. The propaganda department and the administration also release a regular list of the themed topics they expect publishers to focus on. In their plans and reports to the authorities, publishers must show how these

themed topics fit into their publishing work (Yun, 2018). The themed titles are heavily promoted and are bought in quantities by official agencies. In 2019, 20 of the 82 books that sold more than one million copies were theme books, as were six of the overall top 10 best-sellers that year (Chinahlj.cn, 2020). Illustrating an elaborate co-optative initiative, one of Gerschewski's stability pillars, the Party-state commandeers and financially rewards the nation's writers, editors, publishers, agents, book distributors and retailers to focus on these themed topics. These themed titles are the epitome of what the Party consider 'telling the China story well'. While the publications might contain little by way of market appeal, the efforts are lucrative for the practitioners and deliver social and political capital, while strengthening legitimacy for the Party-state. Co-optation and legitimacy-building delivers the coveted 'uses of literature' to the establishment.

China's book-publishing market now generates \$15bn annually, second in size only to the United States (*The Economist*, 2021). By 2019, there were a total of 585 state-owned publishers across the country, including 218 central publishing houses and 367 local publishing houses (Xie and Gu, 2021). This number has stayed at about 580 for the past decade, which is notable in an industry that is typically very fluid. Observers say this can be explained by the facts that, for one, none of the state-owned presses go bankrupt because of government support and the various monopolies and subsidies in place. And secondly, no new entities are allowed to enter and challenge for a slice of the market. The concentration in ownership among the state-owned entities has also remained low and despite a whole process of consolidation and conglomeration the bigger players still only account for a few per cent of the market. In 2016 OpenBook² reported that Beijing United Publishing Company was the largest company in the retail market, with a 2.49 per cent share, while CITIC press was second with a figure of 2.13 per cent. More than half the operators had a share of less than 0.1% of the market.

While private operators are effectively not allowed to publish under their own name, private capital and talent have been active in the publishing sector for decades by collaborating with state-run publishers. It is estimated that there are at least 10,000 private publishers (known in

² <https://www.openbook.com.cn/EN/Index>

the industry as *tushu gongsi* 图书公司 or *chupin gongsi* 出品公司) operating in China, as well as a large number of book agents brokering publishing deals. As these entities lack the business license to operate as a publisher they are generally registered legally as cultural companies or studios. While these private enterprises often operate on the surface like standard publishers, not having a license means they must rely on state-owned publishers for at least two critical aspects of book publishing. Firstly, each new book published requires an ISBN which is only issued to the state-owned publishers, so private publishers need to cooperate with a state-run press to get the all-important ISBN. Secondly, printing presses can only print books for state-owned publishers, so again if a private publisher wants to get a book printed they must cooperate with a state-run entity and use their paperwork to facilitate the printing. Private publishers and their state-run counterparts have developed intricate, symbiotic relationships over the years. Private publishers need the state entities for the reasons listed above, and the state publishers benefit in many cases from the creativity, passion and hard work of the private operators. (Yun, 2018). While these private operators are often the lifeblood of the industry, their rewards are minimal compared to the state operators. According to an industry report, while private companies accounted for more than half of the books that made it onto best-seller lists from 2009 to 2018, they only accounted for 8.8 per cent of the market share in financial terms (Wang and Ah, 2019).

Officials are well aware of the active role that private publishers are playing in the market, and have issued some directives aimed at supporting them, but there have been no indicators they would contemplate letting private operators become formally licensed publishers. Under regulations introduced in 2013, the authorities permitted some kind of separation between publishing and printing, meaning that private printers could pay printers directly for book printing rather than pay indirectly via the state-run publisher, although the regulations still require that book printing work only be commissioned by a state-owned printer (Yun, 2018). Some public-private developments have been sprouting up in the sector in recent years, such as the Beijing Publishing Creative Industry Park which was established in 2010, where state-owned group Beijing United Publishing Company functions as anchor occupant. Several private publishers have moved into the park, including Thinkingdom Media Group, and Beijing United offer them a manuscript reviewing service that also involves permission to print and ISBNs. The private partners then usually have more control over their books than they would in any kind of joint-venture arrangement and manage the distribution element (Yun, 2018). Private operators have had some

success under this arrangement and have been increasing their output, playing a part in Beijing United becoming the biggest publisher in the Chinese market. Yun (2018, p.47) asserts allowing for the full development of the private players would weaken the control of the government and threaten the survival of the state-owned players. As small reforms and new policies come into force, they can be interpreted as taking advantage of the commercial and creative acumen of the country's private publishers while still maintaining the supremacy of the economic and political interests of the Party-state.

3.8 Judging a book by its number

The cooperation between private and state enterprises takes many shapes and forms, with in some cases the private companies looking after the early phase of a project and preparing a title for publication, with the state-run party then adding an ISBN and looking after printing and distribution. In other cases the private firm simply buys an ISBN from the state-run party. As we will see in more detail in the chapter on censorship, this reality serves as a highly effective method of self-censorship, as the state-run firm is ultimately responsible for any books published with their ISBN. The price private publishers pay for the ISBNs varies, but publishing sources say that in recent years it tends to average between 30,000 yuan to 50,000 yuan each (£3,339 - £5,565 approx). This business can be highly lucrative. For example, assuming a state-run publisher had an annual allocation of 300 ISBNs, they could simply sell them all to private firms generating 15 million yuan in revenues for the year. This potential revenue pool has helped introduce a degree of lethargy into the state-run sector. Technically trading ISBNs (*maimai shuhao* 买卖书号) is prohibited, but the government turns a blind eye to the practice and only steps in if a book crosses a red line somehow.

In a dramatic development from 2017, the government told industry operators that it would start to significantly decrease the number of ISBNs issued for publications each year, switching from a policy aimed at increasing quantity to one of qualitative improvement. One immediate impact of the policy was that editors left any potentially politically sensitive books off their list of new publications and kept to safe titles. The year after the policy came into effect there was an overall year-on-year decrease of almost 10 per cent of new titles published. Apart from books related to Marxism-Leninism and the CCP, there was a decrease in all other books published (Xie and Gu, 2021). Some publishers interviewed for this thesis said they had been told that over

the period of three to five years the number issued may decrease from 30-50 per cent in a government bid to further tighten control over the industry. In 2019, 31 publishing houses had their ISBN issuance suspended and were required to submit rectification plans after failing the official quality inspection (Xie and Gu, 2021). This policy has had the effect of making publishers even more conservative and striving to hew closely to government objectives, as with fewer ISBNs on offer they feel they cannot afford to take any risks.

This policy shows that the government is willing to sacrifice economic growth and development of the cultural sector when it comes to questions of securitisation and stability. While building a global cultural power – with the publishing industry as a key pillar of that – has been identified as one of the CCP's key priorities, it clearly is superseded by the Party's desire to avoid any challenges to its rule, legitimacy and tight control. With regard to the issuing of ISBNs, despite all the efforts the Party has made to cultivate the publishing sector, it is willing to dramatically reduce its output, revenue and potential substantially overnight if it means it can tighten control of the content and avoid possibilities of having its legitimacy undermined in any way. In this case, illustrating the Creative Policy Paradox Framework presented in the preceding chapter, officials are engaging in Party Moat-Building and as a self-protective mechanism intentionally weakening a sector it has been aiming to strengthen.

The Chinese publishing sector has faced some criticism in recent years for a perceived lack of quality overall, including from Chinese writers and publishers interviewed for this thesis. The outline above briefly illustrates how fraught the terrain has been for the cultural sector over the past several decades, and even in the occasionally more relaxed periods censorship concerns have always been present to some extent as has the expectation that writers should first and foremost serve the Party and the socialist cause. Furthermore, the regulatory framework that keeps state-owned entities in control of the ISBNs is an example of an institutionalised impediment to creative independent publishing. In Western countries, for example, an independent publishing house can generally get as many ISBNs as they require at either no cost or for a very nominal sum. Once they publish a title under an ISBN they then enjoy long-term rights to that book and ultimately include it in their backlists. They are not obliged to consider the costs or complications of engaging in any kind of joint venture to publish their title. For their independent Chinese counterparts, however, once they have a book project in mind, they must forge an agreement with a state-owned entity in order to proceed, adding to the project's complexity and cost. Before a

private publisher approaches a state-run publisher with a new book idea, they must first factor in the cost, and then consider what content might get the green light from the state-aligned operators, often forcing them to steer away from any potentially risky or sensitive material. And as we will see in other chapters interviewing authors, not only are Chinese publishers now instructed to stay away from sensitive or vaguely political material, but they are also encouraged by the authorities to introduce more “positivity” and “harmony” to their works, in an apparent effort to underscore the Party’s legitimacy by presenting a content, smoothly functioning society. Officials rarely articulate exactly where their red lines are, or what precise content they would like to see in new books, which leaves the various editors in the state-run and private businesses guessing and second-guessing. The editors in the state-run publishers have the most to lose, so they tend to take a very conservative approach to what they will and will not publish under their ISBNs. Furthermore, once the book is published the private publisher cannot be sure of holding any intellectual property rights in the long term as the state-run entity holds the IP. While they could have an agreement in place, they are not on secure legal footing. Similarly, if a third-party pirates the book the private publisher is restricted in legal recourse, as it does not hold the legal rights to the title. All these factors combine to keep private publishers small, investment levels low, and a tendency for them to focus on short-term projects with short-term gains rather than considering potential long-term benefits. These factors evidently do not support a fertile environment for innovative literature.

As evidenced above, the CCP has played extremely close attention to its management of the publishing world and how it should best serve the interests of the Party since it came to power, juggling the desire to promote the nation’s cultural legacy with concerns over securitisation, stability and legitimation, leading to the paradoxical scenario outlined in the CPPF. The control system ebbs and flows, and in recent years it is widely understood to have tightened considerably. The move to consolidate the central Party propaganda department’s control over publishing came on the heels of President Xi Jinping lifting the two-term presidential limit, opening the door for him to remain as president for life. Around this time there were increasing calls for the cultural sector to support the “main melody” in their output by espousing state-approved messages and supporting official policies (Ho, 2018). It was also around this time that the announcement on the restrictions on the number of ISBNs to be issued was announced. With Xi settling into his second term and his position consolidated within the Party, pressure on the publishing world to support the Party-state was intensifying. The approach to ensuring such support has become more

comprehensive than in previous years. More repression, more co-optation, more Party Moat-Building as official focus on having the China story told well and deriving maximum ‘uses of literature’. Financial supports for literary promotion grew dramatically through the writers’ association, themed titles and international projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, but controls have expanded at the same time, resulting in conflicts and the policy paradox presented in the CPPF.

To shine a further light on the official approach to the nation’s writers and publishers, the section below will examine relevant sections from the all-important Five-Year Plans as well as personal comments made on writers and publishing by the CCP’s general-secretary Xi Jinping over the past decade. Together they help illuminate the elevated status literature has held and continues to hold in contemporary China, but also how officialdom views it as a potentially harmful and dangerous sector, and one that needs to be constantly schooled, monitored, threatened and controlled to remain in the service of the one-party socialist system.

3.9 Official Takes: *The Five-Year Plans on literary development*

As an initial point of legal reference on literature and publishing, the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China articulates the state’s role with Article 22 declaring that “the state promotes the development of literature and art... publishing and distribution services, libraries... that serve the people and socialism” and “sponsors mass cultural activities”.³ In terms of policy planning, the Five-Year Plans (FYP) then provide the core framework of social and economic development initiatives and governance objectives issued by the Party. In 1953 the People’s Republic of China issued its first FYP, with outlines of social and economic objectives and initiatives for the country. Considering cultural implications in the FYPs, the second plan (1958-62) called for the cultivation of cultural and scientific development of the Chinese people. The

³ Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. Available online: <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml>

sixth plan (1981-85) urged the country's leadership "to strenuously develop education, science and culture to accelerate the construction of an ideological and material civilisation", while the seventh plan listed the further improvement of "material and cultural life of all Chinese people" as an objective. When President Hu Jintao introduced the 11th FYP covering the period 2006-2010 there was an added emphasis on culture with a section of the programme entitled "Enhance Socialist Cultural Construction" (*China Daily*, 2011). The ideological underpinnings of a socialist cultural construction are set out in that plan, indicating the obligations cultural workers have to the CCP and the nation. Those involved in the sector were urged to "strengthen the education of ideals and beliefs and ideological and political work, vigorously carry forward the national spirit with patriotism as the core... strengthen the construction of socialist ideology and morality, solidly carry out the activities of building a mass spiritual civilisation and advocate the basic moral norms of patriotism". The plan reminds writers and artists of their obligation to keep the national mood positive as they "further enhance the cohesion and creativity of the Chinese nation." It stresses they should "keep all the people in high spirits and in an uplifting mood" and provide "a strong ideological framework and spiritual impetus" for the country's development. The 11th plan also states the Party-state will develop cultural industries and create "more excellent products that better meet the needs of the people." Government investment will increase, it said, to "gradually form a relatively complete public cultural service system covering the whole society." The plan also sets out the government's international soft power intentions, saying "we will expand international cultural exchanges, actively explore international cultural markets and move Chinese culture towards the world."

The Party's commanding role in literary and cultural initiatives is left in no doubt. "We will establish a cultural management system led by the Party committee, managed by the government, with the industry showing self-discipline." National identity is also referenced, and while the industry should "absorb the beneficial aspects of foreign culture" the plan will "adhere to the socialist advanced cultural direction." Law enforcement of the cultural market would be strengthened, the plan said, and "illegal activities" and "backwards and decadent culture" eliminated. In the 12th Five-year Plan – Hu Jintao's second – cultural industries were classified as a "pillar industry", with the party recognising it as a key sector to boost its soft power (HPRC, 2015; Yun, 2018). A section on improving the quality of the nation's "civilisation" said "We will provide strong ideological guarantees, spiritual power and intellectual support for the

modernisation drive” to realise “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. In further efforts to build mass spiritual civilisation, it calls for the strengthening of professional ethics and the formation of a social atmosphere that eliminates the wrong, punishes the evil and promotes the good. It stated it would “improve the quality” of cultural products, modernise the sector to become a pillar industry of the economy, expand upon its “Going Global” ambitions to cultivate soft power and support projects that reflected national characteristics and standards.

The 13th FYP (2016-2020) – Xi Jinping’s first – reflected the fact China was becoming increasingly ambitious on the international front. Culture was given greater prominence than in previous plans, with national ambitions raised to “building a strong, socialist cultural power” (Gov.cn, 2016). The government would “use the Chinese Dream and the core values of socialism to gather consensus and gather strength” and integrate socialism into all fields of economic and social development, including culture. Political ideology was strongly emphasised, and “Through education and guidance, publicity and propaganda, cultural influence... the core values of socialism are internalised into people’s firm beliefs and externalised into people’s conscious actions.” The plan calls for officials to promote and upgrade industries such as publishing, film and television production, guide young people to become “good Internet users” and “improve the level of public opinion guidance, and enhance the influence of publicity and credibility”. It calls on the government to popularise scientific knowledge and promote Reading for All, the first reference to a campaign to promote literacy and reading among the general public that will be discussed in a following chapter. Emphasis is placed on “promoting the motherland’s culture”, “providing the people with high-spirited and colourful spiritual food” and on the promotion of Xi Jinping’s flagship Belt and Road Initiative, the government’s massive infrastructure and outreach programme. While the plan elaborates on international promotion of Chinese cultural products, it also notes the need to “maintain national cultural security,” highlighting the Party’s securitisation concerns in this sector which prompt restraining initiatives imposed on cultural producers as illustrated in the Cultural Policy Paradox Framework.

The 14th plan (2021-2025) brings political guidance and control even more to the fore, stating “Marxism guides all activities in our ideological space” and is “essential to enhance socialist cultural development” (Fujian.gov.cn, 2021). In relation to the cultural industries, the plan speaks of the importance of the ongoing promotion of “ethical standards informed by core socialist values in response to the needs in the new era” and “character development... to foster a positive

ethos, civility, and ethical behaviour.” Also, in reference to the cultural sector, the document states the authorities will strengthen efforts to carry out education in Xi Jinping Thought, strengthen ideological and political work, continue the publicity and education on the history of the Party and of new China, as well as the education on patriotism and collectivism. While talking about the objectives of improving the cultural scene and “sharing China’s stories, spreading China’s voice” the 14th FYP is explicit in terms of its political expectations. “Social benefits are always the top consideration. Pursuit of economic returns should be aligned with the delivery of social benefits, a requirement that underpins the development of cultural industries and markets,” it states. “Culture should serve the needs of the people and contribute to the socialist cause.” As the interviews with writers and publishers in following chapters outline, ‘social benefits’ in this instance are similar to ‘telling the China story well’, in part referring to the avoidance of actions that could potentially undermine the position of the Party-state.

Rather than outlining roadmaps to inculcate creative endeavour and artistic expression and elevate the cultural industries in China, the 14th FYP reads more like a list of perceived industry shortcomings and concerns the authorities have that need to be addressed in order to ensure the country’s cultural workers can be considered to be contributing sufficiently to the socialist cause. The text spells out what Xi Jinping and the Party leadership consider the word ‘well’ entails as they encourage the nation’s writers to ‘tell the Chinese story well’. The tone and list of orders aimed at the nation’s writers in this most public of documents suggests the CCP leadership does not feel the nation’s literati are currently performing anywhere near “well” enough in terms of supporting the political apparatus. Link’s ‘uses of literature’ are evidenced across the FYPs with the most recent explicitly casting the ‘uses’ of cultural producers as promoters of Marxism, Xi Jinping Thought and the reputation and legitimacy of the one-party system. Since the reform era there has been an added emphasis in the texts on commercialisation and elevating cultural quality, but the conflict encapsulated in the theoretical CPPF is highlighted as concepts such as these clash at times in the eyes of the CCP with higher priority concepts such as securitisation, stability and legitimacy.

3.10 Xi Jinping on the uses of literature

Beyond the Five-Year Plans, Xi Jinping’s personal comments on this space are also highly instructive. Since becoming general-secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012, Xi

has frequently spoken of the value of culture and the written word, and how literature must be supported to enable it to serve socialism and the people. He tells a story of how he developed his love of reading when his mother used to bring him to a Xinhua bookstore when he was five or six years of age and how books went on to play a key role in his personal history and development. He recalls how she would choose titles for him that emphasised loyalty and serving one's country. He cites as his favourites a trilogy of short stories by a Ming Dynasty writer from the 1600s: *Stories to Instruct the World*, *Stories to Caution the World* and *Stories to Awaken the World* (Xuexi Xiaozu, 2016). Xi's father Xi Zhongxun (习仲勋, 1913-2002) – a Chinese communist revolutionary and a subsequent political official in the People's Republic of China – was purged for supporting a book deemed critical of Mao when Xi was a teenager. Xi then spent seven years in Liangjiahe village in northern Shaanxi province during the Cultural Revolution where he spent most of the time in a cave digging ditches to extract methane from pig waste. He said afterwards he persevered by burying himself in books. He befriended a group of people who had all gone to the countryside with their backpacks full of books. In the village, they exchanged books and frequently discussed their content. He said he read all the literary classics at that time and still quotes them regularly (Davis and Wei, 2020). During official visits to Russia, France and Germany, Xi brought up with the respective leaders how much the classic literature of their lands had meant to him. In Germany, he told a story of how when he was working in the countryside in Shaanxi he had walked 30 li (about 15 miles) to borrow a copy of Goethe's *Faust* from a young intellectual who he heard had a copy, and later walked 30 li to return it. It is notable that while Xi has presided over a rigid censorship regime for the past decade, many of the books he now boasts about reading when he was young would have been officially banned by the Party at that time. While this point of irony was noted by some writers in interviews conducted with them for this research, it was not one any of them would dare make publicly for fear of repercussions.

Xi's views on writers and the publishing world were perhaps most clearly put forward at a speech he made in 2014 in Beijing, commemorating Mao's 1942 Yan'an Talks where the Chairman demanded that literature and art reflect the life of the working people and always serve politics and the advancement of socialism. In Xi's commemorative speech, he listed off no fewer than 112 writers and artists from around the world whose work he admired (Xinhua, 2015). While pledging to fully support the publishing industry, Xi said he expected everyone in the field to help

build a powerful socialist culture and achieve the goal of a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To do this, he stressed writers must “regard patriotism as the main theme of literary and artistic creation” and adopt positive energy and use their creations to “guide the people in establishing and upholding the correct view of history, the nation and the state”. In terms of management oversight, Xi bemoaned a lack of effective methods of government management and supervision for the new literary and artistic forms and said “we should never provide harmful channels” for the dissemination of literary and artistic works. He was scornful of how the creative publishing industry in China was self-congratulatory, deriding critiques as “all praise and self-praise, touted and self-proclaimed”. He also instructed writers not to prioritise financial success. “Literature and art can’t be slaves of the market. Don’t stink of copper,” he said (CRI Online, 2019).

In 2016, Xi returned to the idea that writers should be first and foremost patriots who must inspire the national spirit and instil a sense of positivity, pride and honour in the nation. As they sit down to create, cultural producers should be clear on their outlook and primary mission and “Promoting socialist core values should be fundamental to artists and writers,” he said (Xinhua, 2016). During his key speech at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi exhorted the nation’s writers to reinforce realistic, creative themes and “continuously endorse and celebrate the Party, celebrate the motherland” (Palmer, 2018). In his remarks, Xi suggests the Party leadership are constantly evaluating which writers are responding to the Party’s call and which ones are not. In a congratulatory letter on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Xi said “the majority of literary and art workers have responded to the call of the Party” and “actively engaged in the great practice of socialist revolution and construction, reform and opening up” (*China Daily*, 2019). While Xi thanks the writers who have responded to the Party’s call, he does not state what will happen to those who have not. The implications, however, are ominous, and as shall be explored in detail in future chapters the Party has devised a well-honed filtering system that ensures publications and writers remain on message. Xi’s chiding pronouncements imply his satisfaction levels with the literary sector are not high, he believes the Party concerns are valid, and therefore the management of the sector shall be intensified to ensure outcomes support political objectives. Similar to the recent FYPs, his comments are didactic in tone and involve a litany of admonishments and stern directives.

Drawing a line from 1942, where Mao told the nation’s writers to “serve politics and the advancement of socialism”, to the current day where Xi instructs them to “continuously

endorse and celebrate the Party”, it can be seen that for all the changes and modernisation that have taken place in China over the past seven-plus decades, writers are still very much viewed by the Party-state as “engineers of the soul” and literature still has Link’s “uses”. Gerschewski’s three pillars of stability – repression, co-optation and legitimacy – are seen throughout this historic outline, while soft power, propaganda, authoritarian image management, cultural security, conflict theory and fragmented authoritarianism are also to the fore of the policies and approaches seen through the Creative Policy Paradox Framework. Under Xi’s leadership, with concerns over securitisation prominent, serving the Party and the socialist state has remained a constant obligation in how writers ‘tell the Chinese story well’.

This overview of major policies, directives and developments from the founding of the PRC to the current day provides a backdrop to the reality that Chinese writers face in contemporary times, a reality that I will examine in detail in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter 4: The Book Club: The China Writers Association's role in literary promotion and control

4.1 Introduction

The China Writers Association (*zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会) is a membership organisation that coordinates literary activity and plays a key role as a link between the nation's writers and the Party-state. In this section I will look at the roots and development of the association, the functions it performs, and how it is perceived by the literary community. From a theoretical perspective, the CWA forms a key part of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, involving fluctuating and reinforcing levels of Gerschewski's co-optation, repression and legitimacy, and is the frontline in the interpretative battle of 'telling the China story well'.

In terms of public expressions of opinion on the CWA, in the years before Xi Jinping came to power there was occasional published debate, criticism and commentary on social media, but that has reduced significantly in the Xi era due to intensified censorship and control, as will be illustrated below. From the methodological perspective, in light of those restraints, for the purposes of this research I interviewed 60 writers, publishers and officials directly on their perspectives of how the CWA functions and impacts upon the nation's literary scene. I anonymised their comments in this instance to enable them to speak freely and to avoid any potential for negative repercussions for them. The objective was to garner a range of opinions on the association's approach and operations that could shed light on the research questions in this study on 'the uses of literature' in Xi's China and what did 'telling the China story well' mean in daily reality for writers on the ground.

The CWA has often been the subject of controversy and criticism. A questionnaire sent out by two writers in 1998 illustrates the type of critical discourse that occasionally appeared in the decades before Xi's tenure. Zhu Wen (朱文, b.1967) and Han Dong (韩东, b.1961), two Nanjing writers who were affiliated with an influential, unofficial literary journal called *Tamen*, sent out the questionnaire to 73 writers. Signalling their intentions, the survey was entitled 'break away' (*Duanlie* 断裂). The 13 questions on the questionnaire focused on the contemporary literary scene in China, particularly the role that the CWA plays, the big literary awards, and the official literary journals. In total 55 writers completed and returned the survey, and the results were

generally contemptuous of the institutions, particularly the Writers Association. Questions such as “What assistance does the Writers Association offer you?” garnered the response “public washroom”. “Dressed-up piles of shit,” someone else commented on state literary prizes (Lovell, 2006. p.133). Han Dong said, “[We] break away not only in the dimension of time, but also in space: we must break away from the established literary order.” He later added: “The established literary order refers not only to various aspects of the official literary field represented by the CWA, but also to any form of imperious monopoly or authority that tries to manipulate peoples’ literary pursuits and aesthetic choices” (Kong, 2005. p.33). The survey results were controversial – some critics termed them “collective patricide” – and they stimulated much debate in the literary media. A writer of the older generation commented that this complete rebellion and bald challenge to the system was “something our generation dares not do, maybe even dares not think about” (Kong, 2005. p.33). Illustrative of the oscillating nature of China’s political space, it would also be highly unlikely that such a critical public initiative could be undertaken in contemporary times in the Xi era. In recent years, securitisation and Party Moat-Building have been prioritised, a point underlined in the CPPF. To introduce the CWA and how it functions, I will first outline some fundamental historical developments and then present findings obtained from the interviews.

Writers were being organised and marshalled by Mao and the Communist Party even before they came to power in October 1949. In July of that year, the China National Literature Workers Association was founded as a subordinate group of the China Federation of the Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC). In September 1953 it was renamed the China Writers Association (CWA). The umbrella group, the CFLAC, currently has 52 existing group members, including the China Writers Association (which is an administratively independent unit). Other groups include the Chinese Dramatists Association, China Filmmakers Association, Chinese Musicians Association, Chinese Artists Association, Chinese Dancers Association, Chinese Folk Literature and Art Association of Chinese Photographers, Chinese Photographers Association, Chinese Calligraphers Association, Chinese Acrobatics Association and the China Television Artists Association.⁴

⁴ <http://www.cflac.org.cn>

The CWA is a ministerial-level agency and, according to its constitutional preamble, “a professional group of Chinese writers, led by the Communist Party of China. It is the bridge and link between the Party and the government in connection with the vast majority of writers, and it is an important social force for the prosperity of literature and the establishment of a socialist spirit.”⁵ There are currently 46 group members (including provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions) and more than 12,000 individual members in the national CWA (Xinhua, 2019). Each province and provincial-level municipality has its own Writers Association, as do some industries such as petroleum, coal and metallurgy. At county and city district levels there is an extensive network of local associations. The CWA publishing arm is the Writers Publishing House which publishes several newspapers and magazines and runs high-profile literary prizes such as the Lu Xun prize in literature, the Mao Dun prize, the Song Qingling prize for children’s literature, the National Minority Literary Creation Award and the Youth Literature prize. The association also runs the National Museum of Modern Chinese Literature and the Lu Xun Literature Institute.

The CWA’s preamble states that the organisation should view and develop the national literary scene through a strong political prism, referring to the importance of writers adhering to Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping theory and Xi Jinping Thought. While the CWA is mandated to develop the national literary scene, the constitutional preamble emphasis is explicitly placed on supporting the Party and its objectives. This creates an automatic conflict with objectives that can at times be contradictory, for example in harnessing incentives to guide more towards Party propaganda than ground-breaking literature, that shall be explored in this chapter and feeds into this thesis’s Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF).

China modelled its Writers Association on the Writers Union in the Soviet Union which was formed in 1934 (Pei, 1994; Li, 2018). The Soviet Writers Union treated its members to a range of perquisites, known as “gingerbread”, as well as a host of repressive policies known as “whips” (Garrard and Garrard, 1990). A parallel with the Soviet whips and gingerbread can be drawn with Gershewski’s theoretical references to repression and co-optation, that along with

⁵ <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/403936/403957/index.html>

legitimacy make up his three pillars of stability and form a core part of the CPPF. Since its inception, the CWA has utilised varying degrees of what could alternately be referred to as whips and gingerbread, sticks and carrots, or repression and co-optation to manage the nation's writers, and in so doing attempt to bolster the Party-state's legitimacy and enhance social and political stability.

After coming to power in 1949, the Communist Party began to systemically introduce the principles outlined in the 1942 Yan'an Talks on literature (Li, 2018; Link, 2000; Roberts, 2003), utilising institutions and cultural campaigns to strengthen their political position. The publishing industry was brought under state control, closing the privately owned publishing houses and journals that operated in the Republican period, and the writers were brought into the CWA. The association coordinated all literary activity, and in terms of literary production writers were expected to celebrate workers, peasants, and soldiers, socialist realism, and later revolutionary realism combined with revolutionary romanticism. There were many benefits to being in the association, particularly for the higher-profile writers. Over the years, the most established members were provided with a steady income, housing, and social benefits in return for their loyalty to the Party. "The system helped to consolidate the status and well-being of writers but also restricted their freedom, especially at times of extreme ideological pressure" (Link, 2000. p.48). Through the association, the government organised the editorial teams for literary journals and magazines, coordinated events on literary matters, ran training and workshops for writers, and was the point of contact for all literary matters domestically and internationally. It also assigned writers to produce a range of books and articles.

To writers in those early decades of the People's Republic, the association offered prestige and a variety of perquisites, including the privilege of attending lectures, seminars, and the banquets that came with them, as well as, for some, the possibility of joining excursions to other cities, to scenic retreats, or even to foreign countries. Part of the rationale for domestic travel was to 'experience life'. Link wrote that although Chinese writers generally knew little of Marxist literary theory, "the tenet that all literary creation springs from an author's 'experience of life' was widely accepted, and especially welcome when it became grounds for requests to travel" (2000. p.120). The association was the only public ladder of success for writers. Its perquisites, no matter how small, were therefore attractive. Moreover, the prestige of membership carried over into important related matters such as placing one's manuscript for publication, commanding higher

manuscript fees, and having more leverage for privilege within one's work unit. For all these reasons, membership in the association was highly coveted (Link, 2000).

The CWA has served the complementary functions of providing the Party with a means of monitoring and controlling creative writing and of establishing a clear-cut ladder of success for writers within the socialist literary system. The association has also played the role of coordinator of an author's creative activities, artistic exchanges, and legitimate rights and interests, but its key functions are "to exercise political and artistic leadership and control of a writer's literary activities, and to guarantee that literary norms were implemented" (Hong, 2007. p.27).

The first CWA Chair was Mao Dun, who was under the leadership of the then CFLAC Chairman Guo Moruo. Mao Dun, who was also Mao Zedong's Minister of Culture from 1949-1964, was chairman from 1949 till he died in 1981. The chair of the association was vacant from 1981 until Ba Jin was appointed in 1984, and he stayed at the helm until he passed away in 2005 at the age of 100. In 2006, Tie Ning was appointed chair at the seventh congress of the organisation, becoming the first woman to hold the position. At 49 years of age when she was appointed, she was the youngest incoming president in CWA history and was not yet half the age of Ba Jin when he died in office. Her appointment, at a time of relatively political open atmosphere, was met with a flood of articles by journalists and fiction writers expressing hope that the "young, beautiful female writer" Tie Ning would bring a breath of fresh air to a stodgy organisation. A *Southern Metropolis Daily* editorial at the time urged the new chair to push for creative freedoms, saying the first task of the CWA "must be to do as much as possible to protect writers' freedom of creation, and not to limit that freedom through the hardening forces of power and ideology as an official organisation" (Martinsen, 2006). The newspaper said they place great expectations on the youthful Tie Ning and hoped she might "through the peculiar organisation of the China Writers Association beat her drum for the creative conscience of China's writers". Tie Ning is also Chair of the CFLAC. Peng Liyuan, a prominent singer and the wife of CCP general-secretary Xi Jinping, is a Deputy Chairwoman of the CFLAC.⁶

⁶ CFLAC.org.cn

Tie Ning remains the CWA chair but the political differences between the time she assumed office and recent times are noteworthy. In recent years, under Xi's tightening grip on securitisation and ideology, it would be essentially unimaginable for a newspaper like *Southern Metropolis Daily*, or any other platform, to publicly call for the protection of writers' freedoms and insist the Party-state not limit those freedoms by intensifying the forces of power and ideology. In 2006 the paper's comments were not particularly remarkable, given the comparatively open media scene at the time. The stark contrast in political atmospheres in the Hu Jintao era and the Xi era is highlighted however by the absence of any such commentary or discourse in recent years.

While the opportunities for public criticism of authority are scarce, the resources at the CWA's disposal are abundant. In 2022, the national Chinese Writers Association operated on a reported core budget of 255.5 million yuan (GBP 30.2 million)⁷. Each provincial association then has its own budget. The Shanghai Writers Association, for example, said that their provisional 2020 budget was 53 million yuan (approximately GBP 6.1 million). Under the provincial level there is then a vast nationwide network of local associations that would all have their own budget that would vary depending on membership numbers and levels of local government support. Membership of the association is open to anyone who "publishes or those who have a certain level of literary creation, theoretical commentary, translation work, or who have engaged in literary editing, teaching, or organisation work".⁸ The CWA, as the highest echelon of the structure, generally asks that an author has "produced nationwide influence" and meets one of the following requirements: They have published more than 300,000 words in journals or newspapers, with at least 150,000 of those words in provincial-level journals or newspapers (for poetry, 10 lines is counted as 1,000 words.); or they have published 150,000 words in journals or newspapers, with at least 100,000 words over provincial level, plus the writer has had one full book published; or they have published at least three books in mainland China, at least two in over provincial-level presses. In November 2013 the Internet Writers Association (*wangluo zuojia xiehui* 网络作家协

⁷ <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2022/0324/c403937-32382609.html>

⁸ <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2019/1211/c403937-31501870.html>

会) was inaugurated. To be considered eligible to join the CWA, online writers should have over 5,000 followers and have had more than two million words published online. (The writers of Chinese Online Literature (CIL) have had a unique impact on the scene which will be explored in a following section.)

The membership rules may be relaxed in special cases, according to the guidelines. Once the application is in, it is up to the association to approve or deny it. The regulations say that works adapted into movies or TV series are considered as being published. Individuals can apply to join themselves, or they can be recommended by two individual members, in a similar way the Communist Party accepts membership applications. A writer from Hubei who is on the CWA said in an interview that applicants should ideally have a recommendation from an executive committee member and the application process is decided at the AGM. “This helps to maintain the standard of the writers in the association, however it does not guarantee it 100 per cent,” he said, alluding to controversies over the bona fides of some writers who have been accepted into various associations over the years. Another writer who is on a panel that assesses membership applications for Guangdong’s association said there were lots of people who wanted to join but could not get in. “But actually, they should know why they cannot get in, the rules are clear. In China, when you have a book published, which publisher published the book and the procedures behind it will indicate how good you are as a writer. Generally, if people get refused, they kind of understand, because they know their writing level.”

With regards to hierarchy, the writing system has four official levels that writers are categorised into, two interviewees explained. Level one is equal to a university professor, level two is equal to a vice-professor, while level three is equal to a tutor. Level four is an entry-level writer. For the grading, every three to four years there is a chance to get promoted. For example, if you are a level two writer and you want to upgrade to level one, when the application period is open you submit to the judges everything you have written in the past few years and all the awards you have won. In interviews with writers who have achieved level one status they said the process is quite challenging and many applicants fail to climb to the top level. The jury to appraise applicants are randomly selected from the membership each year. One main benefit, apart from the recognition, is that a level one writer will get paid the same as a professor when they participate in an official event. For example, if a professor gets 1,000 yuan for making a speech, a level one writer would also get 1,000 yuan, not a smaller sum that might be paid to other speakers and writers.

On membership rates, secretary general of the CWA Chen Qirong (陈崎嵘) said that the membership fee for the national association was 100 yuan to cover membership for five years, adding that it was a nominal sum and was in place primarily to make people feel they were members of an organisation (Lei, 2009). The annual membership fee for the Guangdong Writers Association was 50 yuan per year, according to some members. Several writers and officials with regional Writers Associations said in interviews that in practice the membership fee was not always paid and associations would rarely chase up late dues, as the sums involved were small. A writer who described themselves as a somewhat reluctant member of the Beijing association said they had not paid their membership fee in years “but I am still listed as a member, even if I don’t pay or attend meetings. It is like the Communist Party. Once you join it is very hard to leave.”

As an example of the structure of a provincial Writers Association, the Guangdong Writers Association has about 7,000 members from across the province and about 50 to 60 employees who are employed in the literature department, public relations department, the creative and research department and the administrative department. Among these there are six fulltime, professional writers. Adding in the people who work for the association’s two magazines – *Teenagers* and *Master Thesis/Works* – the combined staff for the Guangdong Writers Association is more than 100. The association is housed in a standalone building called the Guangdong Literature and Arts Centre Building. The association’s funding comes from the provincial government and administratively is on the same political level as the government’s Culture Department. The provincial association is a member of the national China Writers Association, and under the provincial association are city associations and a web of local associations.

4.2 *The Party as patron of the literary arts*

In post-1949 China, writers were often referred to as “cultural workers” or “literary workers” and the socialist literary system effectively transformed the vast majority of Chinese writers into state employees, becoming state-controlled artists whose patron and employer was the Communist Party and the socialist state. Kong argued that contrary to the common Western assumption that socialist control over art and literature had only the negative effect of suppressing creativity, many Chinese writers prior to the mid-1980s actually viewed the system as a suitable environment in which to fulfil their moral responsibilities toward society and develop their literary careers. “Chinese writers, with their close involvement in the political and cultural activities of the

state, could be seen as part of a ‘cultural priesthood’ whose pulpit was constructed and monitored by the government” (2005, p.13).

In the early days, each association had several full-time, professional writers on staff but they reduced in number greatly in the reform era. Professional salaries were fixed on an eight-step ladder that was for all literary and art workers. If a writer was also a Party official, they were ranked on the CCP’s 24-step ladder. The number of professional writers sponsored by each provincial branch depended on the finances and priorities of each. In 1981, the Guangdong branch had 32 professional writers, which was the highest number in the country at the time, while Guangxi had three, which was the lowest. Salaries were normally in line with what the writer got in their previous work unit. Some branches offered creative writing funds or scholarships, to which members could apply if they take work leave to write. Previously these funds were particularly important to writers who were assigned to non-cultural work units and who wanted time off from their daily duties to write. In recent years associations have moved away from life-long positions for professional writers and have opted more for short-term contracts in which writers are paid a subsidy to support themselves while they embark on specific projects. It was usually impossible in the Chinese socialist literary system for a writer to support a family on the various payments from manuscripts. During the 1949-1966 period, perhaps twenty or thirty writers in the entire country could sustain themselves through their writing, often because of pre-1949 publications; “but from 1966 until the 1990s, when commercial publishing of entertainment fiction fully returned, it was impossible to make a reliable living on manuscript fees” (Link, 2000. p.134). To cover living costs, writers depended on salaries, housing assignments, and other benefits from their work unit.

Chen Qirong, the CWA’s secretary, said in 2009 that they had stopped recruiting and developing professional resident writers and at that time there were only about 200 professional writers left in the national association. “And this number is decreasing because we no longer develop professional resident writers, and many old writers are dying,” he said. “Most of the members of the association are amateurs. They have the income of their own jobs and joining the association is only a certification. There is no economic relationship” (Lei, 2009).

Like other state employees, professional writers in the CWA must pass the civil service exam before they can be hired. For those that are currently employed as resident writers, they say the times are changing for them. In recent years there is much more focus on providing services

for members, meaning less time available for them to write. Most provincial associations now only have a few fulltime writers. The Henan provincial association currently has 10 fulltime writers which a Henan writer and association official said was the most of any association across the country, which they attributed to the fact Henan was one of the most populous provinces.

As very few writers in contemporary China can earn a living purely from the commercial sale of their books or stories, they tend to be engaged in a range of activities to increase their levels of income, including editing, teaching, participating in official literary events and applying for project funding from the CWA or other official bodies to deliver manuscripts under various “themes” selected by the Party. Writers who work in more commercial genres or have their work adapted for television, movies or animation etc have better prospects commercially. A few interviewees who write literary fiction, or what is referred to as “pure literature” (*yansu wenxue* 严肃文学), said that given it would be extremely difficult to survive on income generated from their type of writing the CWA’s financial support for them was important to keep the art form alive.

As a publishing outlet, China’s literary journals still play an important role in the scene, both as being esteemed platforms on which to promote new work and as revenue streams for writers. The literary journals would not tend to be considered commercially viable operations and are supported through government funding, sometimes channelled through the CWA. One writer from Shanghai interviewed said the government support for literary journals was crucial for writers, and he noted that the rates had increased in recent years. A 1,000-word story might now earn an author 1,000 yuan, he said, while previously they only got about 300 yuan. “I think that is very important because writers put a lot of time and effort into their writing and when they can get paid properly that is another way of showing respect.” Overall payments have come down in relative terms though, he said. In the 1990s when he published a novella the payment could equal a salary for nine to 10 months. The payments stagnated for many years while the cost of living increased dramatically. In recent years the government has been putting more subsidies into the journals so they have been able to increase payment, but now that same length novella would earn the equivalent of two or three months’ salary, he estimated, compared to nine or 10 months before.

Writers’ associations also sign contracts with writers to submit a certain number of stories to their official journals in a given period, such as the project Nanjing Writers Association runs with their magazine *Qingcheng*. The magazine has a contract system where a writer can sign a

contract with them for 1-3 years and each year they get paid a certain sum of money, generally up to 20,000 yuan a year. The money is prepaid, so before the writer has written a word they will get the annual grant. Then during the agreed time frame the writer should supply a certain number of words to the magazine. One young writer who was one of several writers who signed up to this agreement said he found it very beneficial. “This guaranteed income is great support to young writers like me, and having the contractual obligation was a helpful motivator to keep producing new work.”

Another writer said after she joined the Shanghai association she managed to get funding support from its Shanghai Art and Literature Development Fund that members could apply to twice or three times a year. Her applications were successful on a few occasions. “As a person who came from a small village and was then living in a big city, looking back that financial support really helped me get through that period of time. It was time-consuming to apply for it, but when I got it, it was very helpful and a great encouragement,” she said.

Similarly, a writer and official from the Suzhou association spoke of the financial and other benefits on offer to their local writers. The Suzhou association has a mentoring system to support young writers and writers can get paid to publish in the local journals and join local initiatives. Additionally, the Suzhou association offers financial incentives for their writers to make a mark on the national stage. “It goes like this, every time a Suzhou writer get published in a top tier literary journal like *Hua Chen*, *October*, *Harvest*, *People’s Literature* or *Poetry* they get 2,000 yuan every time from the association in addition to what the publication paid you. So at the end of the year you can calculate how many times you got in these journals and get paid the bonus for the year. Similarly, if you are a member of a Suzhou association and you win a prestigious award like the Lu Xun or Mao Dun award then Suzhou will typically give you a big amount of money as a bonus in addition to the prize money.”

Another key source of revenue each year for writers is speaking fees, lecture fees and stipends for official meetings the Writers Association or other bodies might organise, where the rates of pay vary depending on the event and the level of the writer in the official hierarchy. Many writers noted and bemoaned the fact that the official meetings had become increasingly like political study sessions in nature where the objective was to embrace details of the latest Party exhortations. “That’s the way official China is these days,” one writer remarked, “but at least we get paid to attend, and we can network after the study session which can be useful”.

4.3 *'Theme' writing and propaganda values*

In recent years significant official emphasis, and huge budgets, have been put into the 'theme' (*zhuti* 主题) writing projects where authors get paid to write on specific topics that have been identified as priority areas by the Party. The assignments tend to have strong undertones of Party propaganda. The themes that writers can apply for grants to write under "should have the goal of building a strong socialist cultural power and the works must be guided by Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", according to a call for submissions issued by the National Print and Publications Administration. The guidelines then go on to issue a stern list of political commands. Writers must, the guidelines state: focus on the Party's main ideas to create a healthy social atmosphere; help strengthen the nation's historical self-confidence; enhance historical consciousness; consolidate and expand upon the historical achievements of Party; adhere to the general tone of making progress while maintaining stability; show the bright prospects for China's economy; and strengthen the guidance of socialist core values and righteousness. Finally, in summation, writers were instructed to "show a credible, lovely and respectable image of China to the world, and improve the ability to tell the China story well".⁹

Chen Qirong, the CWA's secretary said to get grants writers had to stick to the themes proscribed by the CWA. "It is precisely because we want to advocate certain topics or themes that we will fund writers. If you write about some small emotions, and just talk to yourself, you will not be funded." If the project is not completed, the money will be withdrawn. Once the funded piece of writing is complete, the association can help edit or modify it, and then assist with contacting publishers. "It is a complete service," he said (Lei, 2009).

To some authors interviewed for this thesis they felt the theme guidelines were preposterous and insulting to the craft of writing. Others, however, did not take them too seriously, saying official documents are inevitably laden with such Party-speak and in practice the official

⁹ <https://www.nppa.gov.cn/nppa/contents/719/103576.shtml>

terminology was largely ignored. The theme topics available recently included praising the leadership of the CCP in general, or specifically on their efforts to promote the Belt and Road Initiative, alleviate poverty or combat Covid-19, as well as on topics that were considered to promote national and ethnic unity, such as in relation to Hong Kong or Xinjiang, or counter claims of Taiwan independence. An example of a major project the CWA arranges that can be lucrative for the writers who are selected to participate is the Deep into Village Life project (*shenru shenghuo* 深入生活), where authors spend months or years, on and off, in an assigned village and write about the life there and how the Communist Party is working to alleviate poverty and help the locals lead a better life. Writers who got these grants said these kinds of projects range in scale, with small projects of shorter duration paying the authors between 20,000-40,000 yuan, while for the longer projects authors could get up to a million yuan to participate. One author interviewed applauded this type of project, saying it would help writers learn more about rural China. “I think that is very necessary as most writers live in the cities and they know very little about village life,” he said. Specifically, these projects focus on villagers who have an annual income of under 4,000 yuan, another author said, explaining that a writer might stay in village homes for a while as part of the research, and while living with the families they might assist the children with their homework and help out with some farm work, and so on. “If you get selected for this kind of project you have to read lots of government documents and get to know the local history, and you get access to all the official statistics and are invited to official meetings, which is very helpful for the research,” she said. Writers see priority projects like this as “a chance to get rich”, she said, while noting the irony that the visiting authors can earn up to 1 million yuan in cases writing about how the Party has dramatically improved the lives of these villagers – villagers who only earn a few hundred yuan per month. “Yes, it is strange. We fly in, we write something about these really hard lives, something positive, we fly out. That’s the system. But for me it is good. I would say it is necessary for me as a writer. It buys me time to write other things, things that I really want to write about, and it does give me a deeper understanding of China’s society, even if I cannot write about all of that right now.”

Another writer said he has been invited to participate in some of these initiatives and went on exploratory visits, but he could not bring himself to write about them for the theme projects and so gave up the opportunity to get the big grants. “For example, they want to show how people’s lives have changed so they send some of us writers to research the situation in rural Guizhou or

Yunnan. When you are in those kinds of cultural activities you eat well, you drink well, you stay in a nice hotel. But I went on some of those trips and I did not write anything. They want us to write progress, I see problems. They want us to write happiness, I see misery.” This happiness/misery conflict underscores the paradox in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework where the Party intent and the outcome are oftentimes contradictory. It is also apparent under a wider policy to promote high-quality literature but the Party Moat-Building initiatives pushing content into the area of propaganda diminishes it in literary terms.

While all the writers interviewed were fully aware of the propaganda objectives that lay behind the scheme, some argued it was still beneficial as a way to bring more nuance and research to the topics, and many valued it as a rare and potentially lucrative income stream for writers. “But the benefits to writers are more than just the payment, which can be good and can last a few years if you are careful,” one young female writer said. “It also means you are practically guaranteed getting the writing you produce on this topic published in high-quality journals or presses supported by the government, then you will get reviewed in official journals and newspapers, you will be invited to speak at official events, you have a much better chance of getting shortlisted or even winning literary awards as your topic is in line with official priorities. If you write about other things it is much harder to make this kind of progress as a writer.” Another interviewee dismissed criticisms of writers participating in theme projects and likened them to situations where up-and-coming writers engage in copywriting and advertising work to pay the bills, while allowing them some financial freedom to continue working on the creative work they are passionate about. On the other hand, a critic of the theme writing projects expressed the view of several others interviewed when she said: “I think that it is universal – all writers in the world want to write without any restrictions. However, the theme projects with these so-called themes, it is a leading signal. It is saying to a writer, ‘Hey, if you write about this theme the way we want then you can get the funds and you may win some awards’. But strictly speaking what they write is not literature, I do not think they count as literary works. I would remove this policy of encouraging writers to write on themes. I think it harms and hurts literature.”

While writers might have mixed views on the themed publishing projects the authorities place a high value on them. These publications get significant promotional support from official channels and in recent years authorities have trumpeted the fact that best-seller lists and top print-run lists are dominated by themed books, such as titles focusing on Xi Jinping’s political

thought and the achievements of the Party.¹⁰ So the co-optation of writers continues but the structure of the arrangement has changed over the years. Instead of the old system where the Party gave talented writers permanent positions to write, which came with some security of tenure, now they must engage in these short-term contractual arrangements that have very specific propaganda requirements. Many writers participate as they need the financial lifeline. They are also aware that working with these themes increases the opportunities of getting a high-profile publisher and can play a role in garnering favourable reviews and awards. This new co-optation structure gives the Party much more ongoing control and leverage over the literary community, and ensures writers have to keep meeting official requirements in order to generate this income.

The various financial incentives the Writers Associations can offer clearly contribute a key part of their relevance. Many writers expressed gratitude for the support they have received, but others feel the Party and CWA are taking credit and demanding allegiance for distributing taxpayer's money. "This association is running with money that the citizens have paid in tax. It is not running with funds from any private sources, it is public funding. It is a public resource. We should not be grateful to the CWA or the Party. We should be grateful to the people who paid this money in the first place, and so should they," one writer said. Another said he sees the CWA as a very typical governmental institution. "They rely on the money from the people, they are paid out of the taxes from the people. It has a national level, provincial level, city level etc so you can see it as a typical Chinese government set-up. It has a central structure and has a lot of resources. Every coin has two sides. The association has its positive influence. It promotes literature and organises many literary events. It also has the problem of corruption and different agendas. Loyalties, political and personal, are key. There can be very bad writers, but they can get a big amount of funding from the writers association."

4.4 *Inside or outside the system*

The question of whether any given writer in China was considered to be "inside the system" (*tizhinei* 体制内) or "outside the system" (*tizhiwai* 体制外) has fuelled many debates

¹⁰ <https://www.nppa.gov.cn/nppa/upload/files/2021/12/910c52660b947756.pdf>

over the past decades in China. Overall, the distinction has become increasingly blurred in recent years as the two have merged together in China's post-socialist mix. The disagreement on whether someone was in or out has stemmed in part from the fact the terms appear to mean different things to different people. To some writers and industry insiders interviewed for this research to be "inside the system" meant a writer's direct employer was a Writers Association and they were fulltime, resident writers on staff who were paid by that association purely to write. This is essentially a civil servant's position that along with a monthly salary would involve housing, healthcare and a pension – a similar package to that offered to other state employees. As mentioned, since the reform and opening up period the number of fulltime staff writers has reduced greatly. Others consider writers who join a Writers Association on any level to be inside the system, as they are joining a government-run membership structure with clear rules and the understanding that they should not undermine the Party-state in their work. Some others would extend this definition further still to include any writers whose writing might be considered pro-government in tone. Hockx writes that over time we have seen a merging of positions with established writers providing patronage and support to the younger generation, and some commercially successful younger writers applying for membership of the Writers Association, "indicating a gradual mixing of social, political, and commercial interests". None of which, he added "are particularly conducive to disinterested literary creation" (Hockx, 2015. p.96).

When Wuhan-native and author Hu Fayun (胡发云, b. 1949) was asked if he saw himself as being inside or outside the system he replied, "Somewhere in between". Hu was one of the first signatories to Charter 08, a manifesto co-authored by Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo, which called for several changes in China, including the introduction of an independent legal system, freedom of association and the elimination of one-party rule. Speaking to a US journalist for the *New York Review of Books*, Hu said that before Tiananmen in 1989 he was quite hopeful for meaningful reform. "A lot of people hoped. But a lot of this hope was destroyed by the tanks and machine guns. Since then, I've become more critical and my works have a harder time getting published. And yet I am not *tizhiwai*. I still get a pension but except for that do not have any relation to the system. I do not attend the association's study sessions or writing competitions and do not follow their value system for writing. I feel I am a free and independent person. I basically separated myself from the system after 1989. After that, I basically did not attend their meetings. It has been almost thirty years now" (Johnson, 2016).

4.5 *Fang Fang: Both inside and outside the system*

In 2020, the case of Fang Fang reignited the inside-or-outside-the-system debate and put a spotlight on the CWA and the expectations the central government has on the association and its members. Fang Fang, a popular writer and former president of the Hubei Writers Association, famously wrote about the coronavirus outbreak in a daily blog from her hometown of Wuhan in 2020 and later had her *Wuhan Diary* published in book form in Chinese, English and German, among other languages. While her diary was extremely popular in China when it was released domestically, releasing it internationally in translation was seen by many as an act of treason. At the time China was beginning to come under intense international scrutiny for alleged cover-ups and early mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak. Chinese media outlets were ordered not to carry any of Fang Fang's articles, and her books – both new works and reprints – have been shunned by Chinese publishers. On social media she was labelled a traitor and received tens of thousands of abusive messages and death threats (Wang and Tsoi, 2021). Her position as a high-profile CWA member led to accusations that she was a mercenary betraying her country while on the public payroll. As Fang Fang was demonised online in China for “handing a sword to China's enemies” (Chaguan, 2020) for criticising some aspects of the early handling of the Covid outbreak in work published overseas, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the Party's highest internal control institution tasked with enforcing internal rules and rooting out corruption and malfeasance, launched an investigation into the CWA, according to members interviewed. This is an example, identified in research by Carothers and Zhang (2023), of how under Xi Jinping inspections (*xunshi* 巡视) that used to be focused primarily on curbing corruption have been increasingly used to promote ideological conformity and loyalty to the Party. Under the CPPF, this reflects an aggressive brand of Party Moat-Building that has become more prevalent in recent years.

“From the national, to the provincial, to the local levels, the same questions are being asked [by the CCDI]. How could the CWA have allowed this to happen? Fang Fang had been inside the system for decades, she was a well-known part of the system and had greatly benefitted from it. They want to know how could this betrayal be allowed to happen?” one central member said. “They saw it as a spit in the face, a spit from people they think should be grateful. They are extremely angry about this. This is the kind of situation they expect the association to handle, to

protect the government from,” a member of the Beijing association said. “They are now sending a message that this is unacceptable, it will not be tolerated.”

One Shanghai writer said officials wanted to know “why they were paying somebody well to stab them in the back at a critical moment, and they also wanted to know how the CWA was going to ensure something like the Fang Fang case does not happen again.” Political sessions for writers increased in the aftermath to reinforce the message that writers should first and foremost serve the Party-state, he added. Public examples were made, for instance after literature professor Liang Yanping (梁艳平, b.1961) expressed support for Fang Fang online she was placed under official investigation and fired from her position in Hubei University for “inappropriate speech” (Xie, 2020).

In some ways Fang Fang could be considered the epitome of an establishment writer who was ‘inside the system’. A Communist Party member and former president of the Hubei Writers Association, she has long had a salary paid by the Writers Association and has lived for the past three decades in a state-provided apartment in Wuhan in the Literary and Arts Federation in a community alongside other officially recognised and approved writers and artists (Jandrić, 2020). By the same token, the prolific author has had clashes with the Party-state too, such as in 2017 when her award-winning novel *Soft Burial*, a critical take on the human costs involved in Mao Zedong’s land reform campaigns, was banned from sale for being too radical. Early criticism of the book had come from semi-official entities such as the Worker, Peasant and Soldier Reading Group which organised a literature criticism seminar in Wuhan and labelled the novel a poisonous plant (Lam, 2017).

Fang Fang’s situation shows the complex terrain that Chinese writers navigate. At issue was not her writing, which was widely praised initially, it was that foreign publishers had picked it up and suddenly the author was accused of airing the nation’s dirty linen. Her case also exhibits the ambivalence of how an establishment writer can run afoul of the censors, have a book banned and face consequences in the short term, but in many cases not be totally ostracised and can continue to work within the system. In such cases, the author’s next book may receive additional scrutiny but may well be published if it does not raise any official red flags, and unless the wrongdoing is considered to be egregious the writer can continue to hold official positions. There have been many cases where writers have had work banned, side-lined or were officially criticised in some way, and have still managed to hold high-level professorships or editorial

positions. Partly down to fragmented authoritarianism (Lieberthal and Oxenberg, 1988), works and writers out of favour one year can find themselves somehow back inside the fold the following year. In the CPPF context, Fang Fang is a writer the establishment has nurtured for decades but yet when she finally establishes herself internationally she is disowned and condemned as the Party Moat-Building tendencies surface in the face of a potentially critical and undermining narrative.

Turning to the poetry realm, there are still some poets who would refer to themselves as being outside the system, in part because they might still occasionally distribute writings unofficially to small personal networks, and work outside officially sanctioned channels. Generally, as long as this unofficial activity remains sufficiently obscure and low-key, and does not present any notable official challenge, it can stay below the radar. The emergence of avant-garde poetics created a need for unofficial publishing channels, but “the notion of the avant-garde often appears to operate in the aesthetic dimension rather than the institutional” (Van Crevel, 2017. p.12). These two worlds often intertwine. While poets might be perceived aesthetically as being unorthodox and outside the system, they can still publish in official platforms, be appointed to roles at universities, accept official awards and hold CWA membership. Rather than letting these things influence any assessment of the integrity of these writers, Van Crevel writes, “this is perhaps a sign of the unofficial scene changing the official scene.”

Fang Fang’s case illustrates how China’s literary landscape is not binary, divided into supplicant apparatchiks and dissident narratives, but rather presents a complex and ever-shifting range of individual voices working within an opaque system that tightens and relaxes the clamps depending on the prevailing political atmosphere. It is important to stress too that membership of the CWA, or being considered close to or inside the system at times, is not in itself generally considered an act of collusion or resignation, accepting the role of propagandist. The reality is much more nuanced and as outlined many writers who are association members have courted controversy at times and had their work censored etc. To many, the Writers Association draw is the social and practical benefits it offers. In practice there tends to be no straightforward classification between pro- and anti-establishment, but rather one where writers have to constantly navigate complex terrain and fluid interpretations. As Walsh states “In reality the relationship between criticism and complicity is as cloudy as the editorial demands of the state” (2022, p.17). This nebulous state is reflected in the instruction to ‘tell the China story well’, intentional ambiguity that prompts official pivots and U-turns. The literary cycle is notable for flows and

backflows, a cyclical scheme encapsulated in the CPPF where conflicting inputs – consecutive or simultaneous – result in outcomes falling short of expectations.

In many ways the systemic official securitisation approach taken in what has evolved into a high-tech surveillance state has shifted the parameters of the ‘inside the system or outside the system’ debate. On one level, the concept of being ‘outside the system’ would carry anti-establishment or even dissident tones, but in reality the censorship and control apparatus has been so comprehensively expanded in recent years to essentially render such categories irrelevant in literary circles. Anyone disaffected and so inclined can write what they please, but attempts to disseminate and promote such texts to any meaningful extent will inevitably be smothered. Official repercussions would be expected. This pillar of Gerschewski’s stability theory, repression, is on full flex and functions effectively. It is indeed so effective as a background threat it is rarely called into play. As with Link’s (2002) “anaconda in the chandelier”, the censorship apparatus does not have to move to influence behaviour, its mere presence is generally sufficient. With the heavy hand rarely required, co-optation is the favoured tool in contemporary times, presenting an image of a frictionless and supportive environment that enhances legitimacy and reinforces stability.

Individual writers still have views on what might construe inside or outside the system approaches, but under the current environment the scope for taking anything that may be deemed a confrontational stance is highly restricted. One writer said that to them, in this political atmosphere, being outside the system would mean simply opting to put down their pen and not write at all, or to just write for themselves and keep all manuscripts in their drawer at home. While varying perspectives exist, there appears to be consensus that the propensity to challenge the political status quo in any meaningful way on the literary front is negligible.

4.6 *Web literature’s challenge to the system*

Another example of the unofficial scene changing the official scene is the world of internet literature (CIL), which has seen a meteoric rise in popularity in recent years. By 2022 there were 20 million authors of web literature and 500 million readers in China. With more than 32 million published titles, the industry is a 26.7 billion yuan business. Sales in the overseas market alone in 2021 achieved 2.9 billion yuan (*China Daily*, 2023).

Web fiction is generally organised according to genres and subgenres on online platforms where users can read, publish and interact with other users. Often serialised, writers can

publish tens of thousands of words per day, and users pay a monthly subscription fee or a pay-per-view fee to read content and interact with writers. Revenues are shared with the platform host. While not always considered highly by some of the literary establishment, the success has been undeniable and these days online writers are driving the growth of the Writers Association. According to data released by the China Online Literature Forum in 2020, online writers accounted for one-tenth of the 663 new members joining the Writers Association in 2020, and 14 provinces across the country have established online associations (Xie and Gu, 2021). Web fiction's intellectual property has become a key channel for TV programmes, animations and video games etc, with downstream cultural products from 2019 to 2020 derived from web fiction valued at over 1 trillion yuan. Of the 100 most popular TV programmes developed in 2018 and 2019 in China, 42 were adapted from web fiction (Zhao, 2022).

The increase in popularity has brought an increase in scrutiny and the government has introduced a ratings system based on to what extent the content matches socialist values. Undesirable content is purged, and low-scoring sites are penalised and could face closure (Walsh, 2022). A real-name registration system was introduced by the NPPA in 2020 to tighten accountability and control and publishers were instructed to release only “healthy and positive” material and “correctly guide public opinion” (Cheung, 2022). Several official initiatives have been aimed at encouraging writers of web fiction to focus on realism and ‘tell the China story well’, and in 2022 a group of 40 writers and administrators involved in web fiction pledged to better self-regulate and take steps to improve the quality of web fiction (Jin, 2022). Writers can face hefty punishments for disseminating content deemed to be beyond the boundaries of the law. In one 2018 case an author who wrote homoerotica under the pseudonym Tianyi was sentenced to over 10 years in jail on the charge of producing and disseminating pornographic material for a book (Cheung, 2022).

To capitalise on the success of web fiction, while seeking to moderate its approach, the authorities established the world's inaugural University of Online Fiction. Mo Yan was appointed honorary president and the university plans capacity for 100,000 students each year (Zhang and Xun, 2013). In this connection, there has been a wave of new creative writing programmes opening in China in recent years. Currently there are at least 200 universities across China that offer undergraduate courses in creative writing, while many universities have set up postgraduate degree courses in creative writing (Yang, 2020). It is noteworthy that at a time when

many practicing writers are despondent due to the increasingly oppressive political system in China, so many people are studying creative writing, The development of online opportunities is certainly one key driving force behind this, presenting low barriers to entry for creative outlets.

The success of web fiction has taken many by surprise. With extremely high levels of output and often little or no editorial scrutiny, literary quality levels can vary widely. But it has struck a massive chord at home and is successfully generating grassroots-driven soft power overseas. While it managed to get away with low levels of official scrutiny for several years, the recent tightening of controls has many in the sector worried. The authorities are now trying to both sanitise the space and capitalise on its success, which again could be considered something of a paradoxical endeavour reflected in the CPPF given its original appeal lay to a large extent precisely in the fact it was edgy and unregulated. The movement has however been a sharp riposte to those who would argue contemporary China lacks creative initiative. Left to their own devices, and with scant resources at their disposal, millions of creatives came together and built a flourishing, vibrant and internationally respected literary scene – something China Writers Association officials must surely envy.

4.7 *Public criticism of CWA*

The China Writers Association has been the recipient of plentiful criticism throughout the years. Particularly as the political atmosphere relaxed at times, many complaints about the system surfaced in the domestic media and across social media. Over the past decade there has been little by way of public criticisms of the CWA, but as mentioned this should be viewed more as a reflection on the wider societal controls that have been imposed on freedom of expression rather than any reflection on the association itself. In the interviews with writers and industry professionals on their perspectives on how the CWA functions, views expressed ran the gamut from highly negative, to very positive, to – in the majority of cases – somewhere in between. Before presenting a summary of those comments and views, I will introduce some of the historical disputes and criticisms that surfaced over the years.

In the early days of the reform era there was much excitement about the potential for China's literature but critics maintained the CWA remained something of a closed shop. In 1980 Zheng Yimei (郑逸梅, 1895-1992), for instance, who had been writing since the 1910s and was one of China's oldest and most prolific writers, still could not get admission to the Shanghai

branch of the Writers Association. Zheng's son publicly complained, saying that there were people in the association who had no literary works at all, only connections. Many young writers also complained at the time that as both membership in the association and professional status for those who had it were for life, and the slots were taken, it left no room for the young to enter. They pointed to cases of senior writers who had professional status, and continued to draw salaries, but no longer published (Link, 2000). In the second half of 1992, two newspapers *Wenxue Bao* (文学报) and *Wenyi Bao* (文艺报) ran numerous articles and reports about the topic of reforming the professional writers' system. *Wenxue Bao* also hosted a symposium at this time exploring the question of where the commercial tide would take Chinese literature. Some writers, including Wang Meng and Feng Jikai (冯骥才, b.1942), supported reforms, contending that many professional writers lived on the system without producing quality works and that the association had become a bureaucracy that did not really serve writers (Kong, 2005). China's "New Generation" of writers of the time, born in the 1960s-1970s, existed increasingly outside the old-style socialist literary system, living by the market economy and holding down day jobs with newspapers, publishers, or businesses. Lovell (2006) writes that it would be wrong to assume the market economy saw an end to political restrictions at the time as writing about politics was still very much taboo. But market forces pulled the sector more towards entertainment fare, and away from serious political discussion, which fit with the CCP's emphasis on market development rather than political reform. By the early 1990s, the market for such material was expanding quickly, allowing some high-profile writers to leave state jobs and pursue freelance careers (Kong, 2005).

Politics was never far in the background. In a public act of defiance in 2001, Wang Lixiong (王力雄, b.1953), author of the thriller *Yellow Peril*, withdrew from the CWA in anger at the association's emphasis on ideology and CCP political work. In a public letter he highlighted the dense political speeches, resolutions and summations that monopolise the associations' meetings and publications. He wrote that the CWA was intent on turning its membership into intellectual corpses, leaving the writers with no honour, only shame (Martinsen, 2006).

In 2003 there was a flurry of high-profile resignations from the CWA. In October 2003, Li Rui (李锐, b.1950), a high-profile writer from Shanxi quit his post as vice-chair of the Shanxi Writers Association and resigned from the China Writers Association. In an open letter, he wrote that he was deeply concerned about the association's increasing bureaucracy. Several writers

left the Hunan Writers Association that year too, citing internal corruption. Xia Shang (夏商, b.1969), a Shanghai writer who also dropped out of the association in 2003, criticised the lack of focus on literature (SCMP, 2003).

There was ongoing criticism about the type of people who were allowed to become association members. In one high-profile case, pop idol and writer Guo Jingming (郭敬明, b.1983) was the youngest member to ever join the CWA in 2006 when he was only 23 years old. This stirred controversy as two years prior to his joining a court had found him guilty of plagiarism, saying that his novel *Never Flowers in Never Land* shared 12 major plot elements and 57 similarities with a book by another author. The court said the celebrity had violated copyright laws and ordered him to pay 200,000 yuan and apologise to the original writer. He paid the fine but never apologised. (Lim, 2009). In 2009, legendary Hong Kong martial arts writer Jin Yong (金庸, 1924-2018) (aka Louis Cha) joined the CWA, a move that caused heated debate. Writer and blogger Han Han (韩寒, b.1982) wrote that Jin Yong was obviously old and confused and had no idea about the political realities in mainland China. One writer, mocking the fact that association writers are meant to absorb all the main political ideologies of the Communist Party and absorb them into their work, asked: “How can you ask a writer like Louis Cha to write martial arts novels according to the spirit of [President Jiang Zemin’s] Three Represents?” (Martinsen, 2006). Similar criticisms were made when actors joined the association, often on the strength of autobiographies that had been largely ghost-written.

In April 2010, ‘China’s King of Fairytales’ Zheng Yuanjie (郑渊洁, b.1955) published on his blog that he would be resigning from the association with immediate effect due to sincere misgivings he had about the organisation (Zheng, 2006). His primary issue related to the associations’ funding and lack of financial transparency. He said that there were about 3,000 Writers Associations above the county level across the country, and based on an average annual expenditure of about 200,000 yuan per organisation per year he estimated the conservative calculation of taxpayers’ taxes for all these Writers Associations should be around 700 million yuan per year (GBP 85 million) at the time. He suggested many officials and members were involved because of financial benefits and not due to any attachment to literature.

Despite being one of the country’s most popular writers for several years, Han Han never joined the association and was often scathingly critical of the official literary world. In

several published comments he urged writers to stay away from the official institutions. “The literary scene is crap. The Mao Dun Literature Award is crap. Pure literature magazines are crap,” he wrote. “It’s like 100 people masturbating so 100 people can watch... old-timers are still out there saying, ‘Look at me masturbating, make sure you copy the exact rhythm of my movements or you won’t be able to enter the wanking scene’.” He compared writers who were in the CWA to kept mistresses who perform sexual acts on demand, and he said that real writers should prefer to go begging rather than try to gain official favour (Hockx, 2015. p.96).

The major literary awards the Writers Association gives out have been dogged by criticism with many alleging the selection processes are unfair and favour those close to the system. In 2011, the state-run *China Daily* carried a critical opinion column headlined, “Literary prizes or farcical awards”, noting that of those shortlisted for that year’s Mao Dun award eight of the top 10 on the list were chairpersons or vice-chairpersons of provincial Writers Associations. The paper then went on to translate extracts of a critical editorial from the *Guangzhou Daily* which said: “Official status cannot and should not be a criterion for literary excellence. That is why people doubt the authenticity of prizes that are awarded to officials for their literary achievements” (*China Daily*, 2021). Tie Ning, the CWA president, withdrew her work from consideration for the Mao Dun Prize that year in the wake of the criticism (Walsh, 2022). In 2014, there was also widespread criticism of the selection of the Lu Xun awards and the organisers of the Lao She award were ordered by officials not to hold a planned awards ceremony or issue a cash prize, apparently because of big concerns about the selection process.

The awards are also criticised by some as being a form of soft censorship. The Mao Dun and the Lu Xun literary prizes primarily recognise works whose aesthetic value is easily visible but also which are ‘positive’ in their thought and content, according to high-profile writer Yan Lianke. He said that whenever one of these literary prizes is proposed, it must first be submitted to the propaganda office so that its standards for selection and evaluation are reviewed and approved. “As a result, these prizes are effectively stripped of their populist potential and are left only with their ideological significance with respect to the Party, the government, and a notion of ‘positive energy’.” As they carry large cash prizes plus the possibility of other rewards such as from a writer’s local government these prizes are very appealing, but in order to win, an author must write works that accord with the government’s ideological demands. “Naturally, this has the

effect of taking the objectives of the earlier hard censorship regime and re-implementing them using a new set of softer approaches” (Yan, 2016. p.431).

Referencing Bourdieu’s field of cultural production (1993), literary awards are an important meeting of cultural capital and economic capital. Squires (2004, p.42) argues literary awards act as “gatekeepers and guardians of culture” and “can be viewed as one of the first steps in the canonisation of books”, so consequently are often a major boost for a book’s economic success and market longevity. She warns, however, that the criteria the judges use to make their selection is an important factor in determining the judgement and cultural capital behind the award, as is the criteria by which the judges themselves are selected. Moreover, of paramount importance is who appoints the judges. “The answer to this reveals much about the ideological construction of the particular prize,” she writes. The judges for China’s major literary awards are appointed by the Party-state, and the criticism from writers and the wider public has been that political criteria has often been prioritised over artistic merit.

Due to all these criticisms, the association is often on the defensive. When asked why there seemed to be a constant barrage of criticism of the CWA, the association’s secretary Chen Qirong said that the criticism, mockery and at times abuse of the association in society or on the internet was because “most people do not know about the association, do not know the nature of the association and what work it does, so there are some misunderstandings”. He said that part of the issue was down to the fact that the association had not sufficiently engaged in public relations and communications, and to address that they had set up a spokesman system to increase transparency. Beyond that, he said “it cannot be denied that there are some people who are prejudiced and biased against the CWA” (Lei, 2009).

As the CWA is built on the model of the Soviet Union it was often seen as the product of the planned economy. Secretary Chen said that the focus of the CWA had shifted to adapt with the times. In the past, he said, the CWA had played a good role, and many red classics were created by professional writers at that time. The issues of reform were taken into consideration at a very early stage, he said. For example, while in previous times the association emphasised management, now the main function of the association was service – “service for writers and service for literature”. According to Chen, there are many benefits of association membership. The association can recommend works to publishers, or to newspapers and journals they are affiliated with. Writers can attend lectures and seminars, and also possibly travel abroad with association delegations. And

they support “a number of important works each year to encourage some writers if we think the writer is in line with the requirements”. He defended the work of the association and the use of the budget that it was given each year by the central government. With tens of millions of yuan, the state organises the entire writers’ ranks and the system works well, he said. “If the works are good, is this investment not very effective? The money is basically used to support literary works, to run literary newspapers and periodicals, to organise seminars, to run modern Chinese literature museums, to train writers at the Lu Xun Institute of literature, and so on, including arranging for writers to visit and go on exchanges abroad, which are obvious and direct to the development of literature.” He said moving forward the association would try to attract more young writers and more internet writers. “The Writers Association must face up to reality and see the trends in literature development. If literature refuses youth, there will be no future. If we refuse the Internet, we will be eliminated by history,” he said.

It is notable that much of the published criticism of the CWA and high-profile departures appeared before Xi Jinping took control and there has been a distinct lack of public criticism in the intervening years. Having interviewed several writers for this thesis it is clear this is more to do with the tightened restrictions on public criticisms of any kind rather than any kind of tacit approval of the CWA’s recent performance. While several state-run newspapers published scathing reports and editorials on the management of the CWA in the 1990s and 2000s, there has been a dearth of critical articles published in the Xi era. Similarly, there was a time when high-profile resignations from the CWA were commonplace with the departing writer publishing a missive on social media and the literary community absorbed in lengthy follow-on debates. Those debates are a thing of the past, with their absence explained largely I would argue by repression rather than any sudden outburst of literary harmony. When asked why public criticism of the association was rare recently compared to earlier years, one prominent Beijing writer said the times had changed dramatically in the interim. “There is no chance anymore to do that, those options have got smaller and smaller in Chinese society now. What we have seen in recent years is like The Second Cultural Revolution. All hope of real reform has been crushed, so there is no point in bringing trouble,” he said. “Writers believe the system is not going to change, certainly not in the short term. So, what can we do? We are writers after all. We either protest and leave the association and live and write in isolation, or accept this is the way things are now and continue on and do the best we can in difficult times, and hope for better times.”

When Zhu Wen and Han Dong initiated their “breakaway” survey in 1998 and many elements of the literary community used the opportunity to publicly disparage the CWA, more conservative voices in the community labelled the move as “collective patricide”. It would be reasonable to assume any similar initiative in the current political climate would be tantamount professionally to collective suicide rather than patricide. This oppressive environment is an example of the Party Moat-Building that undermines policies to promote writing and elevate the nation’s literary output, resulting in a frustrating cyclical process of policy and counter policy depicted in the CPPF.

4.8 *Interview comments on the CWA*

Discussions and interviews for this research were held primarily in the period from 2019 to 2022, with a total of 60 writers, publishers, editors and officials speaking on the function of the CWA and key issues facing the literary establishment. A minority of those interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the CWA, as shall be elaborated on below. Others gave nuanced opinions and were sympathetic to the officials working in the system and appreciative of a lot of their efforts, but overall saw the CWA as being much more a mechanism of manipulation and control than an entity determined to elevate the standard of the nation’s literary output. Several others were scathing in their criticism and would ultimately be in favour of seeing the association disbanded.

Censorship was a primary concern. Across the board, writers brought up and bemoaned the increasing censorship and rigid political control they faced. “My hope of course is that as a writer I can someday write about whatever topics or themes I want to create. All Chinese writers feel this, even if they do not admit it to themselves or others,” a Guangdong writer said. “As a writer, all I can do for now is keep writing, keep writing, and I really hope that in future I can write with more freedom.”

He said the CWA does not directly censor writers, or beat or detain them, and it does not issue overt threats. “It does not have to. It is part of a sophisticated system where they can control the writers, the intellectuals, and their creative output, with the lightest touch. The machine seems to function automatically. The CWA is an instrument of the Party. The influence of the CWA is not one of direct control, it is more one of leading and guiding. The tone is not ‘you have to, you must’, it is not that extreme. We still have the freedom to choose whether to be a member

or not of the CWA. If someone writes something the CWA really does not like the association would not follow up directly. That is left to the police and public security system, they would do that. The CWA would just squeeze them out of the circle, they would not publish them and not give them any opportunities or any platforms.”

A writer from Shanghai summed up his views by saying “Essentially it is an organisation for the Party to control writers. The President and VP are paid and have levels like any other government officials. We know the CWA concept was borrowed from the Soviet Union and has two purposes. Number one, it is easier for the country to control writers. And number two, they encourage the writers to write positive stories and speak highly of the country. If I had the choice, I would just scrap this organisation.”

Another agreed with this sentiment, saying “If I were made chairman of the Writers Association, the first thing I would do is disband it. Writers are quite independent. It is redundant. We do not need it. Personally, I think the CWA system is unnecessary. It does not exist in other countries around the world. Maybe with the exception of North Korea.”

The point the CWA was adopted from the Soviet Union and belonged in a previous time was brought up by several writers, including one from Beijing who added: “Basically, its function is to control writers. It is not a social or civil association, it is a political department. Strictly speaking, it is like a ministry, so the leader of the CWA has the same position as a ministry official. It is like keeping a pet, like a dog. On one side you threaten the dog, and you beat the dog and you train the dog. On the other hand, you give the dog some treats and some snacks if they do what you want them to do. So, it means they terrorise the writers in the CWA so the writers do not write what they really think. The writers do not have the spirit or the strength to stand up to them. And then the association offers the writers some awards, some titles, some honour, so for the association managing its writers is like a pet owner learning how to control a pet.”

The political and propaganda requirements linked to payments the association made was also brought up by several interviewees, “I believe there is nothing free in life. So, behind every offer there is a purpose. Behind all the government support for the bookstores and the publishing industry if you look at those documents and policies you can always see there is a reason behind it. It is a political reason. Nothing to do with books or literature... The CWA does not help at all, actually it hurts, because all it wants to do is to promote those positive and shiny political themes,” a Shenzhen writer said.

Another major bone of contention was the increased CWA focus on politics and study sessions, which several said had become prolonged and more arduous in recent years. “It is all a game,” a Suzhou writer said. They have to be seen to be promoting the latest political speeches and the ideology. We have to be seen to be attending the sessions and paying attention. Everyone knows it is meaningless, just a charade. But it wastes so much time and energy, it is too much!”

The views expressed on the CWA were certainly not all negative and many interviewees pointed out some benefits of the association and the system it ran, and several said that despite its shortcomings they were still proud and honoured to be members. They cited in particular the various ways the association helped authors get published and earn income, the training courses and support they provided, and the sense of community the association offered. Being a member was a form of recognition for a writer’s work and it was still prestigious to be a member, several interviewees said, while some spoke of how their membership opened opportunities for them that would have otherwise been unavailable. “Membership of the CWA works like a certificate or a licence in China. So basically, if you are a member this certificate has some benefits and opens doors, especially if you are dealing with the government,” one writer from Zhejiang said. “The benefits are that if you join the CWA you are inside the circle, the literary network. You get to join the symposiums, meetings, tours, salons etc, you get to meet important editors and publishers and officials, and you hear the latest information and opportunities, and have the chance to exchange ideas with other writers,” said another writer.

Others complimented the role the CWA carries out in setting literary standards and protecting “pure literature” over more commercial literature, and it was also pointed out that the organisation has evolved dramatically from its early days and now undertook a more modern and service-oriented approach. It was also noted in appreciation by some the delicate balancing act the CWA had to perform – on one hand working to please its members and trying to improve the literary world in China, while on the other hand being essentially a government department and having to fulfil various Party tasks and political obligations on an ongoing basis.

Several writers interviewed expressed the view that the status of the association had diminished over the years, and it no longer had as an important role as it once had. A writer from the Guangdong Writers Association surmised one reason that the influence of the association might have declined was that literature was not so important to people in Chinese society anymore because there are so many other entertainment options open to people. He also said that in previous

decades the only way for writers to get published or access resources was through the CWA, but nowadays “writers can access many other resources, and find other ways to get their voices heard.”

One young writer said she had been writing for several years but only joined the Shanghai Writers Association recently as it had not seemed like an important priority to her to join. “As a young writer, I think now we have many more options. Previously we could only get published in some journals organised by the CWA but now we can write online literature and use this channel to show our works and communicate with readers.” She felt the relationship between the association had changed over the years and had become less formal. “In my opinion, the relationship these days between the writers and the association is more like friends. Before it was like the relationship between a boss and an employee. Now it provides a platform for writers to connect and offers some international opportunities.”

4.9 *The CWA: A nest of chickens that do not lay any eggs?*

While the investment in the CWA network across the country has been enormous, officials have expressed concern at the overall quality of the creative output. A report published in 2021 concluded that despite all the efforts to promote literature in China, high-quality writers were still scarce. While the report authors acknowledged there was an increase in the number of content creators, they said there were still only a few writers whose works could meet official cultural standards and were recognised by the public. One of the reasons behind this they said was the fact the best-seller lists in China were not at all fluid. Of the 30 best-selling titles each year, the vast majority have featured on the list for some years and normally only three to six new writers break into this list each year. In literary fiction as well as in genre fiction, there is a lack of high-quality breakthroughs, the authors said, which was having a knock-on effect on film and television due to a lack of sufficiently high-quality scripts and intellectual property (Xie and Gu, 2021).

One writer interviewed said there was an internal joke that is critical of the CWA and the quality of its literary output which goes: “The association has raised a nest of chickens that do not lay eggs (*yiwo bu xiadan deji* 一窝不下蛋的鸡).” He personally felt this was unfair criticism but said considering how vast the CWA bureaucracy was and the resources that were poured into the system he could understand why people might criticise it in this way. Another said the messaging they got from officialdom seemed to imply in their view the contemporary crop of writers was not living up to China’s proud literary traditions. By way of example, they pointed to

the fact that despite big promotional and translation campaigns only a few Chinese writers were known overseas.

The censorship regime could certainly be apportioned some of the blame in any discussion about perceived lack of literary quality output. In conversation with one writer about the tightening censorship and publishers' reluctance to touch anything potentially sensitive, for example, he said it now takes him months to decide upon what to write next given there are so many taboo areas. Every time he comes up with a topic that he feels should be safe, as he outlines the storyline he finds it weaves into potentially sensitive areas for the government – of which there are very, very many. In many cases he has to abandon projects after just starting them as he feels he will not be able to avoid problematic terrain if he continues. He sees no point in investing months or years of hard work in writing a book that will never see light of day. So he goes back to square one. This struggle, similar to many others across the country, takes place in his head in his home. There are no police or courts or raised voices or vigilant censors with red markers involved. The subtle control system functions silently and effectively. This repressive agenda-setting is a core element of the CPPF and constantly interrupts the flow of creative literary output.

In addition to avoiding potentially sensitive areas, writers are also encouraged to write positive and harmonious stories. Several writers said they resent this type of instruction, saying it imposes unrealistic requirements on creatives and shows a fundamental lack of understanding of narrative arcs that would often and naturally embrace concepts like conflict, tension and darker sentiment. Moreover, the official tilt towards theme writing enters the arena of propaganda more than literature. Beyond this constant official interloping in the contemporary creation of texts, the long list of historical traumas the cultural sector has suffered would inevitably have left it scarred and stymied development.

Any judgement on overall sector quality would be highly subjective, but given the historical legacy and all the contemporary political intrusion, it would not be surprising if indeed standards were not as high as they might be. From another perspective, it is a credit to the nation's writers that they manage to create the high quality of content they do, across so many genres, under such challenging conditions.

Elaborate policies designed to elevate the literary world to superpower status that then institutionalise bureaucratic meddling in the nation's literary output is a shining example of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework. The cycle swings around: from ambitious policies, to

allocation of abundant resources, to the triggering of securitisation and legitimacy concerns, to Party Moat-Building, repression and co-optation, to official frustration at policy results. While authorities may call for more creativity, I would argue they are aware the primary benefit of the CWA network to them is it helps generate co-optation more than creativity, one of the three pillars of stability (Gerschewski), and one that is often cheaper and more effective than repression to maintain. Creativity may well spring too through the Writers Association's channels, but the official priority is in controlling and channelling the nation's literary forces. Through the gentle use of extremely well-funded co-optation, this system is a fully functioning example of Party Moat-Building – intercepting critical voices, amplifying supporting messaging, winning the endorsement of the intelligentsia etc. – all of which helps mitigate festering cross-society security concerns and shores up legitimacy. When homegrown literary talent breaks through onto the world stage, like Mo Yan or Liu Cixin (刘慈欣, b.1963), that is a bonus and the Party will take credit and harness the success to bolster patriotic spirit and soft power, but that is a secondary consideration. The primary concerns are securitisation, co-optation and control.

4.10 Summary of CWA

In China's creative publishing world the CWA is the official frontline in the battle to 'tell China's story well'. The association is uniquely placed to evaluate and appreciate Perry Link's 'uses of literature', and presents a core element in this research's development of his work. As the above indicates, while the organisation nominally endeavours to develop the nation's literary output, as an arm of the Party-state under the control of the CCP's central Propaganda Department its key role is to monitor, control, and steer literary output into positive territory so that it does not undermine the legitimacy of the authorities or threaten stability in any way. Gerschewski's co-optation is highly prominent in its approach, with hints of repression and ostracisation never too far in the background. The continuous cycle of (input) pouring great levels of resources and energy into the initiative with the declared aim of cultivating a literary superpower, but in effect using those resources to declaw and intellectually cordon the nation's writers (output), is a working example of the contradictions inherent in the Cultural Policy Paradox Framework outlined in this thesis. The Party Moat-Building actions are subtle in the literary world in contemporary China. Typical authoritarian images of publishing house offices ransacked, writers thrown in jail or books burned are rare occurrences these days – they do happen, but rarely. Much more prevalent is a

sleeping, guiding control, with co-optation and incentives leading the offer of cooperation, while potential acts of repression provide steely backup.

The prevailing sentiment coming from writers is one of weary resignation, with the phrase *mei banfa* 没办法 – suggesting there is nothing that can be done to improve the situation – and a shrug of the shoulders being a common response in discussions. There seems to be a widespread acceptance that the Party-state, aided and abetted by modern technologies and gargantuan resources, and driven by elevated securitisation and existential concerns, has now developed a system of supervision and control so comprehensive and efficient even contemplating how to sidestep it would be futile. The old days where things were a lot more flexible, particularly at the local level, and when useful contacts could be called upon in times of need, are long gone. The system now is largely seen as pervasive and unassailable. So, most writers who choose to continue writing just opt to work within the system and make the best of their lot.

Part of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework then asks can this subtle control system produce ground-breaking creative output across the country with any degree of regularity? Literature has often thrived in tense political times but when writers are commandeered for Party propaganda purposes the chances of connecting with readers are inevitably diminished. And for writers who manage to avoid sensitive or political areas in their narratives, the challenge of successfully writing around myriad constraints would surely result in a very different outcome had they not been in place. Who knows what Chinese writers could or would produce over the next decade or two if all restrictions were suddenly lifted? It would be very interesting to watch, but in the current environment it is a highly unlikely proposition. Securitisation, control and stability are political priorities and creative writing, despite political annunciations and programmes ostensibly aimed at elevating the scene to world-class levels, will not be permitted to evolve organically in the currently political environment for fear it could potentially play an eroding role. The China Writers Association, for its part, leads the CCP's efforts to "domesticate" (Haraszti, 1997. p.5) the potentially feral threat that are the nation's literary creators.

Chapter 5: On the same page: Policies to catch and guide the readers' eye

5.1 Introduction

With the publishing system and network of Writers Associations across the provinces structured to produce a steady stream of 'positive' and Party-supporting 'themed' narratives, as outlined above, the focus of this thesis now turns to the widespread dissemination and policies to encourage the populace to engage with the curated titles. In this section, I will assess how literature-related policies emanate from Beijing and holistically amount to an elaborate nationwide ecosystem of content creation, control and consumption, including with the development of reading programmes and select support for bookshops.

I will first consider the policies devised to encourage the habit of reading and getting the populace to connect and engage with the titles that have been created. As this section outlines, the schemes are ostensibly designed to enable the general public to have a deeper engagement with literature. However, once securitisation concerns and Party Moat-Building come to the fore in the CPPF, the result is the creation of a highly sanitised and Party-curated environment, undermining the intent to cultivate an artistic, creative and self-expressive milieu.

5.2 *Elevating and enlightening the populace from the top down: The Reading For All programme*

A central government policy to encourage cadres and the general population to read more was officially introduced in November 2006 when 11 ministries and commissions, led by the Central Propaganda Department, held a symposium in Shenzhen and launched the *Reading for All* (*quanmin yuede* 全民阅读) initiative. At the 18th National Congress of the CCP in 2012 developing *Reading for All* activities became "an important strategic deployment". A state agency was established to promote "the in-depth development" of reading activities for all people, representing the fact that *Reading for All* "has risen from the original purely private voluntary behaviour to a national development strategy". The political underpinnings were made clear in the announcement that the strategy would be "utilising the cultural resources of Party and government organs... and under the guidance of the Party" would develop the *Reading for All*

programme to “realise the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Shanghai Observer*, 2020). In 2014, Premier Li Keqiang (李克强, b.1955) first included “Advocate *Reading for All*” into the government’s annual work report at the National People’s Congress, a policy he said was aimed at developing a “Literary Society”. In 2015, after the closing of the NPC, Premier Li said: *Reading for All* was a very important symbol of the progress of society and the improvement of the level of civilisation, and one that would not only increase the innovative forces of development but also enhance the moral force of society (*China Publishing Yearbook*, 2016). Many other top leaders also spoke publicly in recent years about the benefits of bookshops and reading. On April 23, 2015, on World Book Day, Liu Yunshan (刘云山, b.1947), member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, said the country would use reading activities to help build a socialist country with a strong cultural foundation” (*China Publishing Yearbook*, 2016).

Reading for All was then included in the government’s 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), establishing it as a key national cultural project. The preamble stated, “Reading is an important way for people to acquire knowledge and increase their wisdom. It is an important way for a country and a nation to develop in spirit and inherit civilisation. The Chinese nation has an excellent tradition of reading, advocating reading, and the history of poetry and writing continues for thousands of years.” The preamble noted that since the 18th CCP National Congress, “the party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has attached great importance to *Reading for All*”. In terms of the objectives, it states that this “period is the decisive stage for building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects and... realising the great dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. Under the new historical conditions, carrying out *Reading for All* in depth can raise citizens’ ideological and moral qualities, as well as their scientific and cultural qualities, while cultivating and practising the core values of socialism, inheriting the fine traditional Chinese culture, and meeting the people’s growing spiritual and cultural needs”. In practical terms the plan lays out initiatives to develop reading programmes, to promote reading extensively, and to encourage people from all parts of society to read more, and to read more “quality content” (Wang, 2016). The term “quality” is a loaded one, encouraging more high-brow literary consumption but also officially endorsed and sanctioned material. All provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities were instructed to design and implement *Reading for All* initiatives “to promote

reading from the top down”. As part of this “core project of cultural construction”, lists of officially recommended books and journals are developed in key categories. In the 2016-2020 period, the government announced that in support of this project they would publish and distribute about 3,000 titles linked to their key theme publishing projects, including original literary and artistic works, children’s books, ethnic minority publications, dictionaries, as well as titles in the areas of social sciences, humanities, natural sciences and engineering.¹¹

In 2020, following a review of the project in its early years the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee issued the Opinions on Promoting Reading for All, which put forward wider requirements and goals for the policy across the country moving forward. The issuance of the opinions “showed that the Party and the state have increased the importance they attach to the *Reading for All* programme to the level of achieving the two centenary goals and the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Shanghai Observer*, 2020). The following year, on the centenary of the CCP the Propaganda Department of the Party’s Central Committee launched a new nationwide reading campaign “to focus on the Party’s first 100 years and promote the reading of key publications on the history of the CCP, the country, reform and opening up, and socialist development among the general public”. A circular issued by the department instructed authorities to take the project promoting the Party’s history and achievements to all communities, ramp up the supply of related reading materials and update reading facilities in public spaces (SCIO, 2021).

The CCP’s central Propaganda Department called in 2022 for renewed efforts from all government departments across the country to promote reading and to substantially increase the number of people who read frequently by 2025. The department issued a circular, which was made public, indicating efforts should be made to promote public interest in reading “good books”, improve the people’s reading ability, and create a sound environment for reading across society. “Proper guidance should be provided”, the document stated, to stimulate interest, foster good habits and boost the people’s reading ability “to enhance moral integrity”, as well as scientific and cultural literacy among the public, the document read. The department said by 2025 a nationwide

¹¹ <https://www.nationalreading.gov.cn>

reading service system should be in place, offering authorities the “ability to provide high-quality content for the public” (Xinhua, 2022).

April 23 marks the annual World Book and Copyright Day appointed by UNESCO. While this date has been a key focus of the *Reading for All* project in recent years, in 2021 national political advisors suggested the establishment of a Chinese national book-reading day on Confucius’ birthday on September 28 to “further promote China's cultural construction”. Lin Yang (林阳, b.1958), a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) said the UNESCO holiday lacks promotion of traditional Chinese cultural elements. “Culture is the primary and most differentiated element. Foreign celebrations cannot replace our motherland’s own. Therefore, to promote national reading for all, it is still necessary to establish China's own book-reading day with its own cultural connotations.” Zhu Yongxin (朱永新, b.1958), another CPPCC member said celebrating a national reading day that pays tribute to Confucius “would continuously enhance ideological and moral quality as well as scientific and cultural quality, providing strong spiritual motivation and intellectual support for the realisation of the two centenary goals and the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation” (Zhang, 2021). From an official perspective, tying the promotion of reading to Confucius and other traditional cultural elements connects with ideological and nationalistic concepts, positions the Party as a moral and cultural guardian, and helps cement CCP legitimacy and perceived right to rule.

5.3 Evaluating the success of reading projects

As part of the programme, provinces are encouraged to organise many events under the *Reading for All* banner at city, town and village levels in efforts to encourage the public to read more and improve the provinces’ statistics related to per capita book consumption. In 2017 alone more than 30,000 events were held around the country, involving more than 10 million people. The Total Book Reading Volume, i.e. the number of books read per year, of those involved in the activity series was 10.97, far higher than the national average of 7.86, an official report said (Shi, 2017). A series of surveys was introduced to assess the reading habits of the population and to evaluate if the investment in the project was paying dividends (*Xinlang Dushu*, 2017). A key barometer is the National Reading Survey, which is conducted annually by the China Press and Publication Institute. The figures, which are widely published in major news outlets, are somewhat abstruse. Writers, publishers and booksellers often question the merit and veracity of these

statistics, as discussed below, but from and internal Party and bureaucracy governance tool they are seen as being important. Below are some of the key indicators from the survey for the years 2011-2022 (NPPA, 2023).

Year	Comprehensive Reading Rate	Book Reading Rate	Paper Book Reading Volume	E-book Reading Volume	Total Book Reading Volume
2011	77.6%	43.9%	4.35	1.42	5.77
2012	76.3%	54.9%	4.39	2.35	6.74
2013	76.7%	57.8%	4.77	2.48	7.25
2014	78.6%	58.0%	4.56	3.22	7.78
2015	79.6%	58.4%	4.58	3.26	7.84
2016	79.9%	58.8%	4.65	3.21	7.86
2017	80.3%	59.1%	4.66	3.12	7.78
2018	80.8%	59.0%	4.67	3.32	7.99
2019	81.1%	59.3%	4.65	2.84	7.49
2020	81.3%	59.5%	4.70	3.29	7.99
2021	81.6%	59.7%	4.76	3.30	8.06
2022	81.8%	59.8%	4.78	3.33	8.11

Figure 2: Key Indicators from the China National Reading Survey Report: 2011-2022. Source: National Press and Publications Administration (NPPA, 2023)

This survey is conducted among a sample of 18-70 year olds each year. The Comprehensive Reading Rate includes books, newspapers, magazines etc, and paper and digital reading. The figure aims to establish the percentage of people among the population who have a regular reading habit. As can be seen, the figure for 2022 was 81.8 per cent, up from 77.6 per cent in 2011. This essentially means more than four out of every five people sampled say they do have a reading habit. The central authorities set targets to increase this Comprehensive Reading Rate and each province and major city is surveyed annually to make up the national figure. Between cities and provinces there is intense rivalry as they each try to score comparatively higher on this

key survey.¹² The country has also introduced a Comprehensive Reading Index, which has been developed over the past decade by the China Press and Publications Institute. The index assesses two target groups – the reading level of residents, and the reading level of public servants. The index assesses the level of reading, reading frequency, reading type, reading time, reading environment, participation in reading activities, periodical reading rate, cell phone reading rate – among other indicators – and comes up with a comprehensive indicator that is used for comparative purposes between cities and provinces. Each city and province devises policies to improve its own performance, and surveys to assess them. In April 2017, for example, Chengdu released a report which showed that the Comprehensive Reading Index for Chengdu citizens in 2016 was 118.259, while the Comprehensive Reading Rate was 78.66 per cent, and the digital reading rate was 85.64 per cent. It said the Paper Book Reading Volume in the city was 7.109, while the E-book Reading Volume was 7.83. About 45.5 per cent of Chengdu residents read for 1 to 2 hours a day, according to the report. Compared with the results of the 14th National Reading Survey, it said these figures show that the Paper Book Reading Volume in Chengdu was 2.459 books per year higher than the national average, and the E-book Reading Volume was 4.62 books per year higher than the national average (Li, 2017).

In 2019, adult Chinese read on average 4.65 books in print and 2.84 digital books, whereas in 2018 it was 4.67 and 3.32, representing a small drop for both. Audio books are increasing in popularity, as 30.3 per cent of adults and 34.7 per cent of minors had a habit of listening to audio books in 2019, an increase of 4.3 and 8.5 per cent on the previous year. The report found mobile phones were the top choice of medium when Chinese people read. On average, adults spent 100.41 minutes a day on mobile phones, 15.54 minutes more than in 2018 (Jia, 2020). The survey shows people's priorities when using the internet was to socialise (60.2 per cent), followed by getting news (59 per cent) and enjoying video clips (56.9 per cent), while only 20.5 per cent of them used it to connect to books, newspapers or journals (Kang, 2022). In 2020, the

¹² This was brought up with Publicity Department officials from Chengdu and Chongqing in conversations with the author.

comprehensive reading rate of various media, including books, newspapers and periodicals and digital publications, was 81.3 per cent, the per capita reading of paper books was 4.70, and the per capita reading of e-books was 3.29 (Jiao, 2021). Results of the 2021 national survey showed the comprehensive reading rate of adults in China was up slightly at 81.6 per cent. The reading rate of books for minors aged 0-17 was 83.9 per cent, with a daily reading time of 51.90 minutes a day (*China Daily*, 2022).

Chinese officials say that on average readers in countries such as Germany and Japan consume more than twice as many paper and e-books as their Chinese counterparts, however they point out there are now almost 500 million online literature readers in China and their reading habits are not picked up in all surveys. They also point to the fact that the Chinese authorities have asked schools to reduce homework in recent years for primary and high school students to alleviate stress, which has impacted the national reading averages (Kang, 2022).

From a Party-state governance perspective, the promotion of reading ties into what is known in China as *suzhi* (素质) discourse, or population quality. This concept on emotional and intellectual quality and development was first discussed in the 1980s as part of China's modernisation programme. The concept partly connects the legitimacy of the Party-state to its historic promise to elevate the conditions of people, including on intellectual, educational and emotional levels (Murphy, 2004). As part of the CCP's own legitimacy barometer, this connects with Gerschewski's stability pillars and motivates official reading initiatives. The conflict inherent in the CPPF manifests itself with the rigid curation and control of approved materials.

Writers interviewed about the *Reading for All* policy had mixed views on the project, with many generally welcoming it but others questioned its effectiveness. "It sounds like a good policy, like the government is taking a good initiative, and the writers welcome it as we can get 1,000 or 2,000 yuan to do each book event if we are selected, and the events promote our books, but I am not sure if it actually encourages people to read, or to read more. Who knows about that? The survey data they announce sounds like nonsense to me," said one Chengdu-based writer. Others criticised the huge amount of funding being poured into organising all the events around the country. "The organisers get big budgets and that inner circle can make a fortune out of the policy, coming up with reports showing they held X number of events and increased the readings levels by Y in their region, but does anyone actually think it makes a real impact? I do not think so anyway," a writer from Nanjing said. "Most of these organisers do not even like literature, they

do not care about the readers and writers at all, they just see the financial opportunities,” another said.

The books selected was another bone of contention. “They focus on the government themed books or positive and uplifting stories. Some officials somewhere decide what is good literature and what is not. They have never picked my books, too dark for them I guess,” complained another writer from Fujian. “I do not think it helps writers a lot. It is kind of like a show. The government is running this but is just doing it to show they are doing it. It is more like propaganda. But it does not really benefit the writers,” felt a writer from Shenzhen.

Regarding libraries, the government runs 3,196 public libraries that have a collection of more than 1.1 billion paper books, 866 million e-books and 225,000 computers. The public borrowed 541 million books from libraries in 2021, representing a decline of 39.3 per cent year-on-year that would have been partly attributable to pandemic restrictions (Kang, 2022). China has a public library collection of 0.55 volumes per capita, which officials said is a significant gap compared with international standards such as 1.5 to 2.5 library collections per capita recommended by the International Federation of Library Associations and UNESCO (*China Daily*, 2022). Additionally, there are nearly 580,000 small Village Libraries (*nongjia shuwu* 农家书屋) around the country (Liu, 2022). The policy of establishing village libraries not only helps enhance the Party’s image but also boosts the size of book market, and is a great sales boost to the books that are selected (Yun, 2018).

5.4 *Reading for All summary*

The *Reading for All* policy is an expansive initiative given a high official priority, a top-down CCP policy designed to reach every corner of the country. On one level it is presented as a project designed to elevate the literacy, literary and educational levels of the populace, developing a more erudite and civilised society, which is designed to bring economic and societal benefits to the country, and thereby enhance the legitimacy of the authorities. The project also has other political aims and objectives, as can be seen in the directives and circulars that talk about imparting moral, ideological and spiritual values with Party guidance, and the focus on patriarchal and subjective terms such as “good” and “high-quality” books, often theme titles that support the Party-state’s political priorities and reflect positively on its governance. Party officials select the social and cultural titles the populace should consume. Identifying themselves as champions of

Chinese culture also helps position the CCP as the nation's moral guardian and draws a connection between its rule and leadership regimes of the past, arguably strengthening its legitimacy to rule.

With large budgets backing the project, there are also many financial beneficiaries along the way, including the publishers and writers of the books selected, the organisers of events and promotion, and the venues where literary events and discussions are held.

The statistics issued on reading rates are often considered by people close to the projects as rather arbitrary figures, as it is not clear how comprehensive or accurate any surveying is. These figures are however taken extremely seriously in official circles, featuring in reporting mechanisms from villages, towns, cities and provinces to central authorities. In internal Party and local governance machinations, statistics link to targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPI), financial outcomes, and carry political ramifications. The internal political tussles over whether, for instance, the reported overall reading rate in Chengdu might be slightly higher than rival Chongqing's has echoes of the random quotas handed out by officials to villagers during the Great Leap Forward, particularly as the statistics themselves are questionable. But for the Party the system offers metrics that feed into the central control apparatus, one that can reward participants' loyalty. These rewards – forms of co-optation from Gershewski's pillars of stability – help elicit compliance and maintain the system of literary content creation, distribution and promotion.

The efficacy of top-down projects such as this can be difficult to establish in terms of attempting to assess overall statistical shifts due to particular initiatives, but the co-optation of writers, publishers, booksellers and event managers is evidenced throughout. Financial and social capital rewards are made widely available for participants, with the threat of repression never far in the background. While the promotion of literature is the stated intent, official interventions and moat-building exhibited in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework can have a stultifying impact. The carefully selected titles that are promoted, the project's official and didactic undertones and the conspicuous co-optation arguably present a sanitised air rather than one forging meaningful public engagement with literature on a wide level. Similar elements are further explored in the next section on the Party-state's engagement with the nation's bookshops.

5.5 Build it and they shall read: State support for selected bricks-and-mortar bookshops

Another key aspect of the government programme to promote reading and the state-supported publishing output is to support bricks-and-mortar bookshops. From 2007 to 2012,

China's bookshops were disappearing at a rapid rate, a trend that reflected the global demise of bookstores facing the new challenges of online retailers and e-books. In China, the pressure was compounded by rapidly rising rents and overhead costs, given the frenetic pace of urbanisation and modernisation at that point in the country's development. In the face of the existential threat to bricks-and-mortar bookshops, the government's top leadership stepped in and orchestrated a turnaround that has not only slowed down the number of closures but in some cases has witnessed an increase in the number of bookshops operating, and the amount of retail space devoted to books, in many cities.

From a theoretical perspective, part of the societal role bookshops perform is they invoke the Thirdspace theory as put forward by Soja (1996). Soja argued Firstspace was the physically built environment, Secondspace was a conceptual space, while Thirdspace was a combined real and imagined lived space, a way that people actually inhabit and experience an urban space. Bhabha (2004) developed Third Space Theory as one of identity and community realised through language that explains the uniqueness of each individual or context as a hybrid. As part of dissent discourse, he argued such spaces could be used by the oppressed to plot their liberation, or be where the oppressed and the oppressor could come together, free of oppression, if perhaps only momentarily. In this way the *Reading for All* projects held in subsidised bookshops around the country could be seen as performing a Town Hall function where citizens and officials meet and discuss and debate aspects of society through the conduit of literature. This delivers a release valve function in a society with restricted freedom of expression and allows officialdom to evaluate public opinion in an ongoing and informal manner. Venue operators would be aware of negative repercussions however if discussions were officially deemed to have strayed into particularly critical territories, so parameters tend to be tightly drawn.

In 2013, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Broadcasting and Radio, jointly with the Ministry of Finance, issued the "Initial Notice on Carrying Out Pilot Work in Physical Bookstores" which aimed to reward "excellent bookstores" in 12 pilot cities. In 2014, the central government arranged 209 million yuan in funds to support bookstores, while in 2015 a total of 300 million yuan was allocated to support 210 bookstores in 16 provinces and municipalities across the country (Wei, 2016). "The Notice on Applying for Special Fund for Cultural Industry Development" expanded the scope of the trial in 2015 to Beijing, Hebei, Tianjin, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Shandong, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Sichuan, Shaanxi and

Yunnan. Each of these pilot provinces was given six million yuan to give out to bookstores in their region as a “special incentive for merit, to help them purchase hardware and software equipment, pay rent, make up for lack of liquidity etc (China Publishing Group, 2016).” Beyond that pilot funding each province was instructed to develop their own supporting fund.

In one regional example, in 2014 the Chengdu government issued “Measures for Encouraging Entity Bookstore Support”, which provided support in areas such as grants for new stores, subsidised loans, activity/events grants, book fair subsidies, copyright trade subsidies and awards for registering foreign brand bookstores. Funding for each year for the 5-year period would be around 700 million yuan, officials said (Tu, 2015). In 2015 and 2016 Chengdu gave out a combined total of 11.5 million yuan, supporting 41 stores. By far the largest allocation that year of 776,500 yuan went to the state-run Xinhua Winshare, while the second largest amount of 550,000 rmb went to Fang Suo, a 4,000 square metre shop in downtown Chengdu that works closely with the government on literary-related projects. In early 2017 the city gave out an additional 5.8 million yuan, 520,800 yuan of which also went to Fang Suo (*Chengdu Commercial Daily*, 2016).

The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) instructed officials “To persevere with creative reform, and to develop market effectiveness of physical bookstores. To strengthen government guidance, and to promote the bookshops’ coordinated socio-economic development.” The original published plan set 2020 as the target date by which time to have “developed a diverse bookshop structure, that has a rational framework, functions effectively, with outstanding main businesses.” In 2012, Shanghai became the first city to roll out a series of policies supporting bricks-and-mortar bookshops. The policies involved a series of subsidies and exemption from sales tax. From 2012 to 2015, subsidies of more than 50 million yuan were handed out to about 100 bookstores in the city. In addition to the subsidies, bookshops were able to avail of sales tax rebates. Shanghai Xinhua Bookstore, for example, enjoyed a sales tax refund of 104 million yuan during this period alone. (*People's Daily*, 2016).

Shenzhen upgraded its existing policies in 2020 with financial support available for selected bookshops of up to 80 yuan per square metre every month, with an annual maximum of 5 million yuan. In 2022 more than 100 bookshops in the city received funding, with a total funding of 30.3 million yuan (*Shenzhen Qiaobao*, 2022). Beijing announced in 2015 it planned to support 400 to 500 bookstores “with strong social influence”, and would invest about 100 million yuan in

the 2016-2020 time period. In 2016, it gave a total of 18 million yuan to 71 bookstores (Wei, 2017). In Shunyi district in Beijing, for example, bookshops could apply for 1-5 million yuan in grant support over the term of a project (*Huaxia Taike*, 2021). From 2019 to 2021 alone, Beijing handed over 200 million yuan to selected bookshops in the city (Shi, 2022).

5.6 *Stemming the tide of bookshop closures*

According to the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce Chamber of Commerce, nearly 50 per cent of the independent bookshops operating in China in 2000 had closed down by 2010 (Li and Wang, 2011). By the end of 2013 – following government intervention with the introduction of subsidies and tax exemption policies – the situation had started to stabilise. During the period covering the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) the number of private bookshops in China increased by 22 per cent (State Administration of Press, Publications, Radio, Film and TV, 2016). By the end of 2015, the total number of bookshops in the country was said to be back up to the peak levels of 2007. Furthermore, the trend was towards the development of large bookstores. By the end of 2016, there were 818 large bookstores in the country with a total area of over 1,000 square meters, 214 of which had a floor space of more than 5,000 square metres, an increase of 4.2 per cent over the previous year (Shi, 2017). In the first half of 2017 alone more than 60 mega “experiential” bookshops opened up (Xinhua, 2017).

One metric that cities and provinces deploy to evaluate the success of these policies is the ratio of bookshops to citizens. In Beijing, for example, the target of the 13th Five-Year Plan was to have 0.8 bookshops operating for every 10,000 people. The city reported that by 2021 the number of bookshops available to 10,000 people had surpassed the target and stood at 0.93 (Zhan, 2022).

By the end of 2018, China had a total of 225,000 bookshops and outlets, up 4.3 per cent on 2017, with total sales revenue of 370.4 billion yuan, up 5.9 per cent on 2017. Certain chain stores that benefitted from state support had expanded rapidly around this time, such as Yanjiyou which opened 53 bookshops from January to November, 2017, and Sisyphe Bookstore chain, which opened 85 of its 160 shops in 2018 alone (Xinhua, 2019). According to official reports, bookshops in China even continued to make a comeback during the Covid-19 pandemic when a lot of retail was disrupted. In an effort to limit the impact of the pandemic, the authorities offered some relief measures to retail operators including tax exemptions and monetary support. During

this time 1,500 bookshops closed down across the country, but 4,000 new ones were reported to have opened or were in the process of opening. (Xinhuanet, 2021).

Physical bookshops in China have faced intense competition in recent decades from online retailers who often offer titles at heavily discounted rates. However, as the annual growth rate of physical bookstores went from negative to positive, online book retailers such as DangDang, JD Books and Amazon started to slow. From 2014 to 2017, the growth rate of China's online book retailers dropped from a high of 50 per cent to 28 per cent (Chang, 2021).

While state preferential policies could be attributed some of the credit for the comparative success of Chinese bookshops, industry observers also pointed out the new breed of stores that while still offering a selection of books and nominally called bookshops are often more like multipurpose community spaces. Cafes, gift shops and other retail offerings often make up a large percentage of their business (Chang, 2021). It should also be noted that some bookshop operators were assisted in the marketplace by the explosion in the number of malls and level of retail space available in China. Developers and property managers saw the benefit in luring experiential bookshops in particular to their retail portfolios at reduced rents to add a cultural dimension to the developments, increase foot traffic, and encourage consumers to stay longer in the malls.

Despite the official statements celebrating the success of the bookshop policies, many of the businesses are still facing financial difficulties. A 2016 survey in Beijing indicated that more than 80 per cent of the city's bookshops were losing money, so despite the sales tax exemptions and the possibility of subsidies and rent decreases the vast majority of book retailers in the capital were still struggling to cover their overheads (Lu and Zheng, 2016). In 2020, 70 per cent of 296 Chinese bookstores surveyed by a publishing industry research institution said their sales decreased and 37 of them saw their sales dropped by over 50 per cent year-on-year. According to data from a book industry research institution, the book sales of physical bookstores accounted for only 20 per cent of China's total book sales in 2020, down from 30 per cent in 2019. In 2021, while the number of physical stores increased by 4.09 per cent year-on-year, data also showed that the sales of 80 per cent of physical bookstores declined in that period (Zeng and Huang, 2022).

The policies in support of physical bookshops are set to continue as they also featured in the 14th Five-Year Plan covering the 2021-2025 period. The plan also refers to the introduction of legislation on book pricing which could potentially have a big impact on the industry. Unlike

several western countries, China has not to date imposed restrictions on book discounting, meaning online retailers can undercut physical retailers with large discounts. Bookstore operators have long lobbied for legislation on price to reduce discounting and enable them to compete with online entities (Zeng and Huang, 2022).

Regarding online retailers, unlike in many other markets around the world Amazon failed to find traction in the Chinese market. The company bought its way into China in 2004 with a takeover of online bookseller Joyo.com for about \$75 million. But in 2019 it closed its domestic e-commerce business in China, continuing to offer only select import items on Amazon.cn. The company had long struggled to compete with local competitors who were often able to compete on price and logistics infrastructure (Weise, 2019).

5.7 *Party guidance at core of bookshop strategy*

It is somewhat ironic that China, a country that regularly bans books, censors writers and publishers and tightly controls the literary offerings available to the public, claims in this instance to be the champion of bookshops. Contradictory loops such as this form the basis of the CPPF. But it should be noted this is a highly controlled and selective support structure. Party guidance is at the core of the development strategy, and according to the project guidelines participating bookshops obligations include to “Actively publicise Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, disseminate the Party's principles and policies, and promote socialist core values” (*Huaxia Taike*, 2021).

Statistically speaking, it is difficult to get these subsidies. In Beijing, for example, in the 2016-2020 period only about 10 per cent of bookshops in the city received any support under this plan (Lu and Zheng, 2016). More recently, in 2021, of the 2,042 bookshops in Beijing 272 received some project funding support (Zhan, 2022). Unsuccessful applicants have no right to formal appeal and typically receive no information as to why their application was unsuccessful. This has led to complaints that the funding is generally earmarked for state-run stores, or companies that have close links with the authorities. Additionally, some see the preferences as being towards the very large “experiential” bookshops, with small retailers not given due consideration. When asked about the selection criteria in Chengdu, a Culture Ministry official said, “This policy is not to help the poorest, but to support the most excellent, to support the strongest (Chen, 2016).”

In interviews with several booksellers across the country, many complained that the grants were only for select operators. “The big money, as always, is for the state-run stores and companies whose bosses are close to the Party. That’s it. The rest of us might get token amounts here and there but they get the meaningful support,” said one Shenzhen bookseller who had submitted numerous detailed applications over the years for ambitious projects but had only ever managed to get 20,000 yuan for one small project.

Another frequent concern raised about these subsidies is that it is encouraging a generation of bookshop owners to place their focus on government relations and on how to garner official support, rather than on literature and connecting with consumers and their reading habits. Some wonder if these stores are becoming entirely dependent on the state to survive.¹³ An employee of a large bookshop in Chengdu that has been a major beneficiary of these policies said their whole management team was now structured around the subsidies and on currying official favour. “There are three people in our marketing team, a couple in book purchasing, but more than 10 working in some way on government relations, and that is the clear priority. We are not a book-selling company now but more like a grant-getting company,” she said in an interview.

Regardless of financial assistance, being allowed to continue to operate at all can be an issue if a bookshop has fallen foul of someone in officialdom or has been perceived to be potentially in violation of any rules or regulations. The Jifeng Bookstore in Shanghai, located at the Shanghai Library metro station, had to shut its doors at the end of January 2018. Yu Miao, owner of the bookstore, said that the government-run Shanghai Library had decided not to extend the lease for the bookshop even though it was widely regarded as a cultural landmark in the city and known for its high-quality academic books and its regular, intellectual events programme. He also said that he had encountered “non-commercial” interference that had stymied efforts to find an alternative location (Li, 2017). “Some projects, including cultural/creative centres, invited us to open a bookshop at a favourable price or even rent-free. But the local culture departments made it clear they did not want Jifeng to move in when the landlord attempted to apply for a licence,”

¹³ Complaints made by two bookshop owners in conversation with the author.

he said. “Our original target was very simple: we wanted to disseminate some progressive knowledge. But those simple thoughts were misunderstood and probably regarded [by the authorities] as a base for opponents.” Jifeng used to hold between 150 to 200 events every year. In recent years objections by the authorities resulted in roughly half a dozen cancellations a year, but government pressure appeared to be mounting in 2017, with five seminars called off in less than two weeks on topics ranging from the South China Sea to constitutionalism and the fate of entrepreneurs and intellectuals in modern China. “After we send out the notices on seminars, the authorities would pay attention to them and call me if they think it is inappropriate,” Yu said. “They would say the topic or the speaker has some problems, but not explain those problems.” One speaker said they had self-censored the topics they would present in Jifeng to avoid a run-in with authorities. Chow Po-chung, an associate professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong who has held two seminars at Jifeng, said that in light of the troubles in recent years, when he spoke in Jifeng he had opted for milder topics so they could proceed smoothly. “I know some seminars by scholars were halted previously,” he said. “I planned to talk about political philosophy and freedom but picked a mild, literary topic as I worried it would be halted.” Yu said the authorities had accused the bookstore of engaging in “enlightenment” in recent years. “Maybe they have concerns about such a place, where people can discuss and rethink many social issues, and whether this will break through what they promote and the constraints on thought they impose on you,” he said, which he referred to as official “contrariness and absurdity”.

After the closure of the Jifeng bookshop, Yu Miao moved to Florida in the US with his family, but the Chinese authorities continued to target him there. In August 2023, Yu’s wife was on a trip back to Shanghai when the authorities informed her they want Yu to return to China for questions about his online activity in the US. Chinese authorities said they suspect Yu of writing three articles critical of China’s governance that appeared online in the US, a claim Yu denies (Aredy, 2023).

In another bookshop closure, The Bookworm, a foreign-owned bookshop and café in the shopping hub of Sanlitun in Beijing closed down in 2019, citing the city’s “ongoing clean-up of ‘illegal structures’” and an inability to “secure an extension of our lease” (Disclosure: As discussed in the introduction, the author was a co-owner of The Bookworm venues in Beijing, Chengdu and Suzhou). Lachs (2019) argued that amid all the official talk of the government wanting to support and subsidise bookstores, “if Beijing had wanted to support The Bookworm

and its objective – to promote cross-cultural dialogue and world culture in a city often accused of lacking it – it would not have been expensive to do so.” The official reason given by the landlord was that the building, which had been rented out continuously for 20 years at that point, was an illegal structure so the lease could not be extended. However, “there has been talk that the free-flowing discussions on contemporary affairs, social and political issues that Bookworm hosted antagonised Chinese censors” (Yau, 2019). Over the years the bookshop was in operation it was subject to several official inspections. At various points some books were confiscated, generally as they had not been imported via state-owned operators, and fines were issued. Events and discussions that approached political topics were monitored closely by officials, and occasionally orders were given to cancel or postpone talks, particularly if the original date coincided with large political meetings in Beijing.

Another bookshop that ran into issues with authorities was the Qingzhen Bookstore, a well-known Islamic bookstore and publishing house in Beijing, a development that came at the time of a wider crackdown on Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. In October 2017, authorities shut down the shop and detained its founder on “terrorism” charges amid a nationwide security operation ahead of the Party Congress. The Qingzhen Bookstore publishes books about Islam and related topics. A report on Radio Free Asia (Qiao, 2017) – a US government-funded news service – said the closure of the bookstore came amid a huge nationwide “stability maintenance” operation that saw the mass confiscation of Korans and other religious items from ethnic minority Muslims in Xinjiang, and a ban on ethnic minority Uyghurs from staying in hotels nationwide before the 19th Party Congress in Beijing.

Several bookshop operators who run literary events spoke in interviews about the fear of “crossing the line” with their public discussions and how they were closely monitored by officials. “Events bring crowds in, and we get government support to run the [*Reading for All*] literary event programme, but you never know if a discussion is going to get sensitive all of a sudden. Mostly it does not, because the writers and the audience know the red lines in China, but sometimes it can,” said a programmer of literary events in Beijing. “We can do whatever we want, as long as we stay away from politics and do not criticise the government,” said another.

With tens of thousands of *Reading for All* and other public events taking place across the country each year, the programmers and speakers are navigating the line of keeping discussions relevant and interesting but not veering into potentially politically problematic territory. As with

the intentional ambiguity with the order to ‘tell the China story well’, there are no guidelines published on what might be permissible or not. Organisers must generally use their own judgement on what might provoke official ire, resulting in many erring on the side of caution. The vibrant scene creates an illusion of an open society but the parameters of discussion and debate are restricted. As Chomsky (1998, p.43) argues, “The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum – even encourage the more critical and dissident views”. Chomsky noted such an approach gives a sense there is free-thinking going on, while at the same time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate. This concept could be extended to many aspects of contemporary Chinese society, assessed through the CPPF, where constructs appear fluid but in effect are demarcated. In the bookstores around the country, the authorities can point to tens of thousands of discussions taking place each year, giving the impression of an open society, but behind each event organisers know official monitoring is extensive and events must not broach politically taboo areas. Desires to establish a literary superpower mean myriad literary discussions and debates are arranged each year but Party Moat-Building then fetters those gatherings, as presented in the CPPF. In so doing, official inputs inhibit deeper engagement with literature and its philosophical underpinnings.

5.8 *Politically curated book supplies*

The book selection that sits on the shelves of every bookshop in China is another element of the industry that is rigidly controlled. Stock that each bookshop carries and sells is controlled by government regulations and the state-run distributions system. Bookshops must source the books they offer for sale through an official state-run distribution channel. Any imported books must be officially imported from one of the state-sanctioned importers. While there is no wider and definitive “banned in China” list, these importers assess titles and decide which they deem to be safe to import and which are not, with the decision generally based on broad guidelines issued by the government. The importers also tend to err on the side of caution, given that if they opt to import a title that later incurs the wrath of the authorities the penalties can be severe.

Two booksellers interviewed told of how officials would occasionally come into their bookshops and pull books off the shelves, demanding to see the invoices that were attached to books they had selected to see who had supplied them. If it was not an official importer the book

would be confiscated and an investigation would be launched into the bookshop. It could result in fines and a warning, and potentially the bookshop could be closed down and the legal representative imprisoned.

“Sometimes we used to buy books from Hong Kong or from book websites that were popular with our customers but not available through the official suppliers. But in recent years there have been a lot of inspections about that. We got a strong warning once, they said it would be a big fine or possibly closure if we did it again, so we had to stop that,” one Shanghai bookseller said. “It was a shame. They were not sensitive or political titles normally, but the official suppliers did not have them on their lists.”

The case of five Hong Kong booksellers from Causeway Bay Books and the Mighty Current publishing house who were abducted by mainland officials in Hong Kong and Thailand in 2015 marked a dramatic intensification of the Party’s efforts to control book supply in both Hong Kong and the mainland. The often salacious and Party gossip titles produced by Mighty Current in Hong Kong were hugely popular but were quickly designated contraband by the Communist Party’s Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideology. The subsequent investigation into the five abducted booksellers marked the beginning of a Chinese effort to reach beyond the mainland to silence the country’s critics (Palmer, 2018; Chou and Phila, 2016). Prior to that high-profile case, books such as those published by Mighty Current were regularly smuggled across the border into the mainland and some bookshops would offer the popular titles for sale. While the forced disappearance of the five Hong Kong booksellers made international headlines, others suffered at a local level. “I know of two young guys who used to ship books, as well as electrical goods and other things, every day from Hong Kong to Shenzhen who got caught up in the crackdown and were sent to prison for handling those books,” one Shenzhen bookseller said. He said many booksellers on the mainland used to source books from Hong Kong as they had a much wider selection and offered better prices than the state-run importers. “It wasn’t just the gossip and sex titles, we could get good mainstream books from Hong Kong too that we could not otherwise get, and often at more competitive prices than official importers offered, but once that crackdown began all that had to stop. No one would dare import or stock books that did not come through official channels anymore. It was too risky.” With monitoring intensified, and the risk of repercussions high for any transgressors, authorities were again reassured all books on offer for sale in China were from lists curated by state-run importers and distributors.

5.9 Conclusion

The policies financially supporting bookshops enable the CCP to take credit for sustaining selected bookshops at a time when the industry is facing competitive pressures globally with the development of online retailers, eBooks, and with an ever-expanding range of digital entertainment options. “Selected” bookshops means only a minority of operations identified by the CCP actually garner this support. As the above outlines, the vast majority of funding goes to state-owned operators and chains with close links to the Party-state. A case could be made that this initiative amounts to unfair competition, with the authorities assisting preferred retailers compete in a highly challenging market. The policy strengthens the position of certain brands while leaving the remaining operators in a comparatively weakened position. This presents another example of Party Moat-Building where officials build a network of loyal allies across the country, to distribute and promote preferred titles and help deliver the CCP’s version of spiritual and moral guidance. Co-opting these central locations with high footfall, the CCP can orchestrate high visibility displays and presentations of themed and other preferred titles. With the book retailers more closely aligned with the authorities, and financially rewarded for showing allegiance, it can also influence stock selection and promotion.

In line with Soja’s (1996) Thirdspace theory, the initiative is helping cultivate urban spaces for citizens to inhabit and experience, a concept of particular value in a society like China’s with such high population densities. And as Bhabha (2004) argues, such spaces could be societal inflection points, where for example the oppressed come together to plot their liberation or where the oppressed and the oppressor disarm and engage. Co-opting these Thirdspaces means, as Chomsky (1998) contends, parameters of debate are more likely to be drawn along lines resonating with official ideologies. Recognising the potential these Thirdspaces have to support or undermine the political apparatus, the Party-state initiated detailed long-term policies to tighten their control and steer them in support of official ideology and objectives. With the nation’s literati, academia and intellectual elite participating in such initiatives, Party legitimacy is also boosted by high visible alignment across intellectual spaces and discourse.

The Creative Policy Paradox Framework and conflict theory come to bear in this scenario when public perception comes to view such spaces and activities as extensions of the body politic. With programmes and spaces evidently prescribed in nature they undermine the notions of open learning and free discourse, potentially stimulating a retreat from the very concepts

related policies were designed to promote. Authorities take a build-it-and-they-shall-read approach ostensibly in the hope official curation of physical and intellectual content will be popular with the masses, assisting the apparatus in instilling designated messaging among the populace. In reality the book-reading and event-going public in China have very sensitive political antennae and are adept at tuning out politically didactic overtures. The themed books are best-sellers in China, for instance, but sales are driven by official mass purchases rather than by individual book lovers, who, as book retailers will admit, tend to give them scant attention. Party policy makers are not oblivious to paradoxes such as these, I would argue. Securing the official position in bookshops in terms of both curated titles and discourse direction are primarily examples of Party Moat-Building, policies designed to seal the environment and ensure no vacuum exists for counter narratives to fill. And while themed books, as with study sessions or the ubiquitous and extended state media reports on Party meetings, may have little resonance with the public, they do help construct the image of a colossal, impenetrable wall of societal power and influence. The constant message is the Party-state is omnipresent and omnipotent – do not challenge it.

Considered holistically, the management of the China Writers Association, the *Reading for All* project and the state support for bookshops presents an overarching literary policy that delivers an efficient supply chain of content creation (the China Writer Association and state-run and state-affiliated publishers), marketing (state-controlled media, social media platforms, official journals, the *Reading for All* project and state-sanctioned awards) and distribution/consumption (state-run/state-supported bookshops and online retailers, libraries, state importers/distributors). The level of planning and coordination on these projects across the country is intensely detailed, the resources invested are enormous, and the co-optation levels are extremely high. But the top-down and highly controlled approach is not, according to official statistics, enticing new readers in any notable numbers. Indeed, China continues to lag behind other major economies, according to official figures, in both reading levels and library inventory. The approach is also not, according to the writers and officials themselves, cultivating a vibrant world-beating literary output. Readers and writers are instead being drawn more to the online literature (CIL) arena, with at least part of the appeal for many being the comparative lack of official involvement and coordination in the scene. In the highly controlled official space, the books on the shelves, the venues, the speakers and the topics up for discussion are all sifted through elaborate mechanisms to promote preferred messaging and minimise threats to stability and Party-state legitimacy. In the

context of the stated goal of establishing a literary superpower, the muted and regulated environment is compromised and despite the vast levels of economic and logistical support is largely counterproductive and feeds into the loop outlined in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework. On the preeminent matter of stability, however, the system becomes institutionalised with, in line with Beetham's theory, multiple actions and interactions criss-crossing under the banners of Gerschewski's co-optation, repression, legitimisation. The stabilising effect depends on the allocation of extensive external resources to sustain the high levels of co-optation and to uphold an effective repression apparatus. Sustained input leads to the point where the co-optative and repressive interactions become behavioural patterns.

While under Beetham's stabilising effect, co-optation and repression can largely be maintained with sufficient resources, for power to be legitimate it needs to pass a three-point test. In the scenario above it could be argued that two of Beetham's three tests are reached, in that the activity conforms to established rules and there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation. However, for power to be legitimate Beetham also requires evidence that the rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate. In this case, taking China's writers, publishers and those involved in the wider book industry, rule conformity and consent can be witnessed, but lacking is evidence that supporting rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both them and the Party-state. There is no general indication of a wider sharing of beliefs pertaining to the right to power, which when absent would undermine full legitimacy claims. Where the Party-state does garner an element of legitimacy in this scenario however is from the absence of criticism or challenges, in which the concept of censorship plays a pivotal role, and one we will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Controlling the narrative: Censorship, self-censorship and agenda-setting

6.1 Introduction

In this section I will examine censorship, self-censorship and the concept of agenda-setting in contemporary China as they relate to creative writers and the book publishing sector. I will illustrate how the censorship system works with regard to book publishing in contemporary times; how it impacts the nation's writers and publishers; and from a theoretical perspective depict its pivotal position in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework .

Censorship, self-censorship and agenda-setting concepts are central Party Moat-Building elements in the CPPF, epitomising Gershewski's three-pronged repression, co-optation and legitimisation approach illustrated in the theoretical framework. In terms of conflict theory and the CPPF, the realities show that while vast amounts of energy and resources are being expended on developing and promoting literature in China, other vast sums are summoned to censor, control and direct writers and their output. The conflicting forces impacting on the subject are neutralising, at best, and often detrimental.

Censorship and self-censorship have been endemic in the People's Republic of China since the founding of the state, and policies currently are on the more repressive end of the global spectrum. On the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, China was listed at number 177 out of the 180 countries in the world rankings, with only Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea indicated as having a worse situation pertaining to freedom of the press and expression (Reporters sans frontiers, 2021). Similarly, Freedom House defined the freedom of expression situation in China in 2021 as "profoundly oppressive", adding the regime had become increasingly repressive in recent years and was tightening its control over the state bureaucracy, the media, online speech, religious groups, universities, businesses, and civil society associations. It has listed China as the worst abuser of internet freedoms in the world for seven consecutive years (Freedom House, 2021).

Literature and writers are held in high social esteem in China, and it is a sector the Party-state has always paid a great deal of attention to (Link, 2000). As Levi King (2022) writes, in an otherwise bleak landscape there is something almost heartening about how charged the

significance Chinese literature continues to hold, and how it is still viewed by officialdom and society as a potent force. Compared with the West, where some research suggests literature has slipped in societal importance in recent decades (Ingraham, 2016; Skaar et al., 2018), Chinese writers can take some solace from the fact that their perceived relevance remains high. Darnton (2014, p.15) argues that the very notion of literature carries weight in some societies that can hardly be imagined in others. He cites the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who said that literature was so powerful in Soviet Russia that it “accelerated history”. The political leadership in China is acutely aware of this accelerating potential and the inherent risks it presents to one-Party rule, and has consequently developed elaborate braking, control and steering mechanisms all through the political and publishing systems.

In one graphic example of how officialdom still views books and literature as a threat, library officials in Gansu made a bonfire out of a stack of books in 2019 they deemed inappropriate and showcased their literary inferno on social media. The move followed a directive from the Education Ministry to libraries to cull politically incorrect reading materials. The incident, with its dark historical precedents in China and elsewhere, prompted many online commentators to point out that for all the modernising that had taken place in China in recent decades in some fundamental ways the country’s control policies had not evolved (Shih, 2019). It was a stark and public reminder that books and ideas contained within them that challenge the official narrative or the leadership’s legitimacy are removed from society – and sometimes in a very visible fashion if that helps underscore the official view of disapproval.

6.2 What is censorship?

Roberts (2018, p.37) defines censorship as “the restriction of the public expression of or public access to information by authority when the information is thought to have the capacity to undermine the authority by making it accountable to the public.” When asking the question “why do governments censor?” she argues that “Information is dangerous to political entities as they require support from at least some part of the citizenry, and information that reveals that they are not fulfilling their role can negatively affect their survival” (2018, p.21). In autocracies, she adds, information can persuade citizens to discontinue their support for the regime, undermine regime policies in everyday life, or persuade citizens to go out and protest. Authoritarian regimes survive not only due to repression and responsiveness but also using other tools used to slow down

coordination of collective action, such as censorship and the distortion of facts, all of which nudges people away from alternative viewpoints and activist circles. Nathan (2003) also identifies censorship as an important source of authoritarian resilience and, in the China context, a critical element that helps legitimise and sustain China's one-Party system.

The paradoxical nature of the Party-state's approach to the literary sector is delineated in the CPPF, where initially it champions and venerates the nation's writers and the unique culture they are an integral part of. As part of this initiative, it corrals them in elaborate efforts to inculcate nationalism and patriotic spirit, and invests massively on cultivating them both at home and abroad in a range of securitisation, legitimisation and soft power processes. Then, on the other hand, the Party-state steers writers to produce propaganda and stifles and suppresses the publishing sector at every turn, often to such an extent that they live in fear for their safety knowing the wrong printed or spoken word could have dire consequences. The Party holds the express desire to develop a socialist cultural superpower that will help boost its legitimacy at home and abroad and retain the political status quo in China, but evidently gauges it cannot risk permitting writers to write freely as the legitimacy they seek may be undermined as a consequence. As part of the Party-state's legitimisation efforts, huge efforts are made to control historical and political narratives and the writers of China are recruited as foot soldiers in this ongoing initiative, in many cases writing and rewriting history according to prevailing political priorities. Arendt argues blurring the lines between fact and fiction and rewriting historical events are important for authoritarian and totalitarian states in cultivating compliant and "ideal citizens" (1976, p.474): "The ideal citizen of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, and the distinction between true and false, no longer exists."

From the theoretical framework, I refer back to Stalin's premise that from the perspective of the Party-state the writer is the engineer of the soul (Westerman, 2011), and in a more recent China context to Link's *The Uses of Literature* (2000), which illustrates how the Party-state considers writers and the publishing sector as tools at their service. These tools can range from the razor sharp to the sledgehammer blunt – but they all assist in the ongoing priority projects of securitisation, generating legitimacy and maintaining tight control. To ensure and foster compliance and enhance that legitimacy the Party-state deploys a ranges of tactics that fall broadly into the categories of co-optation and repression, aligning with Gerschewski's theory on pillars of stability required for authoritarian administrations.

Addressing Stalin's engineer of the soul metaphor, Hungarian writer Miklos Haraszti (1987) wrote it was an ingenious definition of the scope of artistic freedom under the conditions of totalitarian socialism, declaring that essentially writers were neither more independent nor more defenceless than the engineer. The state artist was just another organised professional. He wrote (1987, p.129):

The metaphor also implies that censorship and self-censorship are essential, in the same way that the engineer must reject his own exciting, but solipsistic ideas. His job is to make sure the train runs smoothly and on time, not to determine destinations. Stalin's apt dictum signals the historic demise of the 'independent' intellectual. Henceforth, social planning embraces all intellectual activity.

In this view state artists, like Stalin's soul engineers and Haraszti's train engineers, are just another group of organised professionals with a defined role to fulfil within a political system (Tobar, 2012).

In China official communications are crystal clear that the primary role of writers and literature is to serve the Party-state. This was true in Link's era and it remains so in more recent times. In 2006, then-President Hu Jintao gave a speech to a formal gathering of writers and artists in which he said the work of literature and art was "an important part of the cause of the Party and the people, and it has a very important position in the development of the cause of the Party and the people." He said that whether in times of bloody revolutionary war or in times of peace, art workers had "under the leadership of the Party, responded to the call of the times" (Xinhua, 2006). These calls have been stressed in the Xi era. In a prominent article in *Qiushi* (CCP CWA Party Group, 2021), the Party's leading official theoretical journal, penned by the Party organisational department of the China Writers Association, the line was unequivocal. It reminded the CWA and its membership that the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CCP had placed cultural construction as a priority and announced the goal of establishing China as a major cultural power by 2035. The new era literature "must hold high the great banner of Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics", keep in mind the "great nation", implement the results of Xi's "important expositions" and "contribute to the great power of literature in the new era for the realisation of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," the article said. The CWA membership was instructed to "deeply grasp the new requirements" and "improve its political

position and enhance its ideological consciousness”. Writers must “adhere to the fundamental direction of serving the people and serving socialism, and take it as an inescapable responsibility to highlight spiritual guidance.” In other ‘uses of literature’, the literati were instructed to “consciously use Marxist standpoints, viewpoints and methods”, “correctly handle” the relationship between the past and the present, “vigorously promote the great Party-building spirit” and “inherit the revolutionary tradition, inherit the red gene, continue the red blood, and stand up”. The similarities to Stalin’s engineers of the soul are apparent, with the literary apparatus expected to champion and support the Party and use their pens to protect its security and underscore its legitimacy. To ensure the nation’s writers inherit this “red gene”, a range of repressive and co-optative measures are at the disposal of officials. Artistic self-expression meets Party Moat-Building in the CPPF when that expression potentially challenges or undermines the official position.

The missives and speeches delivered by the leadership show the Party-state is not overly concerned with curtailing dissent per se, as in the current highly restrictive system that is largely unimaginable. Rather, it is focussed on agenda setting and steering the nation’s writers to implicitly and explicitly support the Party-state and ‘Tell the China story well’. As outlined, this initiative ultimately utilises literature and cultural workers to maintain social stability, promote soft power and bolster the legitimacy of the Party. These exhortations are a call to arms for the engineers of the soul to hone their pens in furtherance of Beijing’s key objectives. The messaging also often urges the Writers Association to ensure the nation’s scribes “improve” their output, which would be interpreted more as a political demand than a creative one.

Engaging in any kind of dissent would be a highly risky activity and should any writer in contemporary China be considered to be undermining in any way the Party-state and their priorities the consequences can be serious, as illustrated by Fang Fang’s case in the previous chapter. “Facts show that Chinese censors can be enormously cruel in the literary world. Although China has entered the 21st century, Chinese authors – and their loved ones – can still risk publication bans, house arrests, imprisonment, just for criticising the Communist Party of China” (Sun, 2015. p.9). What exists consequently is an illusion of an open environment where writers are free to write but in reality the parameters permitted for true social critique are very narrowly drawn, so expression is only tolerated within restricted confines. This inherent shackling of writers inevitably curtails creativity, dampens output and casts a pall over the sector both at home and

abroad in the mind of readers and the practitioners themselves – the very sector the Party-state claims it is going to lengths to help nurture and thrive. Conflicting objectives generate confusion and frustration, and the contradictory loop of the CPPF.

President Xi Jinping has long stressed the importance of controlling narratives about the Party's past, and the country's propaganda chiefs have recently repackaged history in support of Xi's national vision, launching the largest mass education drive to promote Communist Party history since the Mao era. Xi also invoked history to reiterate Beijing's determination to gain control over Taiwan, in a speech marking the 110th anniversary of the 1911 Xinhai revolution that toppled the Qing dynasty. In the speech Xi said that anyone who opposed the unification of China and Taiwan would be "condemned by history" (Wong and Zhai, 2021a). Ahead of the Party's 6th Plenum in November 2021, the 25-member Politburo rolled out a draft resolution that rewrites elements of Communist Party history and presents a revised version of the Party's "major achievements and historical experiences" since its founding 100 years ago. Xi has accelerated efforts to establish what he calls a "correct outlook on history" in China, aimed at diverting the discourse from focusing on the Party's past mistakes but instead on the portrayal of the Party as an unstoppable force that has steered China's inexorable rise. The revised historical texts play down Mao's despotic missteps, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, and remove some famous Deng exhortations that warned against the dangers of one-man rule and the cult of personality, and also deleted some of his quotes that advocated in favour of a form of humble diplomacy. The resolution is mainly about Xi's "self-affirmation... to strengthen the Party's image, buttress the current leader's image, and reinforce the current leader's will" (Wong and Zhai, 2021b). In view of the historical emphasis, Xi's exhortation to 'tell the China story well' could be interpreted as a wider instruction to also 'tell China's history well' or to 'tell the Party story well'. Again, 'well' is a highly subjective terms but viewed through the prism of the narratives above reflects one that portrays the CCP positively and reinforces its inalienable right to rule with Xi at its core.

Assertions that Xi is aligning himself and his image with Chairman Mao and ushering in another era of Maoism have been widely made in recent years (Fenby, 2015; Brown, 2016), and they extend too to the Chinese publishing world. Reminiscent of Mao's omnipresent *Little Red Book*, collections of Xi's speeches and essays have in recent years been displayed extremely

prominently in bookshops across the country and dominate the China stands at domestic and international book, translated into numerous languages (Osnos, 2015).

The implication of all the official messaging outlined above to the nation's writers is clear: they should support the Party-state in their published work, and at very least never challenge it. True freedom of expression is prohibited, even though it is a right, technically at least, enshrined in the nation's Constitution.

6.3 *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China*

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China¹⁵ states that freedom of expression is a right enjoyed by citizens of China, but it also contains some ambivalent phrases that could be interpreted as limiting that freedom. Article 35 of the Constitution states unequivocally that citizens of the People's Republic of China “enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.” Article 47 then states that citizens have the freedom to engage in scientific research, literary and artistic creation and other cultural pursuits. The State “encourages and assists creative endeavours”, the Article continues, but then adds the Constitutional caveat that these endeavours should be “conducive to the interests of the people”. Introducing further ambiguity, Article 24 talks about the State's role in strengthening socialist spiritual civilisation and high ideals and morality, and advocates patriotism, love for the motherland and for socialism, while combatting capitalism and “other decadent ideas”. Citizens have the right to criticise the Party-state and expose violations of the law or dereliction of duty, according to Article 41, but that article adds that “fabrication” or “distortion of the facts” is prohibited. Article 51 then states that in exercising their freedoms and rights, citizens “may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society and of the collective.” The Constitution does not define the meaning of “national interests” or “interests of the state”, or what may or may not be perceived as “distortion” etc, leaving abundant scope for the interpretations of the Party. Diamant (2022) examines constitutional conversations between officials and citizens in China where he

¹⁵ Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Available online: <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml>

argues China promulgated constitutions to enhance its domestic and international legitimacy by opening up the constitution-making process to ordinary people. Over decades, the PRC government has encouraged citizens to submit comments and suggest revisions to drafts of a new constitution. Diamant argues that while many citizens view the document as useless in terms of the protection of their rights, it proved useful to several governments who promulgated it, debated it extensively, and amended it on occasion – exercises that all helped add to the Party-state's legitimacy.

Sun (2015) contends China is a nation ruled by individuals, not by laws, and government officials can override the authority of the law in their own jurisdiction. The rights guaranteed by the Constitution, Sun argues, exist only nominally and the Party-state has essentially free reign to unleash the full might of the state in order to dispose of whatever they might deem to be harmful influences. Beyond the flawed Constitution, a raft of laws, regulations and internal documents further serve to stifle freedom of expression. There are more than sixty laws and administrative regulations in effect, not including local legislation, that Sun argues are designed to control, manage, and restrain the news media and citizens' freedom of speech. On top of this, China's myriad 'internal distribution' documents amount to more than 250 secrecy-maintenance laws, regulations, rules and statutory documents. "A careful reading shows that few countries in the world are as lacking in freedom of the press and of speech as China" (Sun, 2015, p.34). Some recent examples of the internal documents that issue instructions on censorship are Document No. 9 and the "Seven Don't Speaks" (*qibujiang* 七不讲). Document No. 9, or officially 'The Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere', is a confidential internal document widely circulated within the CCP in 2013. The document shows how the CCP perceives its own vulnerabilities and how the Party-state sees itself under siege, encircled by enemies both within and outside China. Document No. 9 reveals an anxiety that internal and/or external actors may engage in what is termed "historical nihilism" and "distort Party history and the history of New China". It reveals a deep-seated fear that writers may fundamentally question the CCP's own rather one-sided historiography and thus undermine the Party-state's political legitimacy (Fulda, 2020). Similarly, the directive "Seven Don't Speaks", which was orally communicated to Chinese university administrators in 2013, also shows the CCP's need to control the official historical narrative. The directive prohibits discussion of universal values, civil society, citizen rights, judicial independence, freedom of the press, past mistakes of the CCP, and the privileged capitalist

class (Global Voices, 2013). The communication is a rare acknowledgement on behalf of the CCP of its mistakes in the past, and shows a broad range of fundamental topics that the Party-state does not wish to be discussed or written about.

The importance of political ideology in book publishing was clearly apparent from the very early days of the PRC. Xinhua, for instance, was instructed in 1951 to enhance its “sense of political responsibility” in the production and distribution of books. Also, in line with this order, showing an early focus on promoting the legitimacy of the Party-state, books deemed to have significant propaganda importance were not allowed to be returned to publishers but should instead be distributed widely (Yun, 2018). In recent decades many government administration departments gave up control of their affiliated publishing houses in a nationwide process of commercialisation and conglomeration, but this has not in any way diminished the control of the Party-state. While the day-to-day operations are carried out in many cases by people outside government, Party-state entities, in particular the propaganda department, take up internal positions and make the key decisions (Yun, 2018).

While freedom of expression is protected in the Constitution, a host of caveats, laws and regulations then restrict this freedom. The legal framework is an elaborate example of Party Moat-Building in the CPPF where the authorities can rule by law and claim legal legitimacy in curtailing artistic expression for political motives.

6.4 *Censorship and self-censorship on a daily basis*

In China publishers face prepublication censorship and post-publication censorship, or ex-ante censoring and ex-post censoring (Sun, 2015). According to regulations laid out in the administrative provisions on book publishing, publishers must submit in advance an annual publishing plan for the following year. This plan must detail all the books a publisher plans to publish for the year ahead. In certain circumstances publishers may add in additional titles to their list, but these also have to be approved by the sponsoring organisations. The NPPA typically issues a notice requesting the annual publishing plans towards the end of the year. In this notice the administration highlight themes or important topics that are current political priorities they suggest the sector pays particular attention to. They can also instruct publishers to steer clear of certain topics, while also listing some sensitive topics that will require texts submitted for scrutiny ahead of publication (Yun, 2018).

The book censoring system in China is built around the regulated practice of “Three Revisals and Three Proofs” (*sanshen sanjiao* 三审三校). This system has been in place since 1952 and ensures there is a full line of editorial responsibility registered for any book published. In practice a manuscript has to be reviewed and revised by three editors in a publishing house, in increasing order of seniority. Typically, this involves the executive editor, a senior editor in charge of the relevant subject area, and the editorial director – before the director of the publishing house could give the final approval. Books are required to be censored by people who were considered to have the appropriate ideological and political consciousness. Should officials have any issue with a published book, the three signatories would be called to account (Yun, 2018; Xie and Gu, 2021). Guidelines on implementing the system state that publishing any title without going through this process and having full accountability is illegal and guilty parties will be punished. The guidelines say publishers must “adhere to the correct public opinion orientation, carry forward the main theme, spread positive energy, effectively guide public opinion, and consciously resist the dissemination of all kinds of harmful and false information.” It adds that “the political position must be clear”, the manuscript must “basically meet the requirements of the main leaders” and editors should correct any inaccurate references or “outdated political thought” (Baidao Wang, 2020).

With regard to post-publication censorship, according to a 1994 decree local administrations or the local sponsoring organisation must arrange “scrutiny readings” of all books shortly after they have been published. Reports on these readings must then be submitted to the authorities within three months (Yun, 2018. p.30). In a further tightening of the control apparatus, the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee brought regulations entitled “Trial Measures for the Evaluation and Assessment of Social Benefits of Book Publishing Units” into force in 2019 that introduced new stringent procedures to detect and punish publishers whose “political orientation” might cause issues or create a “poor social impact” (Xu et al., 2019).

While the censorship apparatus is elaborate, most writers and publishers interviewed for this thesis said that self-censorship was by far the most pervasive and important element at play, and the Party-state had developed a framework to ensure that publishers, editors and writers took responsibility for most of the censorship duties themselves in the knowledge that repercussions could be extremely serious if the authorities later found them to be any way remiss in their duties and approach. Relying more on self-censorship is also partly a recognition on behalf

of the authorities that it would be a highly onerous task to try to catch all undesirable content in pre-publication censorship from the hundreds of thousands of books published each year. The book lists submitted in advance do not involve line-by-line detail and the scrutiny readings take place after books have been published, by which time any unwanted messaging could have already been published. Self-censorship is the most effective tool, where the Party-state generates an atmosphere of fear and puts the onus on the publishers, editors and writers to self-censor, placing the key censor into their minds.

As outlined, as private publishers are not issued ISBNs, they must develop an arrangement with a state-owned publisher to publish books under their book numbers. As the state-run publishers still hold ultimate responsibility for the ISBNs they distribute to private operators, this places a responsibility on them to closely monitor any content produced by the private operators as they will be liable in the eyes of the Party-state should any issues later arise. Furthermore, as already outlined, China's "Volume Limit Policy" restricts the total number of ISBNs issued each year which means publishers get issued fewer book numbers than they were issued in the past. With the authorities holding full discretionary power as to who gets how many ISBNs, the tendency is to play safe with the limited numbers issued, avoid attracting official ire, and maintain the necessary quotas required to survive in business. In terms of Gerschewski's three pillars of stability, the system is both repressive, as it encourages wholesale self-censorship, and is an elaborate form of co-optation as publishing houses that curry favour with the authorities can secure a higher quota of ISBNs thereby enabling their businesses to prosper.

The pre-publication censorship structure for private publishers is not as formalised as with the state-run options which leaves them more vulnerable to post-publication censorship. Censorship at the post-publication point can be crippling for a small operator as by that point they have already incurred all the production costs. In some cases, private publishers have applied to have their books censored ahead of publication in the hope of having official approval in hand before going to print, but these requests are generally denied. This situation serves the authorities well as it keeps the situation nebulous and maintains intentional ambiguity. For one, it would be embarrassing and potentially troublesome for an official if they formally approved a book that was later found by some other official to be politically problematic. Additionally, maintaining blurred boundaries encourages publishers to err on the side of caution and steer well clear of material that could potentially attract negative official attention. It also leaves the situation fully open to the

Party's discretion to target or ignore titles at a later point depending on the prevailing political mood (Yun, 2018).

Just how far writers and publishers have to go in their self-censorship is a matter for debate. Literary translator and publisher Eric Abrahamsen (2015) wrote that it could be argued that Chinese authors self-censor their work to an even greater extent than was apparently required by the Party-state, which he largely attributed to a particular type of cliquishness in China. "The social cohesiveness of the literary establishment, rooted in traditional Chinese attitudes toward authority, is far more corrosive to Chinese writers' artistic independence than the state itself." While acknowledging all literary societies probably tend toward cliquishness, Abrahamsen wrote China's is "an especially monolithic old-boy network driven by personal relations... When you are a Chinese author, being anti-authoritarian means being anti-social: It requires not the courage to speak truth to power, but the courage to be rude to your friends".

While this thesis focuses on Chinese writers, it should also be noted in this regard that self-censorship is also prevalent among international publishers and writers who are looking to enter or remain in the Chinese market, with a number of recent cases documented. When international books are imported into China, state-run importers and customs officials vet titles closely before permitting them to enter the country, prompting international publishers and writers to self-censor on occasion (Gardner, 2014; Agence France-Presse, 2017; Phillips, 2017).

6.5 *The official drive to keep content positive and uplifting*

Writers and publishers interviewed for this thesis pointed out that increasingly they are being encouraged by the Party-state to not only avoid "negative" material, which may implicitly or explicitly be critical of the state, but also to channel more "positivity" into their materials, and produce writing that reflects a "harmonious and prosperous society" – which would serve to underscore the legitimacy of the Party-state. An example of regulations that go beyond censorship but also encourage positivity came in 2020 aimed at the booming internet literature industry. Strict guidelines were imposed on online publishers to not only "abide by public order and morals" but also to guarantee their content "correctly guides public opinion" and is "healthy and positive" (Zou, 2020). In an analysis of the famous speech Xi gave to artists and writers in 2014, Hockx (2022) contends that while Xi appeared to be placing the onus on the nation's elite authors to set a moral example and instil patriotic values in the populace, the policy implementations

actually honed in on the online writing community. The Party-state views online fiction, with its enormous and ardent fan base, as an area that holds more propaganda value than traditional literature, but also one that requires more ideological management and control, Hockx argues.

He Qinglian (2008) posits that China uses two key areas to keep the population ignorant and, accordingly, more easily manipulated. First and foremost, the education system, which instils Communist ideology, embellishes the history of the Party and constantly stresses the importance of loving the Party and the leadership. And secondly, the media and all published works are controlled so as to portray the Party-state in glowing colours and conceal the dark underbelly of society, with the aim of putting out, in government terminology, “more positive reports and few if any negative reports” (He, 2008. p.1).

Another way of encouraging the trend towards positivity is through the selection of the major literary prize winners. As prominent Chinese author Yan Lianke notes (2016), the most prestigious literary prizes awarded by the Chinese Writers Association recognise talented works but also works that are deemed by officials to be positive in their thought and content. These prizes bring a guaranteed profile and monetary awards, so are important in terms of the career development of writers. Their selection helps position them among the literary canon. The state apparatus then seeks to convince the nation that these positive works are the only ones that may be considered truly great literature and, from that, a new literary standard and canon emerges, which in turn helps cultivate a new aesthetic sensibility. In this way, via awards and the output of state-sanctioned critics, the regime does not need to engage in censorship but is able to put out a clear message that if literature departs from this ordained sensibility it cannot and will not be critically well received, or even considered to be real literature. Yan points out too that many authors, as their careers develop, become officials in the CWA or literary federations – essentially arms of the state – which gives them more prestige and power but also means consciously or subconsciously they must increasingly accord with the party-state’s expectations. Yan says the censorship regime’s focus is on the domestication of authors, and even if they do not write in highly positive terms as preferred by the Party, at the very least they will not write so-called negative works that focus on the darker sides of the society or the country’s history. What Yan Lianke refers to as domestication of writers is a form of co-optation, Party Moat-Building fuelled by securitisation concerns, aimed at underscoring stability and legitimacy.

Yan, like Fang Fang, is another example of a writer who could be considered both inside and outside the system. He is often critical of official policies, yet he holds a high-profile professorship in a Chinese university. Many of his books are banned in China, although the ban appears to be de facto rather than official, and his less controversial titles remain somewhat available (Fan, 2018). Hawkins and Wasserstrom (2019) argue that a lot of censorship is a result of individual judgment calls rather than official policy and that one reason the CCP has held on to power is due to the fact that it allows citizens at least partial access to cultural products and other consumer goods that are available to their counterparts in other parts of the world. Observing policies that are not necessarily cohesive or uniform represents the fragmented authoritarianism model (Lieberthal and Oxenberg, 1988) that argues authority below the pinnacle in China can be fragmented and disjointed, which can help explain aberrations, dichotomies or conflicts in policies and practices. The model does not argue the central bureaucracy is unable to function or manage subordinates, but rather there exists an in-built flexibility in the local processes of negotiating, consensus building and leveraging control that goes some way to explaining inconsistencies and aberrations in the system.

6.6 Carrots “rule by bribery” and sticks “rule by fear”

Fulda (2020) maintains the CCP’s sharp power works with the help of the simultaneous use of the carrots “rule by bribery” and the sticks “rule by fear”. He argues “the CCP has governed mainland China during the Maoist and post-Maoist eras with the help of the united front method, a two-pronged process of simultaneous co-optation and coercion” (Fulda, 2020. p.84), which aligns with Gerschewski’s theory autocratic states utilise repression, co-optation and legitimation to maintain stability. In order to prevent groups organising and threatening the survival of the Party-state, the CCP uses financial offers “to pacify conflict-capable groups” across society, including influential writers. “Rule by bribery thus encourages Chinese citizens either to become part of the system or to manipulate the system to their own advantage” (Fulda, 2020. p.86). And while it has great willingness to “rule by bribery”, it combines this governing approach with the far more draconian “rule by fear”. Particularly “under the guise of preserving stability, the state bureaucracy has been given a free hand, more coercive power and more resources to crush dissent” (Fulda, p.88). He argues the CCP’s threatening posture leads to imagined and/or realistic fear among members of the target audience with the result being individual and institutional self-

censorship. Ultimately acceptance of the CCP's censorship normalises the Chinese party-state and side-lines opposing voices which echoes the key legitimisation theory offered in this thesis. Ringen (2016) asserts that what is emerging in China is a new brand of totalitarianism which looks less totalitarian than it is. He contends it is a sophisticated brand of totalitarianism that has all the tools necessary for suppression – such as full-on censorship – but these tools are not on permanent display, rather being deployed as needed. The Party-state can claim they do not engage in widespread censorship, in large part because they have developed an extensive system of control it is rarely required. Reading the literary scene through the lens of the CPPF illustrates this phenomenon.

With a range of co-optative mechanisms at its disposal, the Party-state is utilising national resources to cement its position in power, buy support and bolster its own legitimacy (Pei, 2016; He, 2008). He Qinglian (2008) argues that China's system for distributing resources is neither a purely planned nor a market-based economy. Instead, rent-seeking activities leading to the acquisition of capital and wealth rely on informal connections, which are key to mobilising and directing wealth. Sun (2015, p.90) cites in her book exiled author Ma Jian (马建, b.1953) who compares the China Writers Association structure to the imperial civil examination system that existed in feudal China, where writers use their penmanship to earn a living as a government official. The fact that the Party-state has co-opted the nation's writers and can withdraw any privileges offered at a moment's notice means "critical thought has been slowly disappearing under the hegemony of the CCP". In a similar vein exiled writer Liao Yiwu (廖亦武, b.1958), who was previously imprisoned in China for his criticism of the CCP, advances that people who live off the government become desensitised and find themselves unwilling and unable to part with the material comforts. By financing comfortable lifestyles, the Party-state ensures allegiance and quells potential voices of dissent (Sun, 2015. p.126).

Sun criticises what she sees as a "silent conspiracy" between some Chinese authors and officialdom. The co-opted authors adopt "a cautionary attitude where everyone averts their gaze in silence and where they only make a passing acknowledgement to the truth" and some will defend the current system in order to protect their own interests (2015, p.47). Haraszti states that ultimately, "anything that can be co-opted will be co-opted" (1987, p.22). Under socialism, art is an uneconomic and unprofitable expenditure for the state, but one the state considers a necessary budget item, where society is given art essentially as a part of its wages but "only one thing is

expected in return: art must remain loyal” (Haraszti, 1997. p.82). With widespread co-optation, the face of censorship changes, he said:

Traditional censorship presupposes the inherent opposition of creators and censors; the new censorship strives to eliminate this antagonism. The artist and the censor – the two faces of official culture – diligently and cheerfully cultivate the gardens of art together. This new culture is the result not of raging censorship but of its steady disappearance... Censorship is no longer a matter of simple state intervention. A new aesthetic culture has emerged in which censors and artists alike are entangled in a mutual embrace. Nor is it as distasteful as traditional critics of censorship imagine. The state is able to domesticate the artist because the artist has already made the state his home” (Haraszti, 1997. p.5).

What he refers to as the privatisation of art in socialism, amounts to the pursuit of aesthetics for the “common good”, where coercion ultimately becomes unnecessary and a consensus is shaped by unconscious commitments and voluntary prohibitions. On this point Hoffman (2017) argues China has developed a form of authoritarianism that is not binary and cannot be measured purely in terms of retrenchment versus reform. With regards to co-optation and coercion, it is not a question of one or the other, but rather the two operating in unison to varying degrees as required.

What can also be seen is the approach taken to censorship is sophisticated and does not manifest itself as an effort to quell all kinds of criticism. Further to the fragmented authoritarianism model referred to above, several researchers have identified how authoritarian states benefit from the relaxation of controls at times, such as Dimitrov (2008) who maintains that regimes collapse when their public cannot air grievances, as it indicates the state is no longer regarded as legitimate. Others have pointed to how authoritarian states and dictatorships balance media openness with regime censorship and can use public criticism and freer media to minimise local corruption, improve bureaucratic performance, mollify the masses, and ultimately maintain regime stability and enhance legitimacy (Egorov et al., 2009; Lorentzen, 2012).

In an expansive online study analysing social media posts in China, researchers (King et al, 2013) found that posts with negative, even vitriolic, criticism of the state, its leaders, and its policies were not more likely to be censored. Instead, they found that the censorship programme was primarily aimed at curtailing collective action by silencing comments that might encourage

social mobilisation, regardless of content. So, the research shows the intent was to forestall collective activities that may directly challenge their hold on power and legitimacy, and the Party-state recognises that looking bad in itself does not threaten its hold on power, as long as they can derail any collective action potential. “With respect to this type of speech, the Chinese people are individually free but collectively in chains” (King et al, 2013, p.339).

While the situation facing the news media is somewhat different and arguably more intense to writers of fiction and non-fiction books, there are many similarities and parallels that can be drawn. Repnikova (2017) outlines a fluid collaboration and ambiguous partnership between China’s critical journalists and the state. The media and officials actively reinvent the rules of their engagement, but the State holds the upper hand in controlling the space and scope of this creative manoeuvring. She posits the improvised cooperative mode of state-society relations differs from other authoritarian states, which points to China’s uniqueness in its comprehensive official approach to managing dissent and critical voices in the long term. She further contends that despite the tightening of political boundaries, authorities still adjust their restrictions according to changing circumstances, and while the space for critique has shrunk, innovative ways and means are still being utilised to draw attention to key issues of concern to Chinese citizens.

Writers in the creative publishing realm writers are increasingly expected to adhere to the “main melody” (*zhu xuanlü* 主旋律), involving the reflection of Party ideology and values, and the portrayal of realistic themes that eulogise citizens and contemporary China life. Since the reform era there have been times when control has loosened and writers have felt more free to express themselves, air divergent views and present the state and aspects of society in a critical fashion. However, in the ‘new era’ that is no longer the case. In practice authors can write what they please, but the system ensures politically unwelcome content never sees light of day. An untold quantity of ‘desk-drawer literature’ (*chouti wenxue* 抽屉文学) gathers dust around the country because someone, somewhere felt it might not be in tune with this main melody (Levi King, 2022). The risks are high as the system of control is rigid and expansive and dissident voices can find themselves persecuted and imprisoned (Fitzgerald, 2022). In a recent case in point, Li Yanhe, a Taiwanese publisher of the Eight Banners imprint who published many books banned in China, was detained in Shanghai and has been held incommunicado after travelling to visit relatives in China (Man, 2023).

While all writers in China face tight controls, wider official security or geopolitical concerns result in far greater intensification of controls on certain cohorts, such as with ethnic Uyghurs from Xinjiang. Simply writing in their native tongue has been considered sufficient justification to investigate someone. Numerous writers, poets and publishers have been sent to the network of detention centres in Xinjiang where an estimated 1.8 million people, mostly Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, have been incarcerated in recent years (Walsh, 2022). A large number of Uyghurs are living in exile in Turkey and an independent bookshop and publishing house in Istanbul is developing a “seed vault” devoted to the preservation of Uyghur literature given that much of it is no longer available in Xinjiang (Walsh, 2022. p.87).

Fitzgerald (2022) argues the Party’s propaganda apparatus is not a vehicle of persuasion and does not need to convince people domestically and abroad of any of its claims, rather it is designed to indicate which topics can and cannot be discussed, and what can and cannot be said. Walsh (2022) makes the point that writers are not only obliged to suppress any subjective opinions they might hold that do not chime with the official narrative, but in their storytelling they also often cannot interrogate the past and draw a line from it to the present, or present any kind of societal cause and effect. This can leave their protagonists and narratives floundering both physically and psychologically.

In targeted censorship, officials have also put a focus on the country’s youth in recent years over concerns about the information they consume, their role models and influences on their general outlook. Fan-based communities have been shut down and celebrities have been officially attacked and silenced where their image has not aligned with moral codes. Platforms have been instead instructed to focus on the promotion of traditional Chinese culture. Foreign textbooks were also banned from schools and universities, signalling a desire to keep messaging in line with the main melody. The demeanour of young men is also a concern for officials who are worried by a trend of what they consider “unmanly behaviour”. Men considered effeminate have been targeted in online crackdowns, and schools have been instructed to hire more physical education teachers and coordinate more sporting activity in a bid to cultivate masculinity. Douban, an online platform that has a focus on culture, has been punished in this crackdown. In 2021, it was fined 10.5 million yuan for insufficient censorship of its content, and its app was made unavailable in major stores. A government censorship task force was set up in its head offices to further tighten controls, and many popular groups were closed down, including fan-based discussions. Such initiatives are seen

as a holistic rethink of how a society should function, and while cultural reform initiatives were taken in the past there is now a sense the approach is more strategic and comprehensive (Chang, 2021). This comprehensive approach to societal control is reflected in the CPPF and marks the point where the literary world clashes with the burgeoning control apparatus.

6.7 Interviews with Chinese authors on censorship and control

In interviews I conducted largely between 2019 and 2022 with more than 60 Chinese writers, publishers, editors and agents, issues around censorship and self-censorship were priority concerns for many of the interviewees. In this section I will offer a small sampling of the kind of issues the interviewees encountered or had discussed, to give an idea of present-day practices and realities on the ground, and some views expressed by the writers themselves. The writers shall not be identified due to the sensitives involved and concerns over potential official repercussions for them.

Just about every open conversation with writers and publishers on how the literary scene functions quickly came to issues of censorship and Party control. The Party has many potent tools at their disposal – from controlling the police and the courts; to monitoring and guiding both social and traditional media platforms; to holding the purse strings; to directly and indirectly applying pressure and control via the writers’ association; to holding ultimate control of publishing houses, ISBNs, distribution, bookstores etc. It was widely noted that the rigidity of the control often fluctuates, and red lines are rarely clearly demarcated but seem to shift in line with the prevailing political mood. Many writers commented that control was a relative term, relative to other times and to other countries and systems. This situation was summarised by a prominent Shanghai-based novelist, who said:

The Party controls every corner. From the factory to the school to every individual’s life. However, there is a degree. So, the degree can be very extreme and strict. And at other times it is not so strict. Maybe we can take the example of the Soviet Union with the leadership of Gorbachev and Stalin. So, Stalin was more strict and you could only publish what the country wanted. In China you could say it swings between Gorbachev and Stalin. The degree is different at different times. Everything is relative. I think there is no freedom in North Korea now. If you compare China with North Korea, our situation is not too bad.

Similarly, older writers who compared the current situation with the time around the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), or even in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989, said by contrast the situation had been more open in recent years. On the other hand, those who compared current times to the first decade of this century noted a distinct chill recently, with several referring to the Xi era as the arrival of “The Second Cultural Revolution”. There was a wide sense of resignation among the writers interviewed, almost all of whom believed the harsh censorship would be a feature of life in China for a long time to come. A novelist from an eastern province in China pointed out that Chinese writers were acutely aware of the failings in the system and talked about it constantly, but an irony lay in that they were part of the system, and nothing was going to change in his view:

We all know we need a healthy publishing system. But researching this and talking to writers like me – I am like someone who is very sick, a patient in a hospital, and yet I am talking about how good it is to swim or to play sports, and talking about the joy and happiness of that as if I am a very healthy person. That is very ironic, it's almost amusing. It reminds me of Kafka's novel 'The Castle'. We are part of the system but we are the sick patients and yet we are apparently looking forward to the beautiful world outside the hospital.

There was ambivalence towards the China Writers Association expressed by the writers interviewed, as outlined in detail in a previous chapter. In some ways membership in China is considered something of a badge of honour, and writers could identify several perquisites of membership. But while the network of Writers Associations is ostensibly in place to support and nurture writers, many of those interviewed said it was clear to them it was essentially an organisation designed to co-opt and control. As one Beijing writer said:

Things like workshops, grants, literary journals and prizes that the Writers Association does, other countries have those too but without the whole control apparatus. If I had my way it would be disbanded immediately, and I know many colleagues feel the same. But it is there and it is not going anywhere so you have to work within it. You have to play by their rules if you want to be a writer in this country – if you want to have any kind of profile or readership.

Another said the system now was always pushing for “clean” literature, which he said meant staying away from sensitive and critical topics. A Jiangsu writer said if the CWA felt a writer had crossed a line with their writing or their public speeches or comments made on social media, they would take action as the “first alarm bell in the system... But they are not a judicial organisation so their power only goes so far.” He said they would first “have a gentle word” and if that was not having an effect they could intervene on several levels, working with other official entities. “Suddenly the writer finds they are not allowed to leave the country to go to events, for instance, or book publishing deals get cancelled for no clear reason.” Things like grants, awards and appearances in prestigious journals “just seem to evaporate, almost overnight. Quickly you can feel very chilly”. Books that the writer has already published can disappear from bookshelves. Any references to them on social media can be scrubbed, he said. And there is the spectre of the dreaded knock on the door by local police with an “invitation to tea”, an invite many writers said they had got, some on several occasions. A Zhejiang writer explained his “tea” experiences:

I am very often invited by the police to drink tea. To ask you to have tea means they do not have a very solid reason to arrest you or detain you but they want to threaten you or control your voice. Of course, when you ‘go for tea’ it is not to a fancy teahouse. Usually it is in their police station, a room with no windows. You do actually get a cup of tea in there but usually it is a very tense room, very nervous. Sometimes they contact me in response to something I have written or said. Other times it is related to a general clampdown on intellectuals. They make it clear there will be negative repercussions for me and my family if the authorities are not happy with me. Regularly every month or every two months I will be asked to have a meeting and drink some tea. And now as it is a very sensitive time I get more of those invitations.

Another Beijing writer said the last time he was called for tea was after he returned from Europe, where he gave a number of talks in bookshops and universities. He said the police had video and audio clips of his public comments that had been secretly gathered. “The United Front, the Confucius Institutes, the embassy staff, Chinese students in universities who get paid to do the spying, etc etc, they follow you around and go to your events and record everything and send it back. Then the public security bureau go through it line by line,” he said. “Sometimes you are asked a question in a conversation at an event and you have to answer it. With no context it can sound bad to the police, then they stir trouble.”

Writers are also asked to join political study sessions, where they attend lectures and meetings on the latest political decrees emanating from Beijing. These meetings can be as short as a few hours, or in some cases last for several days with the writers housed in a hotel for the duration. One female writer from Shenzhen recounts her experiences of these sessions:

It is not mandatory to attend but we all know we need to go. Sometimes the notice is really short and you still have to drop everything, whatever you are doing, and just go. The worst one I went to recently was in a remote hotel in Guangzhou that lasted for four days [in 2018]. There were dozens of us there and we sat in a meeting room all day long for four long days listening to officials interpret Xi Jinping's speeches at a big meeting in Beijing, his 'Thought', that kind of thing. Looking around the room was depressing. So many writers, some of them big names, big prize winners, scribbling notes furiously for hours on end like scared schoolchildren trying to impress a teacher. We got paid a daily stipend to attend, so that was good, and at night-time we all had dinner together which was quite fun. But overall, I hated it, I think everyone did. They want to influence us writers and then want us to somehow influence the readers. But it's stupid, no reader wants to read this stuff. Depressing. But what can you do? They want to show who is the big boss.

6.8 Dealing with the publishing houses

Many of the writers interviewed have worked themselves at some point in publishing houses, and they generally have empathy for their editors who they know are in a difficult position. As a writer from Chengdu put it:

People who go into publishing generally love books and ideas and it is not natural for them to put ideology first or to want to rip out the bowels of a story. But they have to be extremely careful in these times or there will be serious punishment for them and their publishing house. We all understand that, and we just make the best of it. So, I work with them and the censor in-house on each chapter, one by one, to get something that I think is good writing but is not going stir up political trouble.

In some cases publishers receive clear instructions not to touch certain topics, several said, with examples cited including the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang, protests in Hong Kong, the arrest of outspoken academics, mass protests relating to property or pollution, and incidents

pointing to official mishandling of the Covid-19 outbreak. Regular directives come through to publishing houses forbidding the mentioning of specific names and topics. Direct criticism of the authorities is certainly not allowed “but more than that, we are instructed to serve the Party. To promote them and their work, both directly and indirectly,” one Shanghai editor of a large press said. Zhang Zhan (张展, b.1983), a citizen journalist who also chronicled the early stages of China’s Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan was sentenced to four years in prison for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a vague charge commonly used against government critics. Two others who documented the outbreak, Chen Qiushi (陈秋实, b.1985) and Li Zehua (李泽华, b.1995), were detained for months before being released, while Fang Bin (方斌) was presumed to be in police custody (Wang, 2021).

A prominent novelist and editor based in Guangdong shared his writing experience and views on self-censorship that summarises the experiences of many of the interviewees:

You can write what you want in China. Of course, you can, but the problem is what you write cannot be published. That’s the problem. And writers know this before they write one word. So as you start to write the first thing that crosses your mind is – will this work ever get published or will it stay in my drawer forever? We only have so much time in life, who wants to waste time writing things no one can read? So we have to pick topics and narratives that we think are safe, or write in very vague terms, and as we write we self-censor here and there to stay away from any boundaries. But of course we don’t know where the boundaries are, we just know they are out there somewhere and they are trouble so we don’t want to touch them. Then we submit the work to the publishers and then normally they edit some more – delete some phrases or paragraphs, even whole chapters sometimes, make the tone more positive here and there. And then you have the finished book. Does this finished book look like the book the author would have written if censorship did not exist? No, of course not. Not at all. But what can you do? That’s China.

Speaking on the same topic, a Shanghai author said that he did not self-censor but rather decided on what approach to take once the manuscript was finished and was in the editing phase. He said that if the publishers only required small changes and deletions he could accept them as a sacrifice to getting the work published. But if he felt the changes required were substantial and fundamentally altered the text he would not accept them and would withdraw the

manuscript. As the censorship system was so fluid and so open to interpretation, if a book was not accepted his approach was to wait for a while and try again later, or with a different editor or publishing house. “You never know with this system. It could just be the mood someone is in. What gets rejected today could be welcome some other time. A lot depends on the current atmosphere,” he said. Similarly, when American writer and teacher Peter Hessler was lecturing in a Chinese university the official directives on prohibited topics were vague, stating only that “political opinion that may not be generally agreed upon” or “topics deemed politically sensitive” should be avoided. “This was a typical Party approach – by not being specific, authority remained broader and more flexible,” Hessler asserts (2022).

A Guangzhou novelist and short story writer said he spent 10 years writing a book that he believed was not overtly critical of the Party or the leadership but that touched on taboos such as the Cultural Revolution and religion in China. “No publisher will print it. It cannot be published in these times. It is heart-breaking for me,” he said. And books that were once approved can find themselves on the prohibited list. Several authors spoke of situations where a book was published and widely circulated, apparently meeting with no obstacles or official objection, but when the time came for a reprint edition either the application was flatly denied or the censors pen came out and cuts were introduced for the follow-on edition. “Just because something is safe and approved one day does not mean it will be safe and approved the next day,” one Beijing novelist said. “It could be the content is considered risky now as the political situation is more tense, or maybe the writer has caught the attention of some official. You never really know. All we can do is guess.”

One example of this is Sheng Keyi’s best-selling novel *Northern Girls*, which was published uncensored in China in 2004 and a second edition was also published intact, but in 2015 when editors prepared to launch a third edition of the book the author was informed that parts of her text were no longer publishable and had to be deleted or rewritten. One excerpt editors wanted to expunge from the novel refers to the forced abortions and sterilisations undergone by women as a result of China’s one-child policy, which was formally scrapped in 2015 after 35 years in force. Suggesting the CCP was responsible for such issues was apparently increasingly taboo. Sheng said she had hoped that as Xi Jinping constantly talks about literature and how much he loves it that some new windows in ideological control would open to allow some fresh air in. “In reality it feels like all the windows have been closed. The environment for expressing opinion and writing has become harsher and harsher in recent years,” she said (Phillips, 2015). One Beijing editor said in

an interview that post-publication censors seemed much more prevalent in recent years, adding that they are often retirees who had previously worked in publishing. “The pop up everywhere, browsing through all the books in bookshops, dropping into our offices to skim through new books, they can show up anytime. And they see things in old books that no one noticed or worried about the first time,” he said.

A common discussion and constant source of handwringing among Chinese writers is whether as a group they are being too compliant, self-censoring too easily, and whether they should be finding ways to push back more. A writer from Zhejiang bemoaned the fact that China did not have any kind of Samizdat culture, the dissident activity seen across the socialist Eastern Bloc where individuals reproduced censored and underground material and passed them around by hand. “There are no heroes like that in China today. Writers here are just cogs in the system,” he said. Others argued it was unfair to suggest Chinese writers should be doing more to confront the state as the system was so oppressive and all-embracing and the risks for challenging it dire. As one prominent Chinese writer said:

It is ridiculous for people on the outside to be saying we should be standing up more, we should be challenging the Party, doing this, doing that. As we all know, China is like a micro-managed Stalinist police state, but it is stronger than the Soviets – it also has cutting-edge technology and practically unlimited resources to spend on maintaining control, keeping power. Writers are not a main thing the Party worries about – but they watch everything we do, all the time. If someone in the Party thinks a writer is a threat, they will quickly find a way to silence them. And if they think it is serious they can simply destroy them and everyone close to them. They can choose any number of ways to do this, but they will do it – to stop the threat and to send a message to other writers. People who criticise us for not doing enough should try it themselves. Let’s see how they do.

A factor that many interviewees brought up was the rising demand in the system for “positive” stories, where writers were expected to be upbeat and cast China, particularly contemporary China, in a very positive light. A writer from the north-east of China said that development such as these made her want to give up writing:

It used to be we just had to avoid the three T’s (Tiananmen, Tibet and Taiwan) and you would be fine. Then they kept adding taboos. But now they want our stories to be happy, be uplifting. I couldn’t even mention pollution in one of my stories that was set back in

the 80s, when the north-east of China was probably one of the most polluted places on Earth. They wanted me to rewrite it with clear, sunny skies. And when they say they want positive stories, it's clear they mean positive for the government, the Party. It's just too much.

Another writer gave the example of a story he wrote for *Harvest* magazine in Shanghai and the editor liked the story and said he would publish it but wanted him to change the ending first, to turn what was a bleak ending into a happy one. "I could not do it because when I'm writing a story it follows its own logic. It has its own beginning, body and ending," he said. "I am a dark writer, it's my style, I couldn't just paste a positive, happy ending on and make it make sense. So that story also was never published."

In a similar vein many interviewees bemoaned the agenda-setting push to write to certain "themes" in order to avail of generous government grants and for the publishing houses to hit government-set quotas. Recent themes announced by the government that writers were encouraged to focus on were "China's magnificent victory over Covid-19; the glorious centenary of the Communist Party of China; and how the wonderful party-state eradicated poverty in China," a Beijing writer said, "it is all celebrations and miracles they want, not real writing."

Some genres seem to be less problematic than others and several writers of science fiction interviewed said they had fewer problems with censors than other writers. "Science fiction writing is obviously a commentary on society in many ways but maybe as it is set in another world it does not feel like such a direct challenge so they tend to let it pass," one science fiction writer said. Many writers said they rely on innuendo and metaphor to write obliquely and get indirect commentary and criticism past the censor. "This pushes the writer to play with words and meaning, and write in a more blurred way," a female short story writer said. "You hope the officials don't catch your true meaning and mostly they don't. It is challenging, but fun." On the same point another writer said, "Of course, in some ways I am expressing my political tendencies and opinions, but I think the staff working for the censors don't have the comprehension or the ability to read between the lines. They may miss my main points. So luckily most of my works have not had to be changed much, and they get published."

But some just give up. One interviewee said his friend who was an established writer in his fifties suddenly started to write children's literature. "I asked him why he started to write for

children at that stage of his life. He said he couldn't write many other things, things he wanted to write about, so he decided to use fairy tales to express his ideas," he said.

One element that is keenly observed by writers is what actually does get past the censors. One editor said that while this is all closely watched, writers are aware that random incidents do not indicate a trend:

Sometimes we are amazed that a book gets published or is allowed to keep selling when it clearly has a critical or negative message. And other times an author has a book banned but a while later they are able to publish again and are welcome at official events again. And, for instance, a writer who had a book banned might be able to keep teaching in a prestigious university or keep working in a state publishing house. To some these exceptions give hope, but they are very rare and it is very hard to understand how and why these things happened. It may be just luck or individual circumstances in certain cases, maybe they have a good personal relationship with someone important, or maybe the government wants to allow some criticism or negativity so it can pretend they do not interfere – who knows? But we just keep guessing.

The variance in responses can be explained partly by shifts in central political priorities and moods and also by the concept of fragmented authoritarianism outlined earlier – rendered in the paradox element of my framework – where different institutions and regions have varying interpretations of directives, which are often vague, and to a certain extent place varying degrees of emphasis on issues.

The interviews conducted deliver insights to the realities writers and publishers are facing on an ongoing basis and addresses a gap in the literature between policy and practice where conflicts are often nuanced and parameters ill-defined. It is evident Chinese writers face fundamental official challenges in their pursuance of artistic expression. They face direct censorship via an oppressive legal and regulatory framework and the rigid control of the publishing sector. Then the system actively encourages and rewards self-censorship, and comes down heavily on anyone deemed to have transgressed and challenged that system. But way beyond curbing dissent or critical voices – with the dissident threat negligible – the main official emphasis in recent years has been on harnessing the talents of the nation's writers to underscore the legitimacy of the Party and serve, indirectly at least, as their supporters and public relations officials.

While censorship has been a constant since Link's era, there have been many changes within the system. Overall the contemporary system of monitoring and control is more comprehensive and sophisticated. Under the current elaborate structure, the responsibility is placed more on the publishers, editors and writers to self-censor and not cross any lines. Official emphasis is more on steering content towards positive territory and themed titles that support the Party-state rather than on pre-publication censorship. Wider monitoring and increased numbers of post-publication censors mean that undesirable content that might get through the publishing phase will be picked up quickly. The punishments for transgressors, ranging from criminal investigations to a reduction in ISBN allocation to the suspension of publishing licences, result in industry practitioners taking very prudent approaches. In Link's time the influence of the CWA would have been higher, and there would have been fewer alternatives open for writers to publish or generate income, but content still remains highly controlled. In the modern era the state has abundant resources and technologies at its disposal, that can be used to both support writers and monitor and control them.

The above illustrates a comprehensive range of Party-Moat Building, co-optation and repressive policies and approaches intrinsic in the CPPF to get the county's writers to write what the authorities want them to write about – and to at least not write about what they do not want them to mention. By cancelling out criticism and negative voices, and amplifying positive reflections on society, the Party-state helps maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

The system, which has become increasingly oppressive under the leadership of Xi Jinping, has generated a sense of despondency among many Chinese writers who privately bemoan the fact they are heavily shackled. With the Party-state investing heavily in the objective of establishing China as a major cultural power by 2035, it seems inconceivable that working within the parameters outlined the country's scribe can really elevate China to literary superpower status by that point. The Party would be acutely aware of this perception, one that is widely held in the Chinese publishing sector, but politically it comes down to priorities. For now, clearly, the priority is not on cultivating a free marketplace of ideas where writers can experiment, challenge and thrive. As can be seen from daily life in the sector, the priority rather is on securitisation, stifling criticism, encouraging narratives lauding the work and role of the CCP, and, ultimately, shoring up the Party-state's legitimacy to strengthen their grip on the reins of power. Considering the official approach taken to controlling the publishing sector as outlined above through Gerschewski's theoretical

framework, we can observe how the CCP is utilising repression, co-optation and legitimisation as three drivers of stability. The CCP asserts its power and authority is legitimate by, firstly, proclaiming the legal validity to maintain power; secondly, by engaging in ongoing and elaborate efforts to justify the rules governing the power relationship, blocking alternate positions; and finally, by presenting the absence of dissent as evidence of consent and, ultimately, the CCP's legitimate authority. Again, in line with Beetham's framework, however, there is no indication the rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both the dominant and subordinate parties. The coercive system ensures participation but would not in itself establish legitimacy according to Beetham.

The emphasis on "Telling the China story well" is illustrated in the channelling of positive, harmonious content creation and a focus on theme titles that eulogise the Party-state. Building on Link's "uses of literature" in a contemporary setting, censorship, self-censorship and agenda-setting are at their most evident via the removal of criticism and negativity, and the amplification of endorsement and positivity. Conflict theory is apparent in investing in trying to establish China as a literary superpower by 2035 but then throttling the life out of the system through a range of censorship, self-censorship, agenda-setting and content management measures. On view is the circularity of support/constraint/support/constraint repetition in the ecosystem that illustrates the Creative Policy Paradox Framework. These initiatives demotivate the writers, publishers and editors involved in content creation, while they also influence public perception, leading to a loss of respect for the sector in the eyes of the public and increasing tendencies to dismiss output as a form of propaganda. Rigid censorship is an integral element of the Chinese literary world. Despite this moat-building the scene still functions to an extent and, occasionally, thrives. The next section shall examine efforts to present elements of that scene to prospective readers around the world.

Chapter 7: Exporting the China story: Going Global with soft power and hard edges

7.1 *Introduction*

As part of the Going Global policy, China has put an intense focus in recent years on developing its soft power credentials across the world, ‘telling the Chinese story well’ and striving to become a cultural superpower. Through the prism of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, I will outline in this section some of the main developments in this area with regard to literature and other cultural initiatives, as well as how and where the Party-state flexes its muscles in Party Moat-Building initiatives and in an effort to shape narratives beyond its borders. These endeavours reflect theories encompassed in the CPPF, including Nye’s (1991) soft power, Gerschewski’s (2013) three pillars of stability and Dukalskis (2020) on authoritarian image management.

Beyond literature, in this section I will also explore how China has engaged in the exportation of cinema and media as other mechanisms to tell the China story overseas, illustrating how literature is just one small part of a comprehensive national programme. I will then briefly introduce entities such as the United Front Work Department (UFWD) and the Confucius Institutes network as examples of how the Party-state organises itself culturally and politically beyond its own borders, and aggregate incidents of Party Moat-Building in the form of discourse and narrative control overseas. In the engagement with the Chinese diaspora as well as international individuals and entities, the operations instantiate an exhaustive approach to having the China story told well all around the globe. Charted on the CPPF, it will document how assertive pursuits to promote soft power have at times been counterproductive with policy conflicts embedded in the loop. As a consideration of China’s governance practices, the case studies delineate how policies highlighted in Five-Year Plans are ardently implemented, both domestically and internationally, with extensive official engagement and the deployment of vast resources.

Assessing authoritarian image management, Dukalskis uses four sets of mechanisms to explain how this management can work to portray states in a more favourable light, present state-sanctioned narratives, reduce criticism of the state and allow it to operate with less international criticism, opposition or pressure. These four mechanisms can be seen here in the

CCP's international soft power and propaganda efforts to enhance or protect the legitimacy of the Party-state's political system. Firstly, Promotional/diffuse mechanisms that disseminate positive messaging about the state internationally with the aim of presenting the state in a more positive light can be seen in the media initiatives and promoting literature, film and other cultural projects to portray China in a positive light. Secondly Dukalskis presents obstructive/diffuse mechanisms – mechanisms that protect the state's narrative by censoring, obscuring, or refuting unfavourable information circulating in international public spheres – as witnessed in the 'wolf warrior diplomacy' and via media outlets the CCP controls. Foreign elites and specific groups are targeted in democracies around the world under promotional/specific mechanisms in the hope they can act in the state's interest. And fourth, obstructive/specific mechanisms take aim at individuals or groups beyond its borders that are critical of the state, which can be seen in all the undertakings by the Party-state and its proxies to silence or side-line critical commentary or positions that do not align with the official Beijing worldview. From an external security perspective, the Party-state's motives include preventing the spread of democratic values, influencing international norms, and forwarding their international objectives, while internal security concerns include discrediting critics and challengers abroad, and combatting issues abroad that might feed back into China and have a domestic influence. Under the CPPF these four mechanisms would all fall under the wider banner of Party Moat-Building, actions designed to protect and preserve the position of the CCP.

China's official approach towards international engagement has shifted dramatically in recent decades. Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader from 1978 to 1989, promoted a diplomatic strategy from the 1980s of "Keep a low profile and bide your time". In the early '90s, Deng stressed that China should maintain that low profile in light of the sweeping changes in the international order after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, saying the country should first cultivate a larger political force before increasing its presence in the international arena (Luo et al, 2019). Changes in the policy were first clearly seen towards the end of Jiang Zemin's tenure (1989-2002) and escalated over the course of Hu Jintao's period in control from 2002 to 2012 (Luo et al, 2019). The Going Global strategy was put forward at the third session of the ninth National People's Congress in 2000 (Luo et al). In the realm of culture, the CCP's 11th Five-Year Plan called for an enlarged presence for China in the international cultural sphere over the period of 2005-2010. It outlined a range of policies targeted

at popularising Chinese culture worldwide, including the establishment of new diplomatic ties, Chinese cultural year/weeks, and Chinese New Year celebrations. It also called for the establishment of a range of platforms such as book exhibits, movie festivals, art exhibits, expos, scholarly exchanges and more expansive tourism and sporting initiatives. The policy emphasised the development of commercial networks and Chinese brand names to play a key role in China Going Global, and encouraged the growth and exports of Chinese arts and artistic products, including movies and TV dramas, publications, music, animated film, electronic games, acrobatics and dance (Lai and Lu, 2012). In a prominent speech in 2007 delivered to the 17th National Congress of the CCP, Hu Jintao called on the Party-state to enhance the appeal of Chinese culture and the country's soft power, adding that the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation would be accompanied by thriving Chinese culture and the country's use of its soft power (Lai and Lu, 2012; Meng, 2018). Hu posited soft power was one of the major factors determining comprehensive national power, which was combined with a country's political, economic, military and ideational strength. From this time China could be seen to be fully engaging with Joseph Nye's (1991) soft power concept, an idea that Chinese scholars had initially viewed as a potentially threatening manifestation of Western hegemony, but soon embraced as a transformative opportunity for China. Hu Jintao also expanded upon Nye's original concept by applying it to domestic as well as international considerations by adding that cultural soft power was a basic requirement for scientific and development strategy, social harmony and was necessary to meet rising demands for spiritual culture (Wang, 2011; Klimes, 2017). The overseas cultural advancement was given high political priority and in 2010 the government launched a major plan to reinvigorate the culture industry, financed by the central government with expansive support tied in from financial institutions and the state-owned cultural enterprises (Barr, 2011).

Soon after Xi Jinping took over as general-secretary of the CCP in November 2012 he made it clear he intended to vigorously promote China's soft power. At the National Propaganda and Thought-Work Conference in August 2013 he delivered a key policy statement on China Going Global, soft power, and the role of propaganda and thought-work in which he outlined the Party-state's overall objective of building China into a "socialist cultural power". He instructed cadres that on "issues of right and wrong and political principles" to "strengthen the initiative and grasp the discursive power" and "tell China's story well and spread China's voices" (Xi, 2013). This dictum has shaped the literary landscape in the years since and invoked nationalism, ideology

and soft power concepts into the CCP's wider legitimization initiatives. Brady (2015) argues that in this context telling China's story well means promoting a selective version of traditional Chinese culture to global audiences, adding that the CCP's contemporary thought-management has successfully managed to create a non-critical, market-friendly cultural economy.

In another speech in December 2014 entitled "Enhance China's Cultural Soft Power," Xi said China would strengthen its cultural soft power, disseminate the values of modern China and develop overseas publicity to make China's culture known through international communication and dissemination (Klimes, 2017). In a marked increase in assertiveness in February 2017, Xi said that China should "guide" the international community in building a new world order and maintaining international security that aligned more with China's values and worldview. This shift in tone could be taken to signal the official end of Deng Xiaoping's low-key approach to international strategy which had emphasised the avoidance of confrontation and the use of cooperative rhetoric (Sun, 2017; Klimes, 2017). This was now a much more confident and assertive China on the world stage, economically and politically, a confidence that would mainline into Beijing's international cultural initiatives. The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) placed a renewed emphasis on promoting the international appeal of Chinese culture, identifying a range of projects designed "to share China's stories, spread China's voice"¹⁶. The new approach under Xi's leadership, ardently promoting the 'China model' and Beijing's values and worldview, became known as 'Wolf warrior diplomacy', coined from the Chinese action movie *Wolf Warrior 2*, where diplomats adopted a notably more confrontational and combative approach and loudly denounced any international criticism of China (Hille, 2020; Zhu, 2020; Wu, 2020).

From an economic standpoint, the Going Global policy prompted rapid growth in China's outward direct investment, which increased from US\$2.9 billion in 2003 to US\$146 billion in 2015. In that year China surpassed Japan as the second largest foreign investor in the world and became a net exporter of capital (Luo et al, 2019). These forays would be seen as opening steps in

¹⁶ http://www.fujian.gov.cn/english/news/202108/t20210809_5665713.htm#C35

the Creative Policy Paradox Framework where the cultural and commercial benefits of promoting China's soft power are evident and have not as yet encountered policy conflicts.

7.2 *Chinese publishing initiatives overseas*

The Party-state coordinates cultural production and distribution, including literature, both domestically and internationally. In the context of the wider Going Global strategy, Chinese government agencies have been trying to address the “cultural deficit” in the world of literature for decades, a reference to the fact that while China enjoys a large trade surplus with most countries around the world its cultural industries face a large deficit. In terms of publishing, copyright imports significantly outnumber exports in both volume and value terms each year. Since 2002, China introduced a raft of measures aimed at fostering the right conditions for China's publishing sector to Go Global (Richardson, 2006; Xu and Fang, 2008; You, 2017). One such early policy was the copyright-as-gifts initiative where government officials selected a range of titles, purchased their copyrights from the domestic copyright owners in the form of subsidies and then gifted them to foreign publishers. Xu and Fang (2008) wrote that after its initial launch in 2002 this policy seemed popular in countries like Russia, where 16 agreements were signed soon after the project launch, but found less support with European publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Chinese officials soon came to the conclusion that quality translations were a bigger issue so switched the focus to translation subsidisation. In 2004, during the Sino-French Culture Year, 70 Chinese books were published in France with the benefit of these early subsidies (Xu and Fang, 2008). Reports at the time suggested one-third of the books were sold within six days which spurred official enthusiasm and the initiative soon evolved into the China Book International (CBI) project. CBI's core mission is to implement the Going Global strategy for the Chinese publishing industry, according to the founding regulations published on its website. CBI invites Chinese publishers to submit “suitable titles” each year that may appear in CBI's catalogue for international promotion. The guidelines say the titles should deal with “the development of and change in modern China in political, economic, cultural and other fields, helping foreign audiences learn about China, promoting Chinese culture, describing the major achievements that have been made in the research of natural and social sciences, and reflecting the Chinese traditional culture, literature and art characteristic of accumulated value.” In certain cases, grants may also be awarded to Chinese titles that have not appeared in the catalogue. According to information on its website,

by the end of 2015 CBI had signed 1,454 agreements (2,792 books and 47 copyrights) with 564 publishers from 71 countries. In addition, under the project for Translation and Publication of Chinese Cultural Works CBI had signed 95 agreements (957 books and 15 copyrights) with 59 publishers from 24 countries. While CBI is the main source of grants for Chinese literature in translation, there are other official grant options open to publishers such as via the China Writers Association and provincial ministries. Projects aimed at promoting Chinese publishing overseas include the Classic China International Publishing Project, the Chinese Academic Foreign Translation Project and the Silk Road Book Publishing Project. Beyond seeking foreign publishers to publish Chinese books in translation, Chinese publishers are now also looking to publish in other languages (Qu, 2022).

Supporting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Silk Road Book Project office gives grants to support the publication of Chinese books in BRI countries. In 2020, for example, the office announced it had approved 308 books from 131 publishing institutions that would benefit from the grants (*Shanghai Observer*, 2020b). In 2021, a total of 324 books were selected (Tengxun Wang, 2021). In 2017, the Belt and Road Academic Publishing Alliance, initiated by Renmin University of China Press, was formed to build a cooperation platform to promote the sharing of resources such as authors, translation, marketing, copyright information, education and training among its members. By 2019, the organisation claimed to have joined 310 organisations – publishers, academic institutions and professional groups – in 56 countries and regions. In an effort to enhance efficiency in the overseas publishing efforts, China has also built what officials call the world's first international social networking and copyright trading platform in the vertical publishing field. The “Publishing 1st Publishing Map” is an integrated model that combines online and traditional publishing that allows publishers, editors, and book marketers from different countries to directly connect with each other and promote copyright transactions and international publishing cooperation (Qu, 2022). The Southern Publishing and Media Company announced that it will engage in the project to speed up the resource integration of Chinese culture overseas, with a particular focus on literature, to complete “a value industry chain to deliver complementary advantages and ensure Chinese publishing entities do not have to go it alone in foreign markets” (*Wendang Wenku*, 2020).

In another BRI book-related project, the Xinzhuohua Bookstore has opened branches in Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Malaysia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, with more openings planned.

Currently 90 per cent of the books are in Chinese with the plan being to increase the number of books in translation in local languages (*Wendang Wenku*, 2020). Major publishing houses have all developed their own BRI projects, such as the Wuzhou Media Publishing House which has plans to publish 300 Chinese books in BRI countries under themes including Chinese Culture, Contemporary China, Charming Xinjiang and Creative China in more than a dozen languages, including Russian, Turkish, Arabic, Urdu and a number of south-east Asian languages (*Wendang Wenku*, 2020). Many regional initiatives are also taking place, such as the “Contemporary Chinese Cantonese Literature Translation Series” organised by Guangdong province which announced it has launched series in Russian, Japanese, English, Hungarian and Italian to promote Cantonese literature (Sun, 2021).

While there are significant projects in the realm of international book promotion, there are concerns about the impact of the projects, which the CPPF helps identify. Two Chinese publishers and one author interviewed for this thesis spoke about frustrations they had with CBI and other grant-givers about how books they wanted promoted on catalogues for international promotion were not selected. “They have a strong idea of what kind of book is suitable and what kind is not suitable for a foreign audience,” one Shanghai publisher said. In order to be eligible for a grant, books must be published in China first so they will have gone through all the standard censorship processes as outlined in the previous chapter, but nonetheless it appears that in some instances the grant-givers operate as another layer of censorship when Chinese authors try to connect with international audiences. “One book of mine was heavy, a bit dark in its theme but it was published in China and got excellent reviews from some critics, but when my publishers wanted CBI to promote it overseas for the translation market they said it was ‘not the image of China we want to portray’,” one writer said. The official tendency to select sanitised books and ones with evident uplifting political messaging undercuts the literary promotion policy, prompting the directional shift in the CPPF, as consumers tend to shun suggestions of inculcation.

In another effort to promote Chinese publishing overseas, officials have also placed an emphasis on having a strong presence at the major international book fairs such as the Frankfurt Book Fair, Book Expo of America and the London Book Fair, as well as developing the book fairs in Beijing and Shanghai. China has found however that the high profile attained at these events, particularly when China was the featured country, can be a double-edged sword and can generate more negative attention than positive. At three book fairs in recent years – Frankfurt in 2009,

London in 2012 and Book Expo in New York in 2015 – China was the featured country and went to enormous expense presenting expansive exhibition stands, setting up multiple events and flying over hundreds of writers, publishers and officials. In each case dissident Chinese writers protested their exclusion and the events attracted protests condemning China’s human rights record that generated negative headlines around the world (Johnson, 2009; Sherwin, 2012; Anna, 2015). In such cases Gerschewski’s stability pillar repression rebounds and trammels attempts at international literary promotion.

In preparation for the 2022 London Book Fair, Chinese officials selected 50 books from China “after strict screening” and translated them into English in preparation for international sale. The titles selected suggest the screening and key criteria was more political than literary, with highlighted offerings including non-fiction titles such as *Xi Jinping Tells Stories of Party History*; *Xi Jinping and College Student Friends*; *Eradication of Poverty: China's Promise*; and novels including *Melody of Happiness: Symphony of Tibet's Poverty Alleviation* (Qu, 2022) that present a vision of social harmony. With regard to the Xi Jinping series of books, *Guangming Daily*, an official Party newspaper, notes (Han, 2022) that titles such as *Xi Jinping Tells Stories*, *Basic Issues of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, and *Approachable: The Power of Xi Jinping's Language* have now been sold into more than 20 copyright jurisdictions around the world, which the paper said meant the series had “basically achieved full coverage of the official languages of the United Nations and the world’s common languages”. Celebrating the success, the report said the books “enhance the ideological and emotional recognition of Xi Jinping's thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.” While these successes are widely touted in the state press, interviews with publishers suggested these titles were being purchases by other countries more for political than literary purposes and they did not have high visibility in bookshops overseas.

Pointing to commercial success stories in China’s publishing Going Global in recent years, the *Guangming Daily* said that Mai Jia’s (麦家, b.1964) *Decoded* had sold 50,000 copies in the Western world; the Arabic versions of *Meishi Jia* by Lu Wenfu (陆文夫, b.1927) and *Running through Zhongguancun* by Xu Zechen (徐则臣, b.1987) had both sold 3,000 copies; while Lao Ma’s (劳马, 1962) *Rouruan de yi Tuan* had sold 1,000 copies in Mongolia and won the country’s highest literary award. Chinese online literature is also finding some publishing success overseas,

the report said, with the Vietnamese version of *The Legend of Mi Yue* by Jiang Shengnan (蒋胜男, b.1973) selling 3,000 copies while the Thai version of *The Longest Day in Chang'an* by Ma Boyong (马伯庸, b.1980) sold almost 10,000 copies. The Thai edition of *Langya Bang* by Hai Yan (海宴) earned \$40,000 in royalties, the report added (Han, 2022).

While officials tout these successes, there is scepticism among the literary community in China. In interviews with Chinese publishers, authors and literary translation, several interviewees bemoaned the lack of comparative success for Chinese literature on the international stage despite huge official backing over the recent two decades. One early test case was Jiang Rong's (姜戎, b.1946) 2004 novel *Wolf Totem* which sold over four million copies in China but failed to sell well internationally despite being sold into numerous territories around the world and strongly promoted by the Penguin publishing group (McDougall, 2014). Hopes for international sales success for a Chinese writer were buoyed significantly when Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in 2012. Prior to that win China had been developing from the 1980s what became known as a 'Nobel Complex', manifested as official ire and angst at the nation's failure on this grand cultural stage. Lovell (2006) explored the complex in depth and concluded its roots lay in modern Chinese nationalism and the perception that China, with its long and rich cultural heritage, felt it had something akin to a right to win the Nobel Prize. The issue begged questions such as, on one hand, why could Chinese writers not win this prize, and on the other, what was wrong with the national literary psyche that writers and officials were so obsessed with this accolade and the acclaim and validation it might bring? Lovell contended the complex also illuminates a sense of inferiority and an impulse towards self-criticism at apparent failings that is often part of Chinese nationalism. It appeared the issue might be finally have been put to rest in 2000 when Gao Xingjian (高行健, b.1940), a Chinese émigré and later French naturalised novelist and playwright, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. However, the Academy's presentation named only works by Gao that adopted a dissident tone, prompting China to disown Gao and react angrily at what they called the political agenda of the Nobel Prize (Dahlburg, 2000).

Beijing happily celebrated Mo Yan's win in 2012 but his victory was dogged by controversy. At a press conference in Stockholm just after he won the prize Mo Yan evaded questions about fellow Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo – who had been sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2009 for criticising the CCP and calling for more openness – and Mo Yan said he would not sign

a petition calling for his release. He also appeared to justify censorship in China and compared it to standard airport security checks, saying, “When I was taking my flight to Sweden, going through the customs, they also wanted to check me – they even took off my belt and shoes. But I think these checks are necessary.” In response to Mo Yan’s win and subsequent comments there were several critical comments, including from British writer Salman Rushdie who referred to him as “a patsy of the regime” (Tobar, 2012). Lucien Leites, publishing director at the Swiss publishing house Unionsverlag that holds the German-language rights to Mo Yan’s work, as well as several other Nobel laureates, told Deutsche Welle that negative media attention played a role in stifling sales of Mo Yan’s books. In total his publishing house sold 80,000 Mo Yan titles, which he said was low for a Nobel laureate, with other recent winners selling in excess of 300,000 titles for the German-language publishing house (Peschel, 2019). One Beijing-based international publisher said in an interview for this thesis that they understood Mo Yan’s *Frog*, released in English in 2015 by Penguin, sold fewer than 2,000 copies in the US market after its launch, a figure that would have been well below the publisher’s expectations or breakeven point.

The next big hope for China on the international circuit was Mai Jia, whose novel *Decoded* was sold into more than 30 copyright jurisdictions in 2014, with major firms such as Penguin and FSG publishing and promoting the title (Qian, 2017; Yue, 2017). As noted, Chinese media reported the book sold 50,000 copies in Western markets combined, but a source close to Penguin described the sales as “overall extremely disappointing”. Two interviewees who work with Chinese books in international markets listed the examples of Jiang Rong’s *Wolf Totem*, Mo Yan and Mai Jia’s *Decoded* as cases where overseas sales had been much lower than anticipated, particularly in Anglophone markets, despite expensive marketing campaigns. These case studies had encouraged international publishing executives to exercise caution when investing in Chinese titles. Overall Chinese officials and the country’s literary apparatus have been disappointed with the level of success that Chinese writers have met with abroad, despite expansive soft power measures backed with huge budgets. The quality of translations is often cited as a main culprit, as is the tendency of post-reform writers to gravitate to more commercial routes rather than following what is referred to as “pure literature”. On the political side, the massive ruptures that have impacted the literary scene at various points in history have certainly stymied the growth and maturation process of the system, while the constant political intrusion is a major and ongoing undermining factor (Lovell, 2006). Seen through the CPPF, these intrusions are Party Moat-

Building aimed at discourse control but consequently then impair wider literary promotion objectives.

One big recent international literary success story for China has been Hugo Award laureate Liu Cixin, in particular for his *Three-Body Problem* trilogy, translated into English by Ken Liu and Joel Martinsen. Within two years of being released in the United States in 2014, the English translation of the book was reported to have sold 110,000 copies (Yao, 2016). The cumulative sales of more than 30 editions of the *Three-Body Problem* trilogy has exceeded 3.3 million copies, and the English copyright renewal transaction price is now as high as \$1.25 million, setting a new record for overseas royalty income for a Chinese contemporary literary work. Statistically speaking, as of 2020, one out of every 393 people in Poland has bought a book by Liu, while one in every 330 Czechs had (Jia, 2022). Credit for this success story should not necessarily go to the Party-state's international policies, however. Translating the first book, Ken Liu switched the order of the chapters around to start with chapters that feature the Culture Revolution, something Liu Cixin dared not do writing the original in Chinese, fearing a reaction from the censors. The change prompted observers to ask if the translated version might actually be an improvement on the original (Pandell, 2016). This provides an example of how the very existence of China's censorship apparatus frustrates and undermines literary efforts. Once the book was translated, Wu (2020) argues that beyond the high literary and creative standard of Liu's writing, his work was given added impetus abroad via the efforts of the translators and their networks and a highly connected and motivated science fiction fan base that could help the work gain early traction. In a similar vein, *Clarkesworld* in the US crowdfunded the translation and publication of titles by Chen Qiufan, Xia Jia (夏笳, b.1984) and other Chinese science fiction writers. In total, 473 backers pledged \$12,835 to the organic literary project (*Clarkesworld*, 2019).

In 2017, the CCP's English-language mouthpiece the *Global Times* reported that while China had many best-selling authors domestically, very few had made any headway internationally, particularly in English-speaking countries. Besides Mai Jai, Liu Cixin and Mo Yan, "there are not many Chinese authors that English-speaking readers can remember by name", the report concluded (Li and Zhang, 2017). The Chinese Culture Communication and Translation Center noted that while there are more than 7,000 active writers who have registered with the China Writers Association at a national level and who collectively create more than 3,000 novels each year, only around 200 of them have been introduced overseas (Yue, 2017). According to a *Publishers Weekly*

database¹⁷, the number of Chinese fiction titles being translated into English ran at about 10 titles per year between 2008 and 2017, increasing to about 20 books in 2018 and 2019, 14 in 2020, and 15 in 2021. Nicky Harman, a Chinese-to-English literary translator, compiles a detailed annual list on the Paper Republic platform of Chinese titles that are being published in English that year. Her list for 2021 (Harman, 2022), for example, shows that a total of only eight general fiction titles were translated into English, along with five science fiction and fantasy titles, 10 non-fiction titles, six poetry collections and two children's books.

Dylan Levi King, another Chinese-English literary translator, compared the 2019 list of upcoming English-language translations prepared by Harman and Paper Republic with that year's list of the best-selling Chinese fiction and found no overlap. He concluded that aside from Mai Jia, the writers who appeared on the best-seller list would be completely unknown to non-Chinese readers (2020). He argued that what makes it into English translation is often shaped by the idea that Chinese fiction's main function is to explain China rather than present good literature for its own sake, with the two sides wrangling over what story Chinese literature should tell. He also observed that aside from the officially recommended titles, books presenting dissident voices, titles that claim to be banned in China or that promise exposés of life in China still seem to have a strong resonance with international publishers and readers and the taboo element remains a major selling point.

Even when books from China are sold into other jurisdictions, anecdotal evidence suggests widespread distribution issues exist. Several writers, translators and other industry sources spoke in interviews of frustrations unsuccessfully trying to find books that had apparently been published in other languages in a bookshop in that country. Under a typical translation grant arrangement, the international publisher gets 50 per cent of the translation grant when the agreement is signed and receives the second 50 per cent after they deliver sample copies to China Book International or another grant-giver in China. So, while an international publisher might well translate a book and print a number of copies, it is not always clear what happens after that, particularly on the distribution front. One Chinese publisher interviewed said that when they and

¹⁷ <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/translation/search/index.html>

other colleagues followed up on various Chinese titles that had been translated on trips to central Asia and Eastern European countries, they invariably could not find a copy of the Chinese books that were purportedly available to readers in that country in translation. The reasons they found and heard were varied. Sometimes it was because the rights had been sold to an academic publisher or a tiny press, and they had little or no distribution capacity. Other times the publishers would say it was sold out – but yet according to their contacts in the country the titles had never been reviewed or mentioned in the media, never appeared on any top-seller lists, and the publisher was not even considering a second edition for these apparently ‘sold out’ titles. “It is hard not to be cynical about it all,” the publisher concluded. “The Chinese government officials make big announcements about all these publishing deals done and get bonuses for meeting their quotas; the Chinese rights holder gets a payment; the Chinese writer gets a payment and is happy to hear their book is now supposedly available in yet another language; the foreign publisher gets a translation grant and sometimes a marketing grant. They are all happy. But is anyone in that country actually reading these new books in translation? In many cases what we found would suggest they are not.” A feature on the subject in the official *Shanghai Daily* newspaper came to a similar conclusion, saying: “Most translated works are hard to find in overseas bookstores and are rarely reviewed by influential literary journals” (Yao, 2016). A report in *China Publishing and Media Business Daily* (Qu, 2022) also identified this failing. The report said that since the 13th Five-Year Plan, the Going Global publishing initiatives had helped to reduce the copyright trade deficit, however it said many Chinese publishers were ill-equipped to engage with international markets. “Many Going Global publishing projects mean simply just publishing abroad, and some projects are really only for the support of the state, and do not penetrate into the reading horizons of overseas readers,” the report concluded.

Levi King (2020) wrote that one of his favourite Chinese novels of the 1990s was sold abroad and translated into English but came out on a small press that seemingly never made the book available for sale. On the publisher’s website the title has been constantly listed as out-of-stock. The translated book was made possible by funding from a Chinese institution who lined their boardroom with copies of it. Another book by the same author came out in English the same year by a subsidiary of a state-owned company that focuses primarily on Xi Jinping biographies. “The influx of Chinese funding has not helped much... Both books came out with no fanfare, have never been reviewed, and might as well not exist,” Levi King wrote. Jiang (2021) agreed saying

the state-led concept of what is known as the national translation practice is a practice that serves the national interests and one that ensures that translation remains largely compatible with China's elaborate propaganda system. The CPPF identifies this process where propaganda or narrative concerns outweigh desires to promote writers and the nation's literature and erode the capacity of translation and promotional campaigns regardless of the huge budgets backing them. Another key issue relates back to internal Party metrics and governance, where the priority is on hitting CCP targets and not on meaningful international literary engagement. Taking recent Chinese-to-Arabic translation of literature as a case study, Wang and Stenberg (2019) found major problems with the Chinese state-led approach. In terms of quality of translation, they found serious shortcomings across the board. When they examined a recent translation of a major Chinese author, they found in the opening paragraph of eight sentences at least twelve erroneous interpretations of verbs and/or nouns and three pieces of missing information. They pointed to similar research that found more than 4,000 mistakes in a Chinese novel translated into Arabic. The authors concluded that the new-found demand due to the plethora of grants from China has not been matched by a corresponding growth in qualified literary translators. Their research established that the Chinese state provides Arabic publishers with package funding for translation, publication and promotion of the Chinese titles and that it was entirely at the publishers' discretion how to distribute this funding, and as profit-maximising enterprises the publishers had little or no incentive to raise translation standards.

Wang and Stenberg (2019) further found that the massive increase in translation funding has produced a volume of Chinese books in translation that does not appear to correspond to any real Arab demand for Chinese literature. In their extensive research, they could find no sales data for Chinese-to-Arabic literary translations, nor could they locate even one review of recent Chinese translations in any of the major Arabic press outlets. Furthermore, no surveys have been conducted on the perspectives of Arab readers on Chinese literature in translation. They characterised the literary translations as a PRC-initiated and state-funded cultural growth industry, and came to the conclusion the project had scant hope of actually connecting with readers. In terms of assessing benefits to China accruing as a result of this cultural investment, they argued benefits were not to be found in the literary/cultural realm or with regard to connection with new readers. They wrote that benefits of the project could perhaps only be found in the fact the positive publicity around the official announcements might have some diplomatic value for China. Beyond that, the fact that they were handing over funding to Arabic publishers would also likely generate some

local goodwill. It was only on these grounds they felt China could actually justify such projects, not on any connection with readers. They concluded that while China's extensive literary translation project was a major part of its soft power push in the region, its main aim was not substantive cultural or literary interaction via translated texts but rather to present China in the region as a benevolent and harmonious power.

Analysing China's state-sponsored outwards translation activities, Jiang (2021) also found negative elements and concluded that the close relationship between the concept of soft power and the Chinese propaganda system constrains the creativity and the attractiveness of the cultural resources, and also predisposes projects to prioritise the source culture over the target culture. Jiang argues that the Chinese government's use of translation for cultural diplomacy should draw insights from intercultural communication practices and take different approaches to domestic and foreign propaganda work. In this connection she pointed in particular to the growing international popularity of Chinese online literature (CIL), which is often translated by fans for free, as a timely reminder to policymakers that there are more efficient ways to deliver soft power than via conventional top-down translation policies. Ranging from martial arts legends, to fantasy, to romance, to science fiction, online literature encompasses a wide variety of genres, subgenres and styles and has met with a level of overseas success the traditional publishing sector craves. Translations of danmei (耽美) novels, a genre that features male same-sex romance, have appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller lists, and China's web fiction business model has also been successfully exported with international platforms such as Wuxiaworld and Webnovel, the international version of one of China's largest platforms, Qidian (Jin, 2022). Chinese web fiction is touted as China's most realistic shot at soft power success, with its advocates dubbing it one of the four cultural wonders of the world after Hollywood, Korean idol dramas and Japanese anime (Walsh, 2022. p.56). The growing international popularity of Chinese web fiction has prompted the government to take more interest in its potential as a tool of soft power, while at the same time stepping up efforts to regulate the space with an emphasis on China's image, patriotism and national cohesion (Jiang, 2021).

With regards to the criticism of poor translation quality of Chinese titles overseas, it appears the funding entities are becoming increasingly aware of the issue. The Shanghai Translation and Publishing Promotion Programme, for example, says that under its revised guidelines it puts a focus on the identity and cultural background of the translators, and requires

translators to either be native speakers of the target language or have lived abroad for a long time. It also stipulates that no less than 70 per cent of the funding allocated for a publishing project should go to the translator (Xu, 2021).

Regardless of distribution policies and procedures, and translation quality, it should be noted that generally speaking encouraging international readers to opt for books in translation can be a difficult challenge – particularly in Anglophone countries. Research indicates that in English-speaking countries only about 2-3 per cent of the books read have been originally written in a different language. This figure increases in France (27 per cent), Spain (28 per cent) and Turkey (40 per cent) and reaches a zenith with Slovenia (70 per cent) (Anderson, 2014).

To accelerate the promotion of Chinese literature abroad China has also been engaging in commercial arrangements overseas, but two publishing sources involved in these arrangements said in an interview with this researcher that many of these initiatives had slowed or ground to halt because of the difficulty of transferring funds out of China. On the grounds of “economic security” China’s central policies have severely restricted international transfers out of China, even it seems for government or Party-state entities (Tang and Ji, 2021). Interviewees spoke of government publishing projects overseas that had to be suspended as the government entities could not secure permission to move funds out of China. In theoretical terms this points to the fragmented authoritarianism concept as previously outlined, where policies clash and aberrations can and do occur. Seen through the Cultural Policy Paradox Framework, cultural policies are stymied here as securitisation and Party Moat-Building issues take precedence.

With regards to barriers to growth internationally, particularly in the BRI countries, Chinese publishers complain that many of the markets are not yet mature. A key issue is intellectual property theft with Chinese publishers noting international copyright systems are not well established in many of the markets and about half of the BRI countries have not signed up to the Berne convention on copyright protection as yet (*Wendang Wenku*, 2020). This gripe might be seen as being somewhat ironic however given that in international intellectual property disputes China is often referred to as the world’s largest producer of pirated goods, including of pirated books (Mertha, 2018).

7.3 *Western publishers self-censoring*

As part of China's overseas push, Nossel (2021) argues that Western publishers and booksellers are facing growing incentives to suppress critical narratives and instead feature titles that please officials in Beijing. When Germany's Thalia bookstore chain suddenly gave prominent shelf space to displaying the writings of Chinese President Xi Jinping, it turned out a German subsidiary of the CCP's global publishing arm had curated the promotion. There are other documented instances of Western publishers coming under direct pressure from the CCP or engaging in anticipatory self-censorship to appease Beijing. For example, German publishing group Springer Nature blocked access to at least 1,000 academic articles in China that mentioned subjects deemed sensitive by the CCP, including Tibet, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Cambridge University Press also acceded to a similar request from the Chinese authorities to block content, before reversing course after a public backlash (Bland, 2017).

Looking at China's official efforts to export its literature as part of a comprehensive soft power push, Gerschewski's three pillars of stability can be identified in various aspects of the programme. Repression is evident in the selection of books and authors who will 'tell the China story well' and the efforts to only champion titles that present a state-sanctioned version of Chinese society. It can also be witnessed in the threatening approach taken with foreign partners. In terms of official book selection, hundreds of Chinese authors are selected each year to represent China at various international book fairs and events, but again these are hand-picked, state-approved representatives and critical voices are side-lined. Co-optation is evidenced with the Chinese publishers, authors, translators, agents etc who benefit from the grants, the overseas events and promotion. Foreign publishers, event organisers, and governments are also co-opted into this process and can help China present a united and harmonious image when adopting the Beijing-sanctioned approach. The Party-state's legitimacy is enhanced domestically by increasing China's cultural profile internationally and taking credit for introducing Chinese books and writers to readers all around the world, even if in reality very few international readers are actually getting to engage with these texts. Arranging international book deals, offering lucrative grants and bringing writers of its choosing on high-profile international trips serves to reinforce the hierarchal relationship between the generous benefactor, the Party-state, and the grateful recipient, the nation's writers and publishers. From an international aspect, China can tell the China stories it wants to tell by curating the literary narrative in the exported books and to a large extent on

international discussion platforms. With substantial resources to allocate in the overseas promotion of Chinese literature, it can also use its largesse to co-opt and curry favour with international governments, entities and enterprises that align with its requirements. Internally the resources serve as Party KPIs to motivate and reward loyalty, but evidence of widespread connection with readers overseas is lacking. Party Moat-Building is operating at all levels as self-protection and self-promotion mechanisms are in place. The CPPF's paradox is highlighted by the meagre returns for this propaganda-laden approach in terms of generating real soft power overseas and truly connecting with readers in different countries around the world. Despite the extensive projects, elaborate plans and vast budgets deployed over decades this is evidently not succeeding at scale, which presents an example of conflict theory in the CPPF, with original policies side-lined as securitisation and Party Moat-Building concerns taking priority.

7.4 *Chinese media and film going overseas*

Having considered the efforts China has made to promote its literature internationally, I will now look briefly at recent moves to develop its media and film industries overseas. This will help illustrate how literature is just one small part of a very comprehensive soft power and propaganda power play to 'tell the China story well' aimed at strengthening the Party-state's legitimacy at home and abroad.

Beijing announced in 2009 that it would be making an initial investment of about US\$7.25 billion in what was known as a "big propaganda" (*dawaixuan* 大外宣) campaign into its core media outlets to strengthen its international news coverage. While this initiative formed part of the wider Going Global campaign that had been running for some years, Lai and Lu (2012) contend the increased scale of the project was an official Chinese response to the negative global news coverage of China in the wake of the riots in Tibetan areas in 2008. At the end of that year the CCP's Central Propaganda Department convened several work conferences and instructed the heads of the nation's major outlets to seize the initiative and the rights to discourse and significantly ramp up influence and the capacity to generate publicity. Sun (2015) also argues that since the 1990s Chinese policy officials had identified a significant discrepancy between how China saw itself and how the world sees China, but this was intensified in 2008 following both China's success in hosting the Beijing Olympics and its failure to convince the Western world of its narrative on Tibetan human rights issues.

In the early phase of the international scale-up, Xinhua increased its number of overseas bureaus from 100 to 186. *China Daily* and the *Global Times* now publish English-language editions available worldwide. CCTV, the state broadcaster, rebranded as China Global Television Network in 2016 and broadcasts in English, Arabic, French, Russian, and Spanish, with journalists based in more than 70 countries. China Radio International broadcasts 392 hours of programming per day in 38 languages from 27 overseas bureaus (Albert, 2018; Brady, 2015).

In terms of target audiences for China's overseas media, the Chinese diaspora communities are one particular area of focus (Albert, 2018). These communities are targeted by internationally based Chinese-language newspapers, radio and TV stations, as well as state-owned China Central Television, which broadcasts CCTV-4 aimed specifically at overseas Chinese. Additionally, in recent years the Internet is playing an increasing role in generating support for China among the diaspora, with PRC-based websites now the major source of China-related and Chinese-language news for these communities scattered around the world (Brady, 2015).

Brady (2015) argues that China's propaganda work aimed at Overseas Chinese has three key objectives: to neutralise antagonism toward the regime among Overseas Chinese, to increase their antipathy toward anti-CCP forces (both within China and in exile), and to encourage Overseas Chinese to invest in China. She found that China's propaganda efforts have been extremely successful in fostering positive public opinion among Overseas Chinese, particularly among new migrants, and also in marginalising opposition groups within Chinese expatriate communities. These examples of Party Moat-Building are executed at an international level to enhance security domestically.

The global expansion of Chinese media has been widely studied by scholars (Zhu, 2012; Gorfinkel et al., 2014; Hu, Ji, & Gong, 2017). While Beijing has met with media success in terms of connecting with the Overseas Chinese communities, the same cannot be said for its efforts to win the hearts and minds of non-Chinese audiences via the overseas arms of state-run outlets. China Global Television Network America, for example, reaches 30 million households in the United States, but in reality appears to have a very limited impact with audiences (Mosur, 2019). Brady (2015) argues that China's strategy via these state organs overseas is now widely regarded by Chinese mass communication experts as a failure, given that foreign audiences tend to disregard official Chinese media sources as propaganda rather than news.

Chinese officials are aware of the reality that the propaganda on state-run outlets has limited appeal with Western audiences and realise that a multi-pronged strategy needs to be adopted to achieve their globalising media mission. In this regard, Brady (2015) notes that a key change under the Xi Jinping leadership is that foreign-propaganda activities are increasingly conducted as business transactions. Accordingly, in policy discussions the most frequently used expression to discuss the CCP's overseas media strategy is "Borrowing a boat to go out on the sea" (*jiechuan chuhai* 借船出海) (Sun, 2015; Lim and Bergin, 2018; Allen-Ebrahimian, 2020). The phrase recognises the need for China to identify vehicles that can effectively carry the CCP's messaging, either overtly or covertly. The Party-state "borrows" credible international news outlets as "boats" to dispatch and legitimate their narratives. On one level, this can simply involve paying international news organisations such as the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* to carry Chinese propaganda supplements. Public information is scarce on the amount of money outlets are paid for these supplements but one report said the *Daily Telegraph* was paid £750,000 annually to carry the China Watch insert as a supplement once a month (Hazlewood, 2016).

Recent reflections by the state media on their efforts to raise the effectiveness of international communication indicate the policy has made few real advancements in terms of either strategy or substance. The CCP's official *People's Daily*, reflecting on its accomplishments for 2022, claimed to have inserted 35,000 reports in more than 1,000 foreign media outlets. Yet officials admitted that despite the huge efforts made by the state media overseas – and the tens of millions of dollars needed to finance these supplements – the general pattern of public opinion that perceives western strength vis a vis China's weakness remains unchanged. Bandurski (2023) argues that approaching the 10th anniversary of Xi's call to "tell the China story well", the efforts remain focused on remoulding older CCP approaches to external propaganda around the notion of strategic storytelling. And while it is clear official efforts have become far more determined in conducting external communication under Xi, there is nothing to suggest the efforts – such as the ubiquitous *People's Daily* inserts – have become more effective. Bandurski argues that since Going Global was identified as a key goal, the core Party media has made little progress in developing their own channels for international communication. Furthermore, its attempts to be more compelling are thwarted by its insistence on repressing diverging views and pressing the CCP's political discourse. Seen through the CPPF, the expansive efforts to tell China's story are

undermined by the propaganda-laden discourse and the insistence on a sole, state-sanctioned narrative, producing a countering effect.

In other cases, the boat-borrowing strategy is more covert. In 2015, a Reuters investigation spanning four continents identified at least 33 radio stations in 14 countries that were part of a global web structured in a way to obscure the fact their majority shareholder was the state-run China Radio International (Qing and Shiffman, 2015). Included in this network was the English-language station WCRW in Washington, D.C., which the research found broadcasts China-friendly news and programming into the US capital. In 2013 the Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV attempted to buy two Los Angeles radio stations but was ultimately blocked by the Treasury Department's Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States due to concerns over outside influence (Hoover Institution, 2018).

In a speech entitled “The Chinese Communist Party’s Ideology and Global Ambitions”, then US National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien said the CCP had “moved to eliminate ‘unfriendly’ Chinese language media outlets worldwide, and is close to succeeding”. He said that nearly every Chinese language news outlet in the US is either owned by or works closely with the CCP, and that it was making inroads into English language media as well. “There are more than a dozen radio stations in cities across the country where Americans hear subtle pro-Beijing propaganda on their FM radio,” he said (O’Brien, 2020).

In the international social media space, China has also been extremely active in recent years and employs contracting companies to generate China-friendly content on international platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, undercut negative comments or accusations of human rights abuses, and use bot networks to develop seemingly large followings and troll and track critics of the CCP, no matter where in the world they are located. Procurement documents from the Chinese police to these online contractors show how the authorities want to discover the identities and addresses of people behind certain accounts and trace their connection to China. Its officers can then devise individual strategies aimed at silencing them, such as threatening family members still in China or detaining the account holders when they next return to China (Xiao et al, 2021). Garnaut (2017) argues that the CCP has shown the world that the subversive promise of the internet can be inverted and over the past few years, harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Big Data science, China has manipulated the internet from being an instrument of free speech and democracy into a tool of omniscient control. In the technology domain, China is investing

significant resources and its approach is markedly more assertive and confrontational, carried out by what Brandt (2021) calls a growing army of diplomats online.

In another recent online initiative, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute documented in a report a small but increasingly popular set of YouTube accounts that it refers to as ‘frontier influencers’. These accounts feature mainly female China-based ethnic-minority influencers from the troubled frontier regions of Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia who bid to counter criticism of China’s human rights issues and enhance the country’s image. While YouTube is blocked in China, internationally the CCP consider it a key ideological battlefield. The frontier influencer content was originally developed for domestic consumption for propaganda purposes and to counter concerns of rights abuses, and it is now being redirected to international audiences. While the narratives adhere very closely to the Party line, the softer less official style presentation is expected to be more convincing than the typical rigid Party-media approach (Ryan et al, 2022).

With regards to film, since the early 2000s China has invested significantly in international film co-productions, partly as an element of the national soft power strategy where Chinese firms use the big screen to try to shape China’s external image in more positive terms (Vlassis, 2016; Yang, 2017; Albert, 2018; Peng and Keane, 2019; Zhang, 2020). Beijing’s motivation to target Hollywood may well have been inspired by Stalin when he was reputed to have said if “If I could control the medium of the American motion picture, I would need nothing else to convert the entire world to Communism” (Schell, 2023).

Several scholars, including Aynne Kokas (2017), argue for some years there was a noted increase in the ability of Chinese censors to shape co-productions with Hollywood. China’s content control aims to avoid negative representations of China abroad and to control what is displayed within China, which Kong (2015) says China sees as a way to both counterbalance the cultural hegemony of Western countries and to maintain security and cultural cohesion at home. US film producers have grown wary of casting China in any kind of negative light in the process, primarily out of a desire for continued investment and also not to jeopardise access to China’s expansive domestic film market (Albert 2018). Disney had an early negative experience in this regard when their 1997 movie *Kundun*, which was about the Dalai Lama in his early years in Lhasa, resulted in the company being banned in China. With Disney then seeking to open a theme park in Shanghai CEO Michael Eisner apologised to the Chinese premier at the time Zhu Rongji, calling the film release “a stupid mistake” (Schell, 2023).

Hollywood filmmakers are aware that access to the world's largest film market is determined by Beijing authorities which, under the terms of the country's 2016 Film Industry Promotion Law, favour portrayals that "transmit the glorious Chinese culture or promote core socialist values" (Nossel, 2021). In one small example of recent editing to please Beijing, in the 2019 sequel to *Top Gun* the patches on the back of Maverick's leather jacket were initially subtly changed to remove the Japanese and Taiwanese flags when the trailer was released (Brzeski, 2019). Following extensive criticism on social media the flags were restored when the full movie was released (Kwan, 2022). As a consequence of the flag decision, the movie was not released in China (Zhao, 2023). In another case, when the creators of the 2015 movie *Pixels* wanted to show aliens blasting holes in the Great Wall of China, Sony executives were concerned the scene might alienate China, so they blew up the Taj Mahal in India instead (Hamilton and Ohlberg, 2020). Sony, however, rejected China's request to have less emphasis on the Statue of Liberty and fewer patriotic American shots for the local release of *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. Sony argued such sweeping changes in pivotal scenes could not be accommodated and the film did not release in China (Lang, 2022). In another controversy surrounding Hollywood and Beijing partnerships, the *Mulan* filmmakers used the closing titles to thank eight government entities in Xinjiang, the region in northwest China where Uyghur Muslims and other minorities have been detained in mass internment camps (Brooks and Qin, 2020). Efforts to appease Beijing took a further step in 2022 when the makers of Universal Pictures' animated movie *Minions: The Rise of Gru* made a morality tale alternative ending just for the Chinese market in which all the villains were brought to justice, completely changing the original conclusion (Zhao, 2023). These moves to appease China have caused consternation in political circles in Washington. In a US government move in 2022 to discourage Hollywood from self-censoring to appease China, a new law was approved by Congress and signed into law by US President Joe Biden prohibiting the Pentagon from using funds to cooperate with any movie that seeks pre-approval of content from Beijing (Zhao, 2023).

Another approach China has taken overseas is through the "covert or non-transparent" promotion of Party-state messaging via content sharing and co-production arrangements, Bandurski (2023) argues, often with the international partner unaware they are cooperating with the Chinese state. Operations such as the China International Communication Center (*wuzhou chuanbo zhongxin* 五洲传播中心) present themselves as commercial partners while it is in fact a government entity under the auspices of the Information Office of the State Council. CICC has

formed partnerships with media outlets all around the world, opening up channels for CCP's external messaging.

Outlined theoretically in the CPPF, while Beijing craves Hollywood success, it quickly runs into complications juggling objectives, such as generating soft power on one hand and silencing critical voices on the other. Beijing-born director Chloé Zhao, a case in point, was celebrated by state media as “the pride of China” when she became only the second woman to win the Golden Globe Award for best director for her movie *Nomadland* (Chen, 2021). The state-run *Global Times* ran an editorial saying that in a time of tense US-China relations Zhao could play a mediating role between the two nations (this editorial is no longer available online). However, Zhao then became officially *persona non grata* in China after it emerged she had some years earlier given a media interview that voiced criticism of the Party-state. When Zhao went on to win the Oscar for best director her win was ignored by Chinese state media and comments about her were censored on online platforms. Zhu Ying, a professor of cinema studies, said it was “China’s loss for not harvesting the accidental soft power” of Zhao’s Academy Award win, but added it was Zhao’s gain for being disowned by China as it would give her more freedom to pursue her own creative visions (Barrett, 2021). The case shows the conflict illustrated in the CPPF that China faces when it wants to champion creative talents for its own soft power purposes, but can only tolerate the talents that support, or at least do not criticise, the Party-state.

The film investments from China have slowed in recent years since 2017, with observers citing a variety of factors behind the policy shift, including a crackdown on capital outflows from China, a CCP push on the Belt and Road Initiative countries, as well as a perceived lack of success from some of the big Hollywood financial outlays (Garrahan and Clover, 2017; Albert, 2018). Peng and Keane (2019) argue that with censorship policies undermining its soft power strategy, for all China’s film investments and sustained efforts the country’s film-making reputation has not been boosted in any significant way in recent years. This view is supported by Yang (2017) who states that for China political ideology is at the core and no matter how skilfully the government hides behind so-called cultural soft power international audiences will suspect political intentions and question the credibility of any related output. In both film and literature, despite the huge investments, cultural returns for the Party-state have been meagre, with Party Moat-Building intercepting and undercutting artistic and creative objectives in the CPPF loop.

7.5 *United Front: China's overseas 'magic weapon'*

In the section below I will explore some of the key areas of China's overseas policies and operations that impact upon the cultural realm and influence how the China story is told internationally. Utilising the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, I will examine how these overseas initiatives influence the cultural sphere and where Party Moat-Building surfaces in the face of wider securitisation issues. Firstly, I will introduce the United Front, which plays a critical role in supporting the CCP's ideology and position beyond its borders. In 2015 Xi Jinping placed a renewed emphasis on United Front work (*China Daily*, 2015), a collection of strategies overseen by the United Front Work Department (UFWD), which Chairman Mao had referred to as one of China's three "magic weapons" along with the army and Party-building (Groot, 2015). Xi presided over the first United Front work conference in nine years and set up a Leading Small Group in United Front Work. *China Daily* reported that it was the first time the conference was upgraded and put on a par with other central work conferences and "the conference sent a signal that authorities plan to strengthen work on united front". The UFWD's ranks were soon bolstered by 40,000 cadres to increase the efficiency of the United Front's work at home and abroad (Smith, 2018).

The United Front Work Department's role is to liaise with all forces outside the CCP, such as recognised religious organisations and other civil society and interest groups. It is also responsible for guiding and coordinating the 60 million approximately people of Chinese heritage who live abroad. Hamilton and Ohlberg (2020) argue the objective of the UFWD is to induce, co-opt and coerce those outside the Party to form a 'united front' – or to form a coalition of groups that act in ways that serve interests of the Party – and to undermine those it considers enemies. A *Financial Times* investigation (Kynge et al., 2017) into United Front operations in several countries around the world also shows "a movement directed from the pinnacle of Chinese power to charm, co-opt or attack well-defined groups and individuals". Its broad aims are to win support for China's political agenda, accumulate influence overseas and gather key information, the report concluded.

Joske (2020) argues the CCP, via the UFWD, is working to strengthen its influence by co-opting representatives of ethnic minority groups, religious movements, and business, science and political groups. It then claims the right to speak on behalf of those groups and uses them to claim legitimacy. Beyond China's borders, the united front stretches its reach into diaspora

communities, universities, political parties and multinational corporations in an “often covert or deceptive” manner that “undermines social cohesion, exacerbates racial tension, influences politics, harms media integrity, facilitates espionage, and increases unsupervised technology transfer” (Joske, 2020. p.3).

While Xi’s predecessors also engaged in United Front work around the globe, the ambitions now are significantly more expansive, which Brady (2015) says reflects growing confidence and Xi’s high-stakes strategy for holding on to power by boosting economic growth and tightening control over information. This also reflects the situation in China’s domestic publishing scene, as outlined, where censorship and control have grown in intensity and, reflected in the paradoxical framework, mass cultural policies and objectives are undermined by desires to tighten control. Groot (2015) argues the intensification of the United Front campaign indicates profound concerns with the CCP about political and social stability, as well as its image internationally. Overseas the initiatives seek to prevent rebellious activity towards the Party-state in any way and prevent any conduits back to China of what the CCP sees as polluting Western ideals, such as democratic values and academic freedom. United Front work often takes the form of co-optation, Groot said – in line with one of Gerschewski’s three pillars of stability – by enlisting recruits to advocate for the Party’s views to their circles of influence and to report back the views of their circles.

Under Xi’s new push, there are four priority categories of influence activities, Brady contends (2015): Firstly, significantly increased efforts to exert control over overseas-Chinese communities; second, a renewed emphasis on people-to-people, party-to-party, and enterprise-to-enterprise relations geared toward co-opting foreigners into promoting the CCP’s goals; thirdly, a global, multiplatform communications and media strategy; and finally, the formation of a China-centred bloc running right through the Belt and Road Initiative countries. In these accelerated United Front initiatives, the CCP is determined to reshape the world in its image, Hamilton and Ohlberg argue. They contend China sees itself as being engaged in a bitter ideological struggle with the West, and is intent upon dividing the world into two camps – those who can be won over and enemies. Teufel Dreyer (2018) argues united front work aims to push China’s agendas and influence the policies of other countries through a variety of means that may be legal, illegal or exploit grey areas. She contends that while China interferes in the domestic affairs of other

countries it then attempts to deflect any criticism of those actions by alleging the reactions are prompted by racism or fears of an increasingly powerful China.

A significant number of groups linked to the United Front have sprouted up around the world, according to individual researchers. Sydney in Australia, for example, has more than 300 associations of various kinds with links to the UNWD (Werleman, 2022), while one recent count in Germany numbered 230 groups, which did not include the 20 Confucius Institutes there and the students' associations (Tatlow, 2019).

Overseas Chinese students, as well as returnees from abroad, are key targets of United Front work. Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) are considered the primary platforms for United Front work on overseas students, and they generally operate under the guidance of Chinese embassies and consulates. CSSA executives, while ostensibly recruited to provide useful information and services to Chinese students overseas, have also been found reporting on dissident activity and criticism of China, enforcing censorship and organising rallies and events in support of the Chinese authorities (Joske, 2020). A United Front teaching manual seen by the *Financial Times* said: "The unity of Chinese at home requires the unity of the sons and daughters of Chinese abroad." The manual recommended a number of ways in which United Front operatives should win support from overseas Chinese such as students. In most cases the methods were purely material, providing money or other resources in return for support, while the manual also suggested considering emotional approaches, invoking ties to the motherland, or ideological "participation in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people" (Kynge et al, 2017). The manual exhorts cadres to build an "iron Great Wall" against "enemy forces abroad" who challenged the CCP's rule and legitimacy.

The CSSAs are actively wielding influence in Western universities in efforts to tell the China story as the CCP would like it told in campuses around the world. In Australia a university professor had to apologise for referring to Taiwan as a country following concerted pressure from the student association, while another was forced to apologise to students for using a map in class that showed Arunachal Pradesh, an area under Indian administration but contested by China. In the US, the CSSA in University of California vigorously protested the invitation extended to the Dalai Lama to give the 2017 commencement address, while the University of Miami's CSSA encouraged students to welcome Xi Jinping while he was visiting the US, and counter-protest pro-Tibet and pro-Taiwan demonstrations. Transportation, banners and signs for the rallies were

subsidised by the local Confucius Institute (Teufel Dreyer, 2018). Similarly, when Premier Li Keqiang visited Canberra in Australia, the CSSA fielded hundreds of Chinese students to drown out the chants of anti-China protesters (Joske, 2020). Human Rights Watch (2019) have documented free-speech problems cropping up at universities worldwide due to Chinese pressure. They point to instances in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States where some pro-Beijing students have sought to shut down campus discussions about human rights abuses in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, or Tibet. In other cases, students from China who want to join campus debates on ideas that would be taboo at home feel they cannot for fear of being reported to Chinese authorities. Universities have done little publicly in such cases to assert the rights of free speech, the group argues. Beijing enlists Chinese citizens abroad to propagate its views and to monitor other Chinese citizens and report any criticism of Xi Jinping's rule; Chinese authorities also routinely threaten relatives in China of dissidents abroad to silence their criticisms, HRW said.

In another academia-related case, several Swedish universities reportedly discovered that doctoral students from China were made to sign an agreement pledging their loyalty to the CCP before departing for Sweden. According to the report more than 30 students had signed letters issued by the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) run by China's Ministry of Education. Besides pledging loyalty to the Party, the students committed to not participating in any activity that might go against the will of the authorities. Family members of the students were also made to sign a contract making them liable for damages if the student was deemed to have broken the agreement. The contract stipulated the family member who acted as guarantor would not be able to leave China while the student was studying abroad (Ke, 2023).

International business and political figures are other key targets of United Front work. Brady (2018) writes that to pursue influence in democratic countries the UNFW makes targeted efforts to co-opt political and business elites, using investments, donations, honours, hospitality and party-to-party links among other incentives to encourage foreign contacts to advocate China's interests (Brady, 2018). The United Front system is also a central component of China's technology-transfer efforts, both legal and illegal, contends Joske (2020). These technology-transfer efforts seek to co-opt or recruit professionals and scientists and promote technology transfer to China. At a formal level, the UFWD's Western Returned Scholars Association (WRSA) runs the official association for China Thousand Talents Plan, which is the CCP's flagship programme to recruit foreign scientists. In *China's quest for foreign technology: beyond espionage*,

Tatlow, Hannas and Weber document cases that illustrate how China has institutionalised the siphoning off of technologies from overseas – through legal, illegal and extra-legal means – that Beijing considers necessary to strategic development (Weber, 2021).

Further to the corporate world, in China any company with more than three Party members must set up an internal Party organisation, regardless of the ownership. When state-owned enterprises operate overseas the obligation to operate a Party organisation still exists but officials recognise there may be complications involved. A 2016 “Opinion on Party-Building Work” on SOEs abroad acknowledged that Party organisations may be treated with suspicion in foreign countries and consequently overt Party activities might not be possible. The regulations stipulate that Party activities in such countries must be conducted on the principle of the “five non-disclosures”: non-disclosure of the Party organisation, internal Party positions, Party member status, internal Party documents and internal Party documents. Should foreign employees query any activities, they should be presented as corporate culture or team building exercises, the document stipulated. The impression should be created that business and profit are the main focus of any Party work conducted overseas, rather than ideology or influence (Pieke, 2022).

With its multi-pronged approach, the United Front system helps the CCP claim legitimacy, mobilise its supporters and manage perceived threats (Joske, 2020). Garnaut (2017) argues that the audacity of Xi Jinping’s United Front project is breath-taking, as are the global implications, and the Western world has to come to terms with the fact the CCP’s designs on total ideological control does not stop at its border or with its own citizens. The control is exported with Chinese students, migrants, tourists, and in particular with China’s money and investment. This control then flows through the Chinese-language internet space, seeps into international media outlets and cultural spaces, and aligns itself with China’s increasing global interests. This is Party Moat-Building on a global scale. A body of CCP-aligned actors engaged to protect the Party-state’s position and legitimacy, and direct international discourse, using a mixture of co-optative and repressive measures, reflecting Gerschewski’s stability pillars. The extra-territorial abrasive approach can be counter-productive, as depicted in the CPPE, alienating the international audiences that policies seek to woo. Along with the United Front, the Confucius Institutes project, which will be outlined below, also play a key role in ‘telling the China story well’ in countries around the world.

7.6 *Confucius Institutes as part of China's Party Moat-Building and soft power promotion*

The Confucius Institutes (CIs), which began opening in countries around the world in 2004, are highly visible manifestations of China's soft power agenda and have been a lynchpin of China's overseas cultural engagement in recent years. The operation has quickly built up a comprehensive global network and by 2019 there were 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms in 162 countries and regions, according to the official website. In 2016, their budget was US\$314 million, and from 2006-2016 China spent US\$2.17 billion on Confucius Institutes around the world (Xinhua, 2019). CIs have generally three-way partnerships between the CI's headquarters – the Chinese International Education Foundation – a Chinese institution, which is usually a university, and a foreign institution, again generally a university. In 2020, China created a non-governmental organisation to run the Confucius programs so it is no longer directly under the auspices of the ministry of education, although this has not alleviated concerns the CIs are closely linked to the government (Green-Riley, 2020).

According to its official mission, CIs are focused on teaching the Chinese language and culture, providing cultural and educational exchange programs and strengthening ties with other nations, as well as promoting multiculturalism and building a more harmonious world. Li Changchun, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee, said in a high-profile speech (2007) to education ministry officials at a time when CIs were being rapidly opened in countries around the world that the Confucius Institutes played “an important role in China's overseas propaganda framework”. CIs have been mired in controversy since their inception in many countries around the world, with critics pointing to their links with a Chinese government ministry and claiming they function as an integral part of the CCP's overseas propaganda mechanism. Given they often operate on university campuses, concerns over academic freedom have often been raised. A number of scholars have examined their purpose and structure and related issues such as censorship, academic freedom, hidden agendas etc (Barr, 2011; Hartig, 2012; Shambaugh, 2013; Brady, 2015; Yuan et al., 2016). In terms of financial support, the host institution is usually offered initial support in the region of US\$100,000-150,000 for the first three years, plus ongoing subsidies and supply of teaching staff and materials. However, Shambaugh (2013) identified some foreign universities receive significant funding from China on an ongoing basis in return for hosting a CI, continuing well past the first three-year period.

In the United Kingdom, a report by the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission (2019) pointed to serious concerns about the presence of Confucius Institutes in universities in the UK and around the world with regard to threats to academic and intellectual freedom, transparency over funding and employment arrangements, discrimination in employment and in providing a platform for the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda. After conducting research into the CIs operations in Australia, Human Rights Watch said they found the institutes take political loyalty into consideration in hiring decisions and had actively taken steps to censor certain topics and perspectives in course materials on political grounds (Pearson, 2019). They also argued that while the structure of CIs appeared to be in essence similar to operations run by other governments such as the British Council, Alliance Française or the Goethe Institute, they were effectively outposts of the Chinese government they found to be incompatible with a commitment to academic freedom. In the United States in August 2020, the Department of State designated the headquarters of the Confucius Institutes in the US as a foreign propaganda mission and issued an order that CI staff be required to register and adhere to restrictions similar to those placed on diplomatic embassies. Announcing the move, then US Secretary of State said the CIs were "an entity advancing Beijing's global propaganda and malign influence campaign" (Feng, 2020).

At least 45 Confucius Institutes in the United States have closed down in recent years amid concerns of political interference and erosion of academic freedoms. However, not all Western scholars have found the CIs to be a threat to their societies. In extensive research conducted with American students in Confucius Institutes, Naime (2020) concluded they did not generally produce pro-China views among the people who studied there. She found that CIs tended to avoid politics altogether, rather than skirting around selected sensitive issues. Furthermore, students undertaking Chinese language programs in the CIs were generally curious about China and followed current affairs and news developments on China from a variety of sources. She found it unlikely they were being indoctrinated by the CCP and, on average, students she had tracked developed less favourable views of China over their period of study at the Confucius Institutes. Sweden became the first European country to close all Confucius Institutes and classrooms in the face of deteriorating relations with China (Myklebust, 2020). While Beijing argues the Confucius Institutes are apolitical entities, they nonetheless continue to attract controversy and are often perceived as an arm of the Chinese state in host nations. And as illustrated in some of the examples

below, the CIs are often at the frontline in the battle to tell the China story in countries around the world in a manner the Party-state would approve of.

7.7 The exportation of the Party's censorship and control

In recent years, reports from around the Western world show how China is extending its influence and pressuring societies to censor and encourage self-censorship in myriad ways for political and commercial reasons. This shows how the Party Moat-Building that features in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework is operation internationally as well as domestically. Examples abound, but to list a short selection: Planned screenings of a documentary critical of China's Confucius Institutes were cancelled in universities in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland following pressure from Chinese authorities (Walters, 2019); Similarly, the organisers of the 2019 Berlin International Film Festival announced that two Chinese films, including one by famous director Zhang Yimou set in the politically sensitive period of the Cultural Revolution, had to be pulled (Hamilton and Ohlberg, 2020); Two events in Confucius Institutes in two German universities to mark the publication of a new book about President Xi Jinping were cancelled at short notice due to Chinese pressure (Chazan, 2021); A group of Chinese cross-country skiers who were training in the Norwegian town of Meraker ahead of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics made an official request that the local library remove several China-related books they disapproved of, including one about the Falun Gong (Tang, 2020); French animated film festival Annecy was forced to remove Chinese film *Have a Nice Day* by Liu Jian from its programme, citing "official pressures" (Lai, 2017); The Royal Court theatre in London pulled a play about Tibet after the British Council privately advised that the planned production would coincide with "significant political meetings" in China and warned of negative repercussions (Quinn, 2018); A man in Ottawa, Canada, at a dragon-boat festival was ordered to take off a Falun Gong T-shirt due to China's sponsorship of the popular event; and Octopus Books, part of the Hachette group, and London-listed Quarto publishing house removed references to Taiwan and other subjects banned by Chinese authorities from several books intended for Western readers to ensure their books can continue to be printed in China, where print costs are comparatively cheap (Telling, 2022). In these ways, via CIs and other channels, China is moat-building beyond its borders to minimise criticism and negative discourse.

Chinese efforts to promote censorship and self-censorship on the international commercial front have also been prevalent in recent years, prompting a long string of companies and brands lining up to issue apologies to China. The companies have felt obliged to make amends in the face of threatened Chinese boycotts and social media campaigns against them. As social media in China is intensely regulated by the Party-state, the existence of these online movements against foreign entities indicate official support. The offences included listing Hong Kong or Taiwan as a separate region on a website; producing T-shirts with “Hong Kong” or “Taiwan” prints without indicating they were a part of China; quoting the Dalai Lama in a post; any employees showing support for the Hong Kong protesters, the Uyghurs in Xinjiang or the Tibetans; or showing regional and coastal maps in ways that do not match official Chinese versions.

In the case of the 85°C Bakery Café chain, the company felt obliged to issue an apology after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen just visited one of their stores in Los Angeles, causing angry outbursts on social media in China. Just some of the other brands that have apologised to China and the Chinese people in the recent few years, or are known to self-censor or have been forced to censor include: Dior, McDonalds, Marriott Hotels, Swarovski, Valentino, Zara, Calvin Klein, Coach, Givenchy, Asics, Fresh, CoCo, YiFang, Gap, Mercedes-Benz, Tiffany, Qantas, Delta, Cathay Pacific, Intel and Audi (Niewenhuis, 2019). In the Marriott hotel group’s example, a Canadian vendor the hotel group has worked with for several years had sent out a customer questionnaire that listed Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan as separate countries. It also transpired that one of the hotel’s social media managers in Nebraska running the Marriott’s loyalty program Twitter account had “liked” a post by the Friends of Tibet group at one point. After the company’s website and APP was blocked in China, Marriott terminated the contract with the third-party Canadian vendor that built the survey and fired the employee in Nebraska who had liked the tweet. They then announced a detailed “eight-point rectification plan” and published it in Chinese to illustrate how the company would prevent such mistakes from happening again. Speaking to Chinese media in the aftermath, Craig S. Smith, president and managing director of Marriott’s Asia-Pacific office who has been working with the company for three decades, apologised profusely to the Chinese people and said: “This is a huge mistake, probably one of the biggest in my career” (Xu, 2018). The commercial impact for companies caught up in such controversies can be swift and painful. When fashion giant H&M decided in 2021 to stop using cotton from Xinjiang due to human rights concerns it provoked a furious social media reaction in China. In the following

year the company closed 60 stores across China, sales were down more than 40 per cent in the country, and the brand found itself wiped off Chinese e-commerce sites and social media platforms (Bloomberg News, 2022). Reynold and Goodman (2023) found in a study that China's abrasive international approach and bullying tactics have harmed China's image around the world, diminishing China's reputation as a reliable partner and pushing countries to develop new trading relationships to minimise the exposure to China. This again exhibits the paradox in the CPPF structure where Beijing goes to extreme lengths to generate commercial advantages, but the initiatives taken ultimately harm China's commercial opportunities.

The sports world was also mired in controversy in China when Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey shared an image on Twitter that showed support for protesters in Hong Kong. Sportswear group Li-Ning and the Shanghai Pudong Development Bank suspended their partnerships with the Rockets and several other companies suspended their sponsorship of the NBA. The NBA broadcasts were pulled off the air in China for more than a year. The losses for the basketball association were sizable – for the period the NBA was off air in China, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver estimated the association lost around \$400 million (Deb, 2020a and 2020b). Following another Chinese social media storm, John Cena, the professional wrestler and star of *The Fast and Furious* franchise movie *F9*, apologised to Chinese fans in Mandarin on Weibo after he had inadvertently referred to Taiwan as a country in an interview (Victor, 2021).

In terms of repatriating citizens who have fallen foul of authorities, China's security arm extends well beyond its borders and the CCP frequently returns people to China via its operations Sky Net and Fox Hunt. Between 2014 and February 2022, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP stated that 10,105 people, including some foreign citizens, were forcefully returned to China from over 120 countries, mostly via "irregular methods". Formal extradition accounted for only 1 per cent of the cases. While ostensibly these operations are designed by China to return fugitives from the law and corrupt cadres on the run, examination of cases show that a large number of the individuals were targeted for their political activism or for belonging to a religious or ethnic minority. Furthermore, the vast majority of returns were through extra-judicial means (Safeguard Defenders, 2022). Blanke (2018) writes these campaigns by China have repeatedly been criticised for providing the basis to eliminate any political and economic opposition, and their advancements illustrate China's global reach and increasingly confident foreign policy. Safeguard Defenders found in their research (2022) that Beijing rarely used

bilateral agreements and standard methods such as extradition and deportation to return people to China. Rather, a combination of persuasion, intimidation and harassment was generally used, either via the target's family, relatives and loved ones still in China or by agents approaching the target overseas. Threats tend to centre on warnings that family members would be arrested or worse, unless the fugitive returned. In other cases agents could include Chinese police officers working illegally in the target country, as well as locally hired individuals. China claims its international alliances have assisted their efforts. At the National People's Congress in March 2021, it was stated that the leverage created through the BRI had assisted China in building an integral mechanism for tracking and returning fugitives. Furthermore, it was noted that China would seize the opportunity created by its chairmanship of the BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group to track more fugitives. In another example of extending legal reach, Beijing has set up more than 100 "overseas police stations" in Europe and Africa using bilateral security arrangements to gain a widespread international presence. Safeguard Defenders claim these police stations are used to monitor, harass and in some cases repatriate Chinese citizens living in exile (Dos Santos, 2022).

The systematic exportation of CCP coercion and control impacts the cultural sector and sits like the sword of Damocles over the heads of creatives, encouraging self-censorship and stifling artistic freedom well beyond China's borders. The continuous CPPF loop is observable as mass soft power initiatives are deployed and then often undercut by Party Moat-Building, securitisation and legitimisation concerns.

7.8 *Soft power with a hard edge*

The literature has identified how China's soft power has a hard edge, and how the CCP goes to lengths to control the narrative discourse and curtail critical voices in order to 'tell the China story well' beyond its border. Callaghan (2015) argues that for the past decade or more China has been learning how to export its censorship. Likewise, Rachman (2019) posits that China's efforts to control and censor speech at home are gradually being internationalised, "reaching into foreign corporations, the international media, the seminar rooms and campuses of western universities, and the statements and policies of foreign governments." Economy (2018) writes that with international organisations too China now actively seeks to shape international norms and institutions and forcefully asserts its presence on the global stage, advancing authoritarianism and censorship beyond its borders. The Party's modus operandi is to continually

try to strengthen its positions in large multilateral organisations such as the United Nations. Where it feels it is not gaining ground, it will seek to undermine the organisations and create parallel institutions it can dominate. Moreover, where it can it will also seek to split nations away from multilateral groups and engage in bilateral arrangements. Bolstered in the United Nations by its growing financial contributions, while the contributions from the United States are declining, China is able to use these platforms to spread its discourse power and promote the China Model (Hamilton and Ohlberg, 2020).

In a report entitled “China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order”, Reporters Without Borders (2019) argues that China is engaging in a strategy to control information beyond its borders, posing a threat to press freedom around the world. China is expanding its hold internationally to impose its “ideologically correct” vocabulary, to deter any criticism of itself and to cover up the darker chapters in its history. These strategies include: modernising its international TV broadcasting, buying extensive amounts of advertising in international media, infiltrating foreign media, and also by employing blackmail, intimidation and harassment on a massive scale, the report said. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2019) asserts China uses its growing economic clout to silence critics and to carry out the most intense attack on the global system for enforcing human rights. Its report said Beijing is methodically building a network of cheerleader states that depend on its aid or business, and those who cross it risk retaliation. As a consequence, the group said that Chinese censorship is now a global threat and the world can no longer pretend that China’s suppression of independent voices stops at its borders.

Considering China’s overseas approach, Schrader (2020) identifies five components that characterise China’s political interference in democracies. The first, a paramount one, is the weaponising of China’s economy, where the financial benefits of compliance and cooperation are made clear, as are the costs China can impose on any country, company or individual that it perceives to have stepped out of line; secondly, China asserts narrative dominance, manipulating and controlling information to advance narratives that serve its interests and downplay or shout down adversarial voices; thirdly, elite intermediaries are co-opted to shape foreign perceptions of China; fourth, the Chinese diaspora are instrumentalised, with the Party identifying valuable individuals and groups to penetrate diaspora communities; and fifth, China embeds authoritarian control to demonstrate an alternative to liberal democracy and to strengthen authoritarian norms internationally. Schrader argues these five components all have deep roots in how China governs

at home, and have grown out of strategies and warfare doctrines the Party has used to address perceived internal and external threats within its borders.

It can be seen that China's Going Global policy is comprehensive in nature and blends soft power and cultural promotion with a raft of regime security initiatives aligned with Beijing's domestic and international interests. The investment required to maintain this level of activity is significant. On identified soft power projects alone, Shambaugh (2015) estimates that China's annual spend is approximately \$10 billion. By comparison, the United States spent less than \$670m on public diplomacy in 2014.

Under Xi Jinping, the propaganda push has shifted dramatically with the CCP no longer feeling the requirement to promote long-standing foreign policy goals, such as over Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang or the South China Sea. Instead, the CCP is taking a more ambitious approach and is looking to generate support for China as a global leader and its visions for the future, including the China Dream, BRI and the Community with a Shared Future for Mankind (Pieke, 2022). Pieke argues the CCP is not driven primarily by a desire to extend its domestic form of governance overseas, but rather seeks to connect global Chinese actors, including overseas Chinese, enterprises, associations and media outlets, more tightly back to China itself and its operating system. Wuthnow (2022) agrees, observing that by adding overseas interests to the overall national security concept in 2021 the Party's grip on control is increasingly being seen as being linked to developments and issues arising beyond its borders. The CCP's external propaganda seeks to manage international discourse on China, and the way it uses propaganda to exercise power domestically shapes how it uses propaganda to increase China's overseas influence (Edney et al., 2019). Internationally we witness an ongoing tension between the CCP's desire to showcase a rich and vibrant culture and the need to smother critical voices to avoid undermining the Party-state's legitimacy and image of national cohesion.

Beyond neutralising external threats to the Party's internal rule, McGregor (2022) posits China does not expect to see other countries adopt the China Dream. But it is intent on challenging the current rules-based system which it perceives as a structure that was developed by the US and its allies for their own benefit. This international system needs to be modified, Beijing believes, or it could undermine the CCP's legitimacy and grip on power at home. Holbig (2022) also argues a key motive is to challenge what China perceives as US political and discursive

hegemony. These present multiple ideological battles China is engaging with on international platforms, with culture often at the vanguard of such confrontations.

7.9 Overseas policies: securitisation supersedes culture

Considered through the CPPF, despite the elaborate Going Global undertakings and large budgets the cultural projects often fail to have the desired effect. The blame is often put on the top-down approach and rigid control mechanisms that are not conducive to a freewheeling cultural scene. While it is hoping the world will consume more of its culture, the CCP continues to ban, censor and persecute any inconvenient or critical artistic voices. Klimes (2017) argues the approach illustrates how China's cultural leaders conceive cultural work as an act legitimating the power of an authoritarian regime. He adds a major part of the problem in the failing of the 'China story' is audiences are alert to and sceptical of authoritarian narratives, even when the source is concealed to some extent. The CCP's credibility is compromised by the fact that it curtails cultural expression that runs counter to its narrative or may conflict with its political interests. Edney (2014) also argues that the central supply of cultural ideas, the rigid control and the curtailment of grassroots scenes significantly hampers China's soft power ambitions. Furthermore, in terms of its image internationally, China's image has actually deteriorated since the Going Global campaign was launched rather than improved, according to polls by Gallup and others (Brady, 2015).

Pu (2022) argues that as China's diplomatic initiatives are primarily designed to portray the CCP in a positive light to a domestic audience rather than an international one, the efforts can be counter-productive, which also supports the inherent conflict theory in the CPPF. Examples include 'wolf-warrior diplomacy', which might play well at home but can antagonise foreign counterparts. Jiang (2021) also contends that linking soft power concepts with the propaganda system undermines the appeal and creativity of cultural resources, and argues instead that cultural diplomacy should draw lessons from intercultural communications concepts based on the principle of taking different approaches to foreign and domestic efforts (*neiwai youbie* 内外有别). It should be noted in this regard however that while China's soft power initiatives have had little impact in Western industrialised nations, they have met with a greater degree of success in the global South, including in Africa and Latin America, where a more pragmatic approach to soft power mixed with extensive economic activity have met with more favourable reactions (Repnikova, 2022).

While China's international image and perspectives on how its culture is received abroad is important to the CCP, it is evident regime security and averting any legitimacy challenges are of paramount importance. As the cases outlined above attest, should a policy conflict arise issues of regime security take priority. Rather than generating soft power by capitalising on film director Chloe Zhao's Oscar success, the CCP effectively cancel her in China as she had previously made some comments critical of Beijing. While the Party would no doubt have liked to have benefitted on a soft power level from her Hollywood glory, they could not risk ignoring her criticism for fear of setting an example to others and a contagion risk. In another instance, Chinese publishers and filmmakers had to curtail plans abroad that required financial investment as another central policy restricted capital outflows. The end result in this conflict: the risk to the Party-state of capital flight trumps the potential benefits of accumulated soft power. Internally within the Party these calculations and debates are no doubt going on all the time, and while we are not privy to details the outcomes are clearly witnessed – regime security takes priority.

On one level the proverbial phrase “attack is the best form of defence” could be seen as a major justification in itself for China's Going Global policy. With the belief that a pre-emptive strike is the best way to defend yourself, China has come out of its diplomatic, economic and cultural shell in a dramatic fashion over the past number of years and now takes an assertive, at times abrasive, stance on the world stage. People all around the world, from all walks of life, now understand that if they do or say something that the Chinese authorities dislike, the Party-state will react and will seek to take counter measures. This can curb criticism, but seen through the CPPF it can also manifest itself as an alienating and counter-productive approach.

We have seen in an earlier chapter how the Chinese authorities do not need to censor in China so much in contemporary times as self-censorship is so prevalent across all spectrums of the state. And we have also seen how many of the strategies and approaches the CCP uses abroad are strategies that have been developed and honed at home initially. China's reaction internationally to situations it takes umbrage with can only encourage self-censorship way beyond its borders. In the battle to suppress challenges to the Party-state's legitimacy, the Going Global initiative has pushed back the frontlines way beyond China's borders. Now not only can China control narratives and suppress criticism at home, it can increasingly do so abroad. This should be seen as the CCP's major policy objective in this realm. The Party's ability to repress and censor

internationally is naturally not as potent as on the domestic front, but it clearly has some successes, and its persistently intense approach actively promotes self-censorship around the globe.

While China encourages and welcomes soft power cultivation and international image enhancement, it is argued this is a secondary consideration; primary is the developed mechanisms that reduce levels of criticism, shape narratives globally and ultimately defend and enhance the Party-state's legitimacy. Gerschewski's stability pillars of repression, co-optation and legitimacy are three interweaving strands evidenced in varying degrees across the policy. Initiatives overseas reflect protective Party Moat-Building, from generating and maintaining CCP diasporic support, to neutralising potential oppositional threats coalescing beyond China's borders, to cultivating a conducive landscape for CCP geopolitical and commercial strategies. Conflict theory is apparent in instances where the CCP sees comparative advantages in prioritising repressive over co-optative approaches.

The Creative Policy Paradox Framework illustrates the literary promotion conundrum. State-endorsed cultural products can spark scepticism among consumers. Approaches considered to be bullying or cajoling can backfire. Two decades of top-down, heavily funded literary translation projects have arguably yielded scant results compared to the successes of organic online literature (CIL) and grassroot-supported science fiction projects. China's web fiction's comparative success was driven in part precisely because it was not a part of an officially endorsed programme. In the wider context, the CCP is an ecosystem in itself and many policies and actions can be interpreted to be driven by internal performance and output objectives and metrics. In this case taking literature as an example, while certain projects might have a questionable impact taken from an overseas consumer perspective, they could be in line with internal planning, managing and reporting mechanisms. With multiple ongoing policies, conflict and a Creative Policy Paradox are inevitable to a degree, with primacy evidently resting on fundamental securitisation and legitimisation concerns.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and summary of findings

8.1 *Introduction*

This study examines how the Chinese Party-state, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, manages, controls and interacts with the nation's creative writers and publishers. The key research questions investigated in this thesis are: Through the prism of the Creative Policy Paradox Framework (CPPF) and Party Moat-Building (PMB), what are 'the uses of literature' in Xi Jinping's China, and what does 'Telling the China Story Well' mean in reality for the nation's writers and publishers?

This case study is a microcosm of governance in contemporary China and illustrates the CCP's comprehensive approach – politically, ideologically, commercially and practically – to societal control, management and development. Assessing 'the uses of literature' through the CPPF it was explored how the CCP considers literature as something that first and foremost should serve the Party and their political imperatives of the day. From Mao's exhortation on the founding of the People's Republic of China to "consciencely do a good job in publishing" to Xi Jinping's instruction once he took the helm to "tell the China story well," it shows the literary world has always been a high priority for the political leadership. Both slogans contain the key character 'hao 好' – meaning 'well' or 'good' – and despite frequent evocation neither was ever officially defined or expanded upon. I argue this is a case of intentional ambiguity, left open to interpretation in a tense environment to instil a conservative, self-regulating approach across the sector. This Party-preferred approach is premised on the concept of CCP loyalty, or at least acquiescence, encouraging augmentative behaviour that drives the circularity in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework.

The literary sphere has and continues to be viewed officially as a potential political asset that can combat securitisation concerns, underscore the Party's legitimacy, bolster nationalistic and patriotic spirit, support governing policies and generate positivity and harmoniousness across the nation. Conversely, it has always also been viewed with extreme caution, a potent force that could turn on the leadership by highlighting negative aspects of society, criticising the authorities and their political performance, and undermining the legitimacy of the CCP and the one-party socialist system. From the outset this has encouraged political leaders to

want to unleash the potential benefits a thriving literary scene could bring to the Party, but at the same time keep practitioners on a very tight leash to reduce the potential for harm to the CCP. I developed the Creative Policy Paradox Framework to illustrate this leash/unleash phenomenon, where policies and inputs designed to cultivate the literary world are often countered by policies and inputs designed to stifle and curtail it and protect the Party-state. In support of this theory, I coined the term Party Moat-Building (PMB) – echoing imperial moat defence mechanisms of the past, or a durable competitive advantage in contemporary corporate parlance – to refer to initiatives that were devised to strengthen and secure the Party’s own position, even if and when they conflict with other wider Party and societal initiatives. Moat-building refers to the crackdowns, purges and rigid, systemic control outlined, as well as to the championing of aspects that deliver propaganda and legitimacy-boosting value. It also refers to where other Party policies are side-lined or abandoned where aspects of them might be perceived as holding a potentially undermining capacity for the authorities.

This moat-building has been on full display in the Xi Jinping era with the securitisation of all aspects of the Party-state’s governance, including literature and culture generally, and with the intensified centralisation of Party control. One of Xi’s early directives with regard to publishing was to restructure the administration and switch it from a State Council responsibility to one coming under the direct auspices of the central CCP Propaganda Department, bringing literature under tight Party surveillance. Calls for writers to adhere to the ‘main melody’, to serve and support the Party-state and take patriotism as their muse were intensified. In an indicative opening move, the Propaganda Department then announced they would be reducing the total number of ISBNs issued to the nation’s publishers each year by up to one-third. Vividly illustrating the CPPF, the Party in this case decided that regardless of the massive investments it had been making to develop the domestic literary sector it would opt to arbitrarily reduce the industry’s entire annual output by 30 per cent or more in order to tighten control over content and avoid legitimacy challenges.

8.2 *Writers, readers and the quest for legitimacy*

The China Writers Association was shown to be an extremely well-funded national operation that acts as the interface between writers and the authorities. An effective form of personnel management, the CWA offers a range of benefits and supports, and incentivises those who follow the official line while ostracising those suspected of not doing so. Co-optation, one of

Gerschewski's (2013) three pillars of stability along with repression and legitimization, is an inherent element of this organisation's approach to controlling and corralling the nation's writers with the objective of enhancing CCP legitimacy. The CWA is also a main driver of propaganda output, seen more directly in initiatives such as theme publishing projects eulogising the leadership and more indirectly in the general steering of content towards positive and harmonious narratives. None of this is to say that members of the CWA are purely propagandists or necessarily colluding in any way, or that good literature is not being produced despite these restraints, but it does illustrate how the system is heavily stacked to favour Party narratives.

Under the Xi administration, writers report that political study sessions they are expected to attend have intensified, exercises that reinforce ideological priorities, hierarchies and power structures. It is notable too that while there were many high-profile resignations and public criticisms of the CWA in the decades before Xi came to power, there has generally been public silence on that front since he has been in control, even though the interviews conducted for this research illustrate extensive critical sentiments remains. I argue this absence of negative discourse exemplifies the repressive atmosphere that has been created where writers are either afraid to express dissatisfaction or see it as being futile in the face of such a comprehensive system of control and co-optation. While scathing public criticisms of the Writers Association were labelled as patricide in the Hu Jintao era and before, in the current climate they could be considered career suicide.

Considering the concept of legitimacy in this regard, Beetham (1991) observes that with the exercise of power by one group over another, those who are subordinate experience it as constraining, often humiliating and sometimes life-threatening. And if they had the opportunity to escape the clutches of the control many would do so. This conflict that Beetham points to underscores the CPPF, where creative free expression and Party-state legitimacy are often at odds. As the interviews with several writers illustrated, in general they resent the creative restraints placed on them by the Party. However, there was also a strong sense of resignation that the political atmosphere was not expected to change, and these restraints would remain in place indefinitely, so many concluded the only option was to work within the system. In a subtle erosion of legitimacy, some chose not to cooperate and to withdraw their services to an extent under such conditions by opting for instance to switch to genres or styles considered politically safer, or by choosing not to

persist at all with published creative writing. In such cases the lack of legitimacy impacts the degree of cooperation, with subordinates withdrawing partial cooperation.

Using Beetham's definition, power is legitimate to the extent that it conforms to established rules; the rules can be justified by referencing beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate; and there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation. In the literary context the rules are clearly laid out, and with the writers' active participation there is evidence of consent by the subordinates. There is, however, no indication the rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate. In the literary case, the coercive context ensures participation but would not in itself establish legitimacy. Given this lack of established legitimacy, Party Moat-Building is prioritised through a range of measures including propaganda, co-optation and repression.

This moat-building is presented in projects such as the *Reading for All* programme, which while ostensibly aimed at promoting literature and literacy, co-opts publishers, writers, bookshops, venues and events promoters to support Party discourse and narratives for legitimisation values. Similarly, the policies to support bookshops co-opt and boost state-owned operations and entities close to the Party in return for their alignment with official policies on inventory selection, title promotion and on public discussions. Actors considered to be non-aligned, however, face repressive rather than co-optative measures.

8.3 *The roles of censorship, self-censorship and agenda-setting*

Repression as another of Gerschewski's pillars of stability comes to the fore in the analysis of censorship, self-censorship and agenda-setting, where a rigid and expansive set of controls are in place and severe repercussions potentially await perceived violators. While this legacy operation remains in place in the background, the system has developed to such a comprehensive level that pervasive self-censorship has to a large extent replaced any official requirement for repressive censorship. The elaborate carrot and stick mechanisms, or what Stalin's "engineers of the soul" would have known as whips and gingerbread, are so entrenched the system is now largely self-policing. As Haraszti (1997, p.5) notes, at this stage censorship is no longer a matter of simple state intervention or distasteful top-down judgements. The Party-state is stable because they have "domesticated" the sector and censors and artists now embrace the new aesthetic culture that has emerged. At a sophisticated level, co-optation is working efficiently, control can

be relaxed at times and select criticisms allowed to seep through, serving as a societal pressure valve with its rare presence – the exception that proves the rule – engendering legitimacy.

This domestication has been accelerated through co-optation and myriad pecuniary arrangements. The state-owned publishers are given an allocation of ISBNs each year they can sell to private operators or utilise as a contribution in a commercial relationship, for example. Writers have multiple state-linked income-generating opportunities by contributing to theme projects or other official priority projects. They can also get paid for joining events, study sessions and official programmes. Bookshops can apply for state support in the form of grants and through event programmes such as the *Reading for All* project. On the international front publishers can apply for translation and promotion grants. Examples such as these do not require the industry to connect with the market or the requirements of the readers, but they do require a close relationship with officialdom. These handouts shift the industry focus from the market to the grant provider, and encourage a relationship dependent on the state. As these financial contributions become more significant to the recipients, market competitiveness is numbed. Priority is placed on nurturing the benefactor relationship and on not jeopardising the beneficial arrangement.

8.4 *International soft power initiatives*

Beyond China's borders, the CCP aims to generate soft power by promoting cultural products that underline its own legitimacy. Despite huge investments in the efforts, official success has been scarce. Areas of Chinese literature that have seen overseas success, such as Online Literature (CIL) and in areas of science fiction, were driven organically by grassroots support, rather than top-down initiatives. Domestically these two areas have also flourished in recent years, arguably to a large extent precisely because they were not central to official focus and campaigns. Assessing the CCP's tactics overseas regarding other areas of culture and propaganda, the comprehensive and detailed official approach is evidenced. Again, securitisation is of paramount importance and domestic concerns drive overseas initiatives. Desires to cultivate more soft power are trumped by Party Moat-Building measures in cases where conflicts arise. Examples of this CPPF loop beyond China's borders were the scaling back on plans to develop overseas publishing projects as other elements of the Party were concerned about the issue of capital flight, and not continuing to celebrate Chloe Zhao's Oscar success to garner more soft power once it became known she had been critical of the Party in her past.

The scale and scope of Party propaganda initiatives overseas in this realm are immense. They encompass, among others, the wider Going Global campaign and extensive projects to promote Chinese culture and party discourse, authoritarian image management initiatives, propaganda campaigns and ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’, the takeover of overseas media outlets, the “borrowing boats” campaign to generate Party-friendly coverage in foreign press, the Confucius Institutes, the ubiquitous United Front Work Department and its exportation of domestic tools of monitoring and repression, and the wholesale repatriation of Chinese nationals. As a case study analysing the Party-state’s policy management of a sector, the comprehensive, all-embracing approach is remarkable. From central strategising to local execution, the planning is assiduous and supporting budgets immense.

In researching this thesis, a range of qualitative methods were used including interviews or background discussions with more than 60 writers, publishers, literary translators, agents, booksellers and government officials. This research presents and analyses how industry practitioners and the government interact in contemporary China and identifies “the uses of literature” to the Party-state and how and why Party officials want the China story to be told “well”. The official approach to contemporary literature presents an example of the Party’s holistic planning, management and control, and its prioritised commitment to securitisation and legitimacy building. Wider aspirations feature in Five-Year Plans, multiple laws and regulations are issued; the publishing, printing, distribution, retailing and promotion sectors, as well as the elaborate China Writers Association network, are all rigidly controlled with a comprehensive range of repressive and co-optative measures in place to ensure Party loyalty. The Going Global campaign then extends that reach to every corner of the world. Adherents are rewarded, occasional opponents are made examples of. The Party is patron of the arts and in return it demands allegiance.

Assessing this case study of creative content, the Party-state controls production (via the China Writers Association and the state-owned publishing apparatus, as well as incentive programmes such as themed topics to shape narratives), distribution (through state-run and distribution channels, control of physical and online booksellers), and promotion (with the support of state-controlled media and journals, official awards and accolades, promotional projects such as *Reading for All*, and international translation and promotion initiatives).

The management and control operate on multiple levels, with the primary level being legal and regulatory. Secondly, it operates on a commercial level, with control over state-run

entities, CCP propaganda departments making the key decisions in private entities, ‘golden share’ arrangements where the Party gets an outsized role on the board of directors of private companies in return for nominal shareholdings, and with initiatives such as ‘borrowing boats’ where the Party-state’s financial largesse is used to engage with private companies to further political and ideological objectives. It also operates on a social level, where soft control is influenced on platforms like the China Writers Association where peer pressure is exerted to encourage conformity.

When Xi came to power he made ideological adherence a key priority, particularly among the 95 million Party members and 4,860,000 Party organisations across the country, utilising a security-focused and intense top-down approach on issues across the board ranging from anti-graft campaigns to cultural promotion. In terms of literature and culture promotion, many of the policies are evidently counter-productive or quixotic, reflected in the leash/unleash initiatives in the CPPF. Rampant censorship is not going to produce a world-class literary environment, nor is the push toward the creation of primarily propaganda-laden and positive output. Potential readers, be they domestic in the *Reading for All* programme or international under various Going Global projects, have an innate tendency to shun politically loaded and promoted content.

Top-down targets and metrics can also appear to be facing a disconnect, such as objectives in translation projects where evidence suggests translated books rarely find local readers, or competition on readership consumption levels based on obscure statistics between local provinces and jurisdictions to boost their apparent average reading rates. The litany of targets, metrics and key performance indicators appear in cases to not correlate with the stated overarching objective of building a literary superpower but should instead be seen in the context of internal Party machinations aimed at inculcating loyalty and support among the mass nationwide network of Party members and organisations. This constituency, more than the wider Chinese public or the international community, is arguably the most vital for Xi Jinping and the Party leadership in terms of securitisation, maintaining legitimacy and political control. Consequently, when policies conflict, as seen in the CPPF, priority goes to securitisation and solidifying the control and support of this core base, while the concepts of fragmented authoritarianism and conflicting objectives highlight dichotomies and systemic inconsistencies.

8.5 *Response to research questions*

The “uses of literature” in Xi’s China are manifold. In parallel with the period of Link’s research, “uses” still include teaching correct political attitudes and ensuring the tellers of history are firmly aligned with the Party-state view, while other practical benefits would include the bolstering of domestic industry and economic growth. While overt criticism would generally not have been tolerated in the era Link reviewed either, the current administration has taken the management and control of the literary apparatus to a considerably more sophisticated level. Censoring critical discourse has become much less of an imperative in contemporary times as the system, with its elaborate mechanisms of repression and co-optation, results in one where published content is essentially self-censored to a point that meets, and at times even exceeds, the Party-state’s requirements.

With the absence of undermining discourse, the official focus is elevated to using creative texts to help shape political and ideological narratives, engender patriotic and nationalistic sentiment, cultivate soft power overseas and positively reinforce the legitimacy of the Party-state and the one-party Marxist-Leninist system. On one level the official underwriting of the literary sector is ostensibly aimed at encouraging and supporting emotional, creative and intellectual development among the reading public, but the parameters of this development are tightly drawn along Party Thought lines. The Party amplifies the supportive output and celebrates literary successes and highlights, claiming credit as the nation’s sole patron of the arts. While any system of government can claim reflected glory and a patriotic dividend for national artistic achievements, these benefits, or “uses”, arguably run deeper in a one-party system where the authorities lack channels of legitimacy inherent in other systems via multiparty elections or have embedded societal checks and balances such as an independent media, judiciary or civil society in operation.

Another use lies in harnessing the nation’s literati, an esteemed cohort. With the Party choreographing the nation’s literary and intellectual elite and ensuring their fealty, it reinforces its authority and command in the eyes of the general public. Their advanced co-optation and control also minimises the risk of this influential cohort coalescing around rebellious sentiment. Finally, the execution of this mammoth top-down initiative centring around content creation, control, distribution and promotion involves numerous officials and grassroot Party members engaged from a national level down to village levels. Managing the minute aspects of an expansive

nationwide policy such as this one in the realm of literature keeps these foot soldiers on message, motivated and rewarded for their loyalty.

The comprehensive approach to literary management ultimately delivers many uses to the Party-state, key among them one of securitisation, essentially eradicating any risk of critical narratives or potentially undermining content or activity. It also then co-opts and reinforces an extensive and influential support base across the nation, drives narratives to support the Party-state's legitimacy, and cultivates a more stable and cohesive political landscape that helps secure the CCP's preeminent position and longevity. These uses of literature to the CCP are apparent regardless of the quality of the literary output. As outlined in the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, and supported by the case studies and interviews, the quality of the literature itself does not register as a primary concern in the state initiative which is ostensibly designed to promote literature. Instead, primary concerns involve securitisation, cohesion and legitimacy.

Link found in his study that writers and officials of the time encountered three perennial questions: Was it possible to plan literary inspiration? Would efforts to engineer souls produce the intended effects or others? And could literary ambiguities be eliminated? Then as now, centrally planning literary inspiration is a stretching task. What officials have been able to do in contemporary times is to nurture writers with talent, educate them to a high level, immerse them in a highly supportive environment, enable them to travel domestically and internationally, and provide income so creatives can often dedicate their full energies to writing. Once select manuscripts are produced the state system of editing, production, distribution, domestic promotion, awards, reviews, translation, overseas promotion and distribution etc is ready to click into motion. From that perspective, writers from other countries around the world would be highly envious of such a supportive state environment that would appear to deliver great advantages to their Chinese counterparts. However, with these benefits comes an oppressive system of literary management control.

Chinese writers are not free to write as they choose, with many areas forbidden territory. Moreover, the official mechanisms steer content towards self-censorship and messaging supportive of the Party-state. Despite these restraints some high-quality literature is still produced, but it has to work through a filtration process. The process undermines the integrity of the apparatus, leaving many writers despondent, some opting out altogether or gravitating towards safer literary terrain, and diminishes the sector's merit in the eyes of the public. Observers are

inevitably left feeling somewhat short-changed and wondering what output might have been created had such filtration processes not been imposed.

Answering Link's questions, it appears it is possible to plan the basis for literary inspiration but only to a limited extent. As to whether efforts to engineer souls would produce the intended effects or others, the state objective is to establish China as a literary superpower by 2035. According to the practitioners themselves, at this point initiatives have not established a literary scene that would be widely considered world-beating. A wide range of works are produced each year, some of them of an extremely high calibre, but there is a widespread, general understanding of the controls in place and the fact the publishing sector is first and foremost required to serve the interests of the Party-state, corroding the scene's credibility. The official concern about literary ambiguities is still valid to an extent, in that creatives are still widely deploying metaphor, analogy, symbolism, irony, hyperbole and other literary devices to make commentary, however, writers say with the heightened sensitivities in recent years such endeavours are being nudged into ever more ambiguous domains. As in Link's time, the compliance levels ebb and flow depending on personalities and circumstances, but systemic safeguards ensure limited deviation scope.

Under consideration next is what does 'telling the China story well' mean in Xi's China? The Party-state is the patron of literature and the arts in Chinese society and it controls this creative industry to such a point where the practitioners are often shackled, indoctrinated and driven to produce art that serves a political endgame. Whether writers opt to engage with officialdom or not, many topics are taboo, swathes of history have been erased and cannot be revisited in literary form, criticism of the Party or the political system is verboten, and the system steers output into the realms of the positive, supportive and harmonious.

China has a very proud and distinguished cultural and literary history, and officials, the publishing industry itself and the general public relish any continued success. Despite all the restraints, China still maintains a thriving literary scene, and its societal relevance remains comparatively high in a digital era where global public interest in literature is on the wane. Thanks in large part to opportunities on online platforms, creative writing courses are thriving and, beyond the traditional sector, hundreds of thousands of writers are publishing online on a daily basis. But as the case studies show, despite how much the Party-state might crave continued literary success and be able to draw cultural parallels with perceived halcyon days of the past, creatives who are not in tune with the main melody are airbrushed out of the system, regardless of how talented they

are and how much glory and patriotic joy they could bring. So, telling the China story well means, at very least, not being perceived to be challenging or undermining the political status quo in any way. And ideally and increasingly, from an official perspective, telling the story well entails portraying contemporary China in a positive light, and reflecting well on the Party-state, its leadership and the one-party system it upholds. In essence it is an instruction to the nation's writers to tell the Party story well.

8.6 *Contributions to learning*

In terms of contribution to learning, this research has put the creative publishing sector under a microscope and shown its development and how it operates today in Xi Jinping's China. Through extensive interviews with writers, publishers and other industry practitioners, the analysis reflects how the policies and structures impact on the functioning of the sector. Assessing specific key aspects such as the Writers Association, official support for selected bookshops, reading programmes, the censorship system, publishing operations and the promotion of literature overseas, the research illustrates how the sprawling literary apparatus is managed and controlled on a daily basis. While it is well established that China is a highly controlled and restrictive society, this research pinpoints the processes and practices inherent in the system in the publishing sphere. It outlines the explicit policy objectives and then contrasts them with the actual outcomes. Apparent contradictions inherent in the policies and system inspired the Creative Policy Paradox Framework, which I developed to analyse the various system inputs and outputs and to illustrate how literary and cultural goals are relegated when confronted with securitisation, cohesion and legitimacy concerns. As a key part of this theory, I devised the term Party Moat-Building to label self-protective measures initiated at the expense of wider declared objectives. The research sets the scene on the development of the creative publishing sector in China and takes a snapshot of the actualities during Xi Jinping's first two terms in office. While this case study examines the literary sphere, it is a microcosm of modern China and its governance and helps illustrate on a wider level the CCP's approach to aspects of societal control, management and development from political, ideological, commercial and practical perspectives. Assessing policies, practices and priorities, the study adds to the understanding of how the Party-state functions in contemporary China.

Turning to the question of the limitations of this study, one area I would identify would be the lack of access to the CCP's decision-making process. While I was able to interview some

officials who were also writers, and could monitor outcomes and official statements, the opaque nature of China's political system restricts external observation of the policy formulation process. Given this reality, I structured my research to focus on practitioner interviews, key related CCP announcements and speeches, and outcomes pertinent to the sector. Regarding the practitioner interviews, after due consideration I opted due to time and space constraints to adopt a largely mainstream focus incorporating primarily Han Chinese writers. For the purposes of this general study, I omitted writers from areas such as Tibet or Xinjiang as the political tensions and heightened sensitivities in these areas would inevitably result in an entirely different experience from the mainstream. While this thesis adopted a more general focus, in-depth study on cultural policies and engagement with writers from specific ethnic minority groups is an intriguing area for further research. Similarly, this research did not engage with narrative theory or textual analysis, and again in the wider context of this research area such studies would add to deeper understanding. With regards to additional further research potential, there are many other areas that would be intriguing to examine. Just as Link's analysis focused on the 1970s and 1980s, this research considers largely the 2012-2022 period. In a very fluid environment, this area should be revisited often to assess developments and deviations. How the Party-state manages the burgeoning online literature sphere is developing into one area of particular interest, as is the question on the management of ISBNs and if and how the policy to intentionally reduce industry output to maximise control will continue. This type of research could also be conducted on a more focused basis in China, with assessments considering regional or ethnic variations. Overseas, the national translation project warrants continued attention, particularly in light of the growing sentiment that the high-budget project has a stronger domestic, political agenda rather than actually connecting with international readers of literature. Where future international successes come from will be another key area of interest, and – depending on the nature of the content – if and how the Party-state supports them.

Theoretically, the Creative Policy Paradox Framework could be utilised in any context to analyse where inherent contradictions and conflicts are evidenced in cultural policy-making and implementation. Furthermore, it could move from the cultural sphere and 'creative' could be replaced by 'educational', 'environmental' or 'civil society', for example, to analyse other policy frameworks and potentially embedded conflicts. The 'moat-building' concept could be utilised in

any arena where ascendant forces ensure continued dominance by initiating specific actions, regardless of whether they run counter to other official policies and declared objectives.

Conflicts and paradoxes are apparent throughout the analysis and this thesis argues core concepts of securitisation and legitimacy are prioritised over cultural advancement in a bid to cement further the CCP's role as the unchallenged and legitimate government of the People's Republic of China in domestic and international eyes. This research has shown how in many ways the official approach to literary management has remained unchanged since the 1940s. Xi Jinping's instruction to writers today to continuously endorse and celebrate the Party echoes Mao's 1942 exhortation to cultural workers to always serve politics and the advancement of socialism. Modernisations have resulted in the bureaucracy becoming more sophisticated and systematic, with the development of techno-surveillance frameworks and extensive personnel management presenting refined and integrated nationwide structures of monitoring and control. Oversight is omnipresent and management is rigid, minimising scope for individual influence or impact. The Party-state legitimisation quest and creative policy paradox across the literary apparatus results in simultaneous efforts to stimulate and stifle the nation's writers. Mass budgets and extensive projects continue to be unleashed in a bid to achieve literary superpower status in the next decade, but underpinning the initiative lies the implicit edict to the nation's writers not to tell 'China's' story well, per se, but rather to go out and "Tell the Party story well".

Appendices



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

同意书

语言文化与社会学院—东亚研究

统一参与“中国的文学生活：当代作家及出版业所面临的挑战与机遇”项目的研究。

若您同意声明，请在其旁边写上您姓名的首字母。

我确认我已经阅读并理解了注有 2018 年 4 月 15 日的信息表，该表解释了以上研究项目，我有机会对该项目进行提问。	
我同意从我这里搜集的资料可保存下来用于未来相关的研究。对于存档资料，转录材料也可应采访者要求隐去姓名。我了解采访转写材料将会储存在利兹大学稳定的 M 驱动盘，并且将在三年后删除。我也了解在存档期，其他研究员将无法得到这些资料。	
我了解，在研究过程中，搜集到的这些资料，某些部分将会被利兹大学的编辑及监督委员为的专家查看。我允许这些个体查看我的档案。	

我同意参与以上研究项目，并且在项目期间，若需要，在项目之后，告知项目主持人我联系方式的异动。	
--	--

考虑到受访者可能匿名或不匿名，烦请在以下选项中选择一项：

我同意研究员将我的名字添加在采访稿中。（ ）

我希望我的评论匿名。（ ）

参与者姓名	
参与者签名	
日期	
项目主持人 姓名	Peter Goff 高岩
签名	
日期	



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

CONSENT FORM

School of Languages, Cultures & Societies – East Asian Studies

Consent to take part in Literary Life in China and the Challenges and Opportunities facing Contemporary Writers and the Publishing Sector

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated April 15, 2018, explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research. For archive materials, transcripts can also be anonymized as requested by the interviewee. I understand that interview transcripts will be stored on the University of Leeds secured M Drive and	

will be deleted after a period of three years. I also understand that no other researchers will access this material while it is in the archives.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project.	

With regard to the interviewee being identifiable or anonymised, please choose one of the below:

I consent to letting the researcher attach my name to the interview. ☐

I would like my comments to be anonymised. ☐

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Peter Goff
Signature	
Date	



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Information Sheet on Academic Research Project

Title of the Research Project:

Literary Life in China and the Challenges and Opportunities facing Contemporary Writers and the Publishing Sector

Dear Participant,

I am taking this opportunity to introduce my research project and to kindly request your participation as an interviewee. Under the auspices of the University of Leeds, I am currently pursuing a doctoral research project with the faculty of East Asian Studies that will examine aspects of the literary and publishing world in China. In the research, I hope to gain an in-depth understanding of the professional landscape facing Chinese writers and literature in contemporary times and so in this regard am interested in the relationships Chinese writers have with domestic and international publishers, the support and engagement they have with various departments of the government and official entities, the relationship they have with online and offline booksellers, as well as the trends among readers. At root, I am trying to assess the challenges and opportunities that Chinese writers currently face in the publishing world, and if and how the situation is changing at all as China develops. I am requesting your participation as a highly regarded member of the profession, so your insights would make a great contribution to this research.

As this research is under the auspices of a university, the interview and interviewee approval process must follow the university's standard process. Participation in this interview is

entirely voluntary, of course, and you are under no obligation to accept my request. If you do decide to accept, I would ask you to sign an informed consent form which is for the university's internal purposes. Should you be willing to participate in the interview, but would rather not sign a consent form for any reason, we can proceed with verbal consent. In general, interviews will be recorded for the purposes of making fully accurate transcripts. Should you wish, however, you can request that their interview is not recorded.

Should you request it, part or all of the interview can be kept confidential and your name and any other identifying features will not be made public in relation to any of the confidential material. For archive materials, transcripts can also be anonymized as requested by the interviewee. Interview transcripts will be stored on the University of Leeds secured M Drive and will be deleted after a period of three years. No other researchers will access this material while it is in the archives.

In terms of a time commitment, I would estimate that an interview would take between 40-60 minutes. This could be conducted in a personal meeting, or over telephone or via correspondence, and it could be conducted with me personally or with my research assistant. All participants have the right to withdraw from this research while the research process is still underway, so at any point up until 31/1/2020. It is anticipated that this research project will culminate in a doctoral dissertation in English with the University of Leeds. Your participation will greatly enhance the readers' understanding of the currently literary landscape in China.

The research is being undertaken under the auspices of the University of Leeds, East Asian Studies faculty. The researcher can be contacted at any time by the interviewees. Contact details are as follows:

Peter Goff (email: XXX ph: XXX)

Should an interviewee wish to contact the university, to file a complaint or any for any other reason, the supervisor of this research project can be contacted via the email and telephone number below:

Dr Frances Weightman (email: XXX ph: XXX)

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee on 6 April 2018, ethics reference PVAR 17-086.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Goff

学术研究项目信息单

研究项目名称:

中国的文学生活: 当代作家及出版业所面临的挑战与机遇

亲爱的参与者:

借此机会, 我向大家介绍我的研究项目, 并友好地请求你们作为受访者参与该项目。在利兹大学的赞助下, 我目前正在东亚研究系进行博士学位论文的研究项目, 该研究将调查中国文学界及出版界各方面的状况。在研究中, 我希望对中国作家及当代文学所面临的专业图景作深入了解。因此, 就这一点而言, 我对中国作家与国内外出版公司的关系很感兴趣, 对政府和官方机构的众多部门对作家的支持与帮助感兴趣, 以及对读者的阅读趋势感兴趣。从根本上说, 我想要评估在出版界中国作家当前所面临的挑战与机遇, 并且因中国在发展, 该情况将会如何变化? 作为这个行业的翘楚, 你们的观点将会为该研究做出巨大贡献, 请你们参与我的研究。

由于该研究得到大学的赞助, 采访人与受访人审批流程必须遵循该大学的标准流程。你们完全自愿参与采访, 当然, 你并没有义务要答应我的请求。若你确实决定要接受采访, 我会请你签署一份知情同意书。这份同意书仅仅是大学内部的要求。如果您愿意参与该采访, 但没有理由地, 就是不想签一份同意书, 我们可继续进行口头同意书。总体而言, 访谈将会录音, 其目的是制作完全准确的转写资料。但是, 如果你希望, 你可以要求他们不录音。

有关保密的资料, 只要你要求, 部分或所有的采访都需要保密, 你的名字及其他可证明身份的事物将不会被公之于众。对存档资料, 若受访者有要求, 转写资料也能匿名化处理。访谈转写资料将被存储在利兹大学稳定的 M 驱动盘, 并且将在三年后删除。在存档期, 其他研究员将无法得到这些资料。

就时间承诺, 我估计一个访谈大约需要 40-60 分钟。这将在个人会面时进行, 或者通过电话或者通信。可能我会亲自调查, 或者与我的研究助理一起调查。当该项目正处于研究中时, 所有的参与者有权退出该研究, 在 2020 年 1 月 31 日前的任何时刻都可以。

我们期待这项研究，能与利兹大学一道，在众多英文博士毕业论文中脱颖而出。您的参与将极大地提升读者对当今中国的文学现状的了解。

该研究的进行得到了利兹大学东亚研究系的赞助。受访者可在任何时候联系采访人。具体联系方式如下：

高岩 (邮箱: XXX 电话: XXX)

若受访者想联系利兹大学投诉或者其他的原因，可通过以下邮箱和电话号码联系该研究项目的指导老师：

弗朗西斯·卫道明博士 (邮箱: XXX 电话: XXX)

2018 年 4 月 6 日，该研究经艺术人文及文化研究道德委员会的评估，备受好评。道德参考文献 PVAR 17-086。

您真诚的

高岩

Bibliography

- Abrahamsen, E. 2015. The Real Censors of China. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 16 June. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/opinion/the-real-censors-of-china.html>
- Agence France-Presse, 2017. At Beijing book fair, publishers admit to self-censorship to keep texts on Chinese market. In: *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 24 August. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2108095/beijing-book-fair-publishers-admit-self-censorship-keep>
- Ake, C. 1975. A Definition of Political Stability. *Comparative Politics*. 7(2), pp.271–283.
- Albert, E. 2018. China's Big Bet on Soft Power. Council on Foreign Relations. [Online]. 9 February. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-big-bet-soft-power>
- Allen-Ebrahimian, B. 2020. Between the lines on Chinese strategy: “Borrowing a boat to go out on the ocean”. *Axios*. February 26. [Accessed on February 27 2023]. Available from: <https://www.axios.com/china-foreign-media-borrowing-boat-ocean-635145c4-a189-425f-b65a-676a7754b248.html>
- Anderson, H. 2014. Why won't English speakers read books in translation? *BBC Culture*. [Online]. 21 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140909-why-so-few-books-in-translation>
- Anna, C. 2015. American, Chinese authors protest major book fair, censorship with shadow expo in New York. *Associated Press*. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://pen.org/press-clip/american-chinese-authors-protest-major-book-fair-censorship-with-shadow-expo-in-new-york/>
- Areddy, J.T. 2023. China's Displeasure With a Bookseller Follows Him to Florida. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Online]. 28 January. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-displeasure-with-a-bookseller-follows-him-to-florida-11674885303>
- Arendt, H. 1976. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego: Harvest Books.
- Baidao Wang (百道网), 2020. 中宣部印发《图书出版单位社会效益评价考核试行办法》. [Online]. 2 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://cugp.cug.edu.cn/info/1041/3800.htm>

- Balzacq, T., Léonard, S. and Ruzicka, J. 2015. *Securitization Revisited: Theory and Cases*. International Relations. 30.
- Bandurski, D. 2022. The CMP Dictionary: Two Establishes. The China Media Project. [Online]. 8 February. [Accessed 27 February 2023]. Available from: https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/two-establishes/
- Bandurski, D. 2023. China Media Project. Co-producing with the CCP. <https://chinamediaproject.org/2023/02/17/co-producing-with-the-ccp/>
- Bandurski, D. 2023. China Propaganda, In a local paper near you. China Media Project. [Online]. 19 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://chinamediaproject.org/2023/01/19/chinese-propaganda-coming-to-a-local-paper-near-you/>
- Barmé, G. 1999. *In the Red: On contemporary China culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Barr, M. 2011. *Who's Afraid of China? The Challenge of Chinese Soft Power*. London: Zed Books.
- Barrett, E. 2021. Beijing's censorship of Chloé Zhao's Oscar win could spell trouble for Marvel's next blockbuster. *Fortune*. [Online]. 27 April. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://fortune.com/2021/04/27/chloe-zhao-nomadland-oscars-best-director-china-censorship-marvel-disney-eternals/>
- Beach, S. 2018. Media, film, publishing put under direct CCP control. China Digital Times. [Online]. 21 March. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/03/media-film-and-publishing-put-under-direct-control-of-party/>
- Beetham, D. 1991. *The legitimation of power*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.
- Bhabha, H.K. 2004. *The Location of Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Bland, B. 2017. China censorship drives split leading academic publishers. *The Financial Times*. [Online]. 5 November. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/b68b2f86-c072-11e7-b8a3-38a6e068f464>
- Bloomberg News, 2022. China Cancelled H&M. Every other brand needs to understand why. Bloomberg News. [Online]. 14 March. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-china-canceled-hm/>
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Brady, A. 2009. Mass persuasion as a means of legitimation and China's popular authoritarianism. *American Behavioral Scientist*. Volume 53, Number 3, November 2009, pp.434-457.
- Brady, A. 2015. Authoritarianism Goes Global (II): China's Foreign Propaganda Machine. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 4, Oct. 2015, pp.51-59.
- Brady, A. 2018. China in Xi's New Era – New Zealand and the CCP's 'Magic Weapons'. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 29, Number 2.
- Brandt, J. 2021. How autocrats manipulate online information: Putin's and Xi's playbooks. *The Washington Quarterly*, 44:3, pp.127-154.
- Bremmer, I and Kupchan, C. 2023. Risk 2: Maximum Xi. Eurasia Group. [Online]. 3 January. [Accessed 27 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/live-post/top-risks-2023-2-Maximum-Xi>
- Brooks, B and Qin, A. 2020. Disney Wanted to Make a Splash in China With 'Mulan.' It Stumbled Instead. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 12 September. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/12/business/media/disney-mulan-china.html>
- Brown, K. 2016. *CEO China – The Rise of Xi Jinping*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris
- Brzeski, P. 2019. Top Gun: Maverick' trailer sparks controversy as fans notice Taiwanese flag mission from Tom Cruise's jacket. *The Hollywood Reporter*. [Online]. 22 July. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/top-gun-maverick-trailer-sparks-controversy-tom-cruise-jacket-1225993/>
- Buckley, C. 2014. Xi Touts Communist Party as Defender of Confucius's Virtues. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 13 February. [Accessed on 27 February 2023]. Available from: <https://archive.nytimes.com/sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/13/xi-touts-communist-party-as-defender-of-confuciuss-virtues/>
- Burke, E. 1790. *Reflections on the revolution in France*. London: James Dodsley.
- Burton, C. 2008. The "Beijing Consensus" and China's quest for legitimacy on the international stage. In *The Chinese Party-State in the 21st century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy*. Laliberté, A. and Lanteigne, M. (eds). 2008. UK: Routledge.
- Buzan, B and Waever, O, 2003. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*: 91. Cambridge University Press, UK.
- Callahan, W.A. 2015. History, Tradition and the China Dream: socialist modernization in the World of Great Harmony. *Journal of Contemporary China*. 24:96, pp.983-1001.

- Carothers, C. and Zhang, Z. 2023. From Corruption Control to Everything Control: The Widening Use of Inspections in Xi's China, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 32:140, 225-242.
- CCP CWA Party Group (中共中国作家协会党组), 2021. 新时代文学要牢记“国之大者”. [Online] 16 October. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2021-10/16/c_1127960182.htm
- Chaguan, 2020. A diarist in Wuhan faces fury for sharing her story with the West. *The Economist*. 16 April. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available here: <https://www.economist.com/china/2020/04/16/a-diarist-in-wuhan-faces-fury-for-sharing-her-story-with-the-west>
- Chang, C. 2020. Do Chinese people support their government? Here's why it's hard to tell. The China Project. [Online]. 25 August. [Accessed 27 February 2023]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2020/08/25/do-chinese-people-support-their-government-hard-to-tell/>
- Chang, C. 2021. China's brick-and-mortar bookstores are making a comeback. The China Project. [Online]. 8 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2021/04/08/chinas-brick-and-mortar-bookstores-are-making-a-comeback/>
- Chazan, G. 2021. China Blamed for cancellation of events for German book on Xi Jinping. *The Financial Times*. [Online]. 26 September. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/8e4af031-6d07-4b3b-816b-1fc9194b6e4a>
- Chen, M (陈谋). 2016. 成都扶持奖励实体书店 17 家书店首获 570.9. 《成都商报》. [Online] 8 January. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://e.chengdu.cn/html/2016-01/08/content_550884.htm
- Chen, M(陈梦溪). 2014. 盘点 2014 年文学奖：传统文学奖引发巨大争议. 《北京晚报》. 22 December. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2014/12-22/6900170.shtml>
- Chen, S, 2022. The CMP Dictionary: Main Melody. The China Media Project. [Online]. 18 February. [Accessed on 27 February 2023]. Available from: https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/main-melody/
- Chen, X. 2021. The pride of China! Chinese netizens congratulate Chloe Zhao, the first Chinese director on winning Golden Globe Awards. *The Global Times*. [Online]. 2 March. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202103/1216918.shtml>

- Chengdu Commercial Daily, 2016. 成都商报. 成都扶持奖励实体书店 17 家书店首获 570.9 万. 《成都商报》. 8 January. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://sc.cnr.cn/sc/2014kj/20160108/t20160108_521075402.shtml
- Cheung, R. 2022. Internet Literature. In: (eds) Abrahamsen, A. Harman, N. Jones, E. Hargreaves, J. Zhu, Y. Lirong, Y and Levi King, D. *Paper Republic Guide to Contemporary Chinese Literature*. [Kindle Edition]. London: Paper Republic, pp51-57. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.amazon.com/Paper-Republic-Contemporary-Chinese-Literature-ebook/dp/B09TMC9GNW>
- China Book International, <http://www.chinabookinternational.org/aboutcbi/Project/>
- China Daily*, 2011. The Five-Year Plans - 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010). 23 February. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available online: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012npc/node_1079463.htm
- China Daily*, 2015. Xi urges strengthening of united front. *China Daily*. [Online]. 21 May. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/21/content_20785494.htm
- China Daily*, 2019. Xi sends letter to congratulate 70th anniversary of national writer, artist groups. 16 July. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201907/16/WS5d2d709ba3105895c2e7db50.html>
- China Daily*, 2022. National Conference on Reading. *China Daily*. [Online]. 25 April. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: <http://ex.chinadaily.com.cn/exchange/partners/82/rss/channel/language/columns/v0m20b/stories/WS62666319a310fd2b29e5933e.html>
- China Daily*. 2023. Chinese online literature witnesses boom over past decade: report. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202303/27/WS642138afa31057c47ebb6c12.html>
- China Publishing Group, 2016 (中国出版集团公司). 传达学习中版集团工作会议精神 部署商报 2016 年及“十三五”工作. 《中国出版传媒商报》. 2 February. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <http://www.cnpubg.com/news/2016/0202/27700.shtml>.
- China Publishing Yearbook*, 2016. 《中国出版年鉴 2016》. Beijing: 杂志社有限公司
- Chinahlj.cn, 2020. 中国出版传媒商报. 国家新闻出版署《2019 年新闻出版产业分析报告》图书出版营收增速名列前茅. 11 September [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.chinahlj.cn/news/439198.html>
- Chomsky, N. 1998. *The Common Good*. Berkeley, California: Odonian Press

- Chou, O and Siu, P. 2016. One year on: Hong Kong bookseller saga leaves too many questions unanswered. *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 29 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2058000/one-year-hong-kong-bookseller-saga-leaves-too-many-questions>
- Clarkesworld, 2019. Clarkesworld: Chinese Science Fiction Translation Project. Kickstarter. [Online]. 20 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/clarkesworld/clarkesworld-chinese-science-fiction-translation-p>
- Cong, X. 2013. Road to revival: a new move in the making of legitimacy for the ruling party in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*. 22:83, pp.905-922
- Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Available online: <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml>
- CRI Online, 2019. 对于创作优秀文艺作品，习近平提出三个“无愧于”。 17 July. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <http://news.cri.cn/20190717/ccaecb50-7833-f7dd-35f6-13b0a9233e3f.html>
- d'Hooghe, I. 2015. *China's Public Diplomacy*. Leiden: Brill.
- Dahlburg, J. 2000. Chinese Exile Gao Xingjian of France Gets Nobel Literature Prize. *The Los Angeles Times*. [Online]. 13 October. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-oct-13-mn-36050-story.html>
- Darnton, R. 2014. *Censors at Work: How states shaped literature*. London, UK: TJ International.
- Davis, B. and Wei, L. 2020. *Superpower Showdown: How the Battle Between Trump and Xi Threatens a New Cold War*. New York: Harper Business.
- Deb, S. 2020a. Chinese State TV to air NBA for first time since Hong Kong rift. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 9 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/09/sports/basketball/nba-china-cctv.html>
- Deb, S. 2020b. NBA expects to lose 'hundreds of millions' from China rift, Silver says. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 15 February. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/15/sports/nba-adam-silver-china-kobe.html>
- Diamant, NJ. 2022. *Useful Bullshit: Constitutions in Chinese Politics and Society*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press
- Dos Santos, N. 2022. China operating over 100 police stations across the world with the help of some host nations, report claims. CNN. [Online]. 4 December. [Accessed on 2 March

- 2023]. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/04/world/china-overseas-police-stations-intl-cmd/index.html>
- Dowding, K. and Kimber, R. 2006. The Meaning and Use of 'Political Stability'. *European Journal of Political Research*. 11, pp.229 - 243.
- Dukalskis, A. and Gerschewski, J. 2017. What autocracies say (and what citizens hear): proposing four mechanisms of autocratic legitimation. *Contemporary Politics*. 23:3, pp.251-268.
- Dukalskis, A; Gerschewski, J. 2020. Adapting or Freezing? Ideological Reactions of Communist Regimes to a Post-Communist World. *Government and Opposition*. Vol. 55, Iss. 3, pp.511-532.
- Dukalskis, A. 2020. *Making the World Safe for Dictatorship*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Economy, E. (2018a) China's new revolution: the reign of Xi Jinping. *Foreign Affairs*. 97(3): pp.60–74.
- Edney, K. 2014. *Globalization of Chinese propaganda: International power and domestic political cohesion*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Edney, K. 2015. Building national cohesion and domestic legitimacy: a regime security approach to soft power in China. *Politics*. 35 (3-4), pp.259 - 272.
- Edney, K., Stanley R. and Zhu, Y. 2019. *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China's campaign for hearts and minds*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Egorov, G., Guriev, S. and Sonin, K. 2009. Why Resource-poor Dictators Allow Freer Media: A Theory and Evidence from Panel Data. *American Political Science Review*. 103(4), pp.645-668.
- Fan, J. 2019. The publishing industry in New China: Eventful 7 decades. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. (2019) 35, pp.629-647.
- Fenby, J. 2008. *Modern China: The fall and rise of a great power, 1850 to present*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Feng, Z. 2020. US labels Confucius Institute a Chinese 'foreign mission'. BBC. [Online]. 14 August. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53773776>
- Fitzgerald, J. 2022. *Cadre Country: How China became the Chinese Communist Party*. [Kindle Edition]. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing.

- Flew, T. 2016. Entertainment media, cultural power, and post-globalization: The case of China's international media expansion and the discourse of soft power. *Global Media and China*. Vol. 1(4), pp.278–294.
- Freedom House, 2021. Freedom of the Net: China. Freedom House. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/china/freedom-net/2021>
- Fujian.gov.cn, 2021. Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China. 9 August. [Online]. Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: http://www.fujian.gov.cn/english/news/202108/t20210809_5665713.htm#C35
- Fürst, R. 2021. Cultivating the Art of Anxiety: Securitising Culture in China. *China Report*. 57:4, pp.433-450.
- Gardner, D. 2014. Mainland censorship: authors cut their losses. *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 2 July. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/article/1520312/mainland-censorship-authors-cut-their-losses/>
- Garnaut, J. 2017. Engineers of the Soul: what Australia needs to know about ideology in Xi Jinping's China. In Asian Strategic and Economic Seminar Series. [Online]. Beijing: Sinocism. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://sinocism.com/p/engineers-of-the-soul-ideology-in?s=r>
- Garrahan, M. and Clover, C. 2017. China's Hollywood romance turns sour. *The Financial Times*. [Online]. 26 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/d5d3d06e-de8b-11e7-a8a4-0a1e63a52f9c>
- Garrard, J. and Garrard, C. 1990. *Inside the Soviet Writers Union*. New York: Free Press
- Gerschewski, J. 2013. The three pillars of stability: legitimization, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes. *Democratization*. 20:1, pp.13-38.
- Gerschewski, J. 2018. Legitimacy in Autocracies: Oxymoron or Essential Feature? *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(3), pp.652-665.
- 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.
- Global Voices, 2013. Netizen Report: China's 'Seven Speak Nots' bring new Hurdles for Netizens. [Online]. 21 May. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2013/05/22/netizen-report-chinas-seven-speak-nots-bring-new-hurdles-for-netizens/>

- Goff, P. 2020. *The Irish Times*. What does China want? Three takes on the rise of a superpower. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/what-does-china-want-three-takes-on-the-rise-of-a-superpower-1.4304252>
- Goldman, M. 1967. *Literary Dissent in Communist China*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Goldman, M. 1981. *China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Gore, L. 2022. Behind Xi Jinping's Resurrection of Ideological Orthodoxy. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore.
- Gov.cn, 2016. The 13th Five-year Plan. 中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十三个五年规划纲要. 17 March. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-03/17/content_5054992.htm
- Green-Riley, N. 2020. The State Department labeled China's Confucius programs a bad influence on U.S. students. What's the story? *The Washington Post*. [Online]. 25 August. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/24/state-department-labeled-chinas-confucius-programs-bad-influence-us-students-whats-story/>
- Grimm, S and Leininger, L, 2012. Not all good things go together: Conflicting objectives in democracy promotion. *Democratization*. 19:3, pp.391-414.
- Groot, G. 2015. The expansion of the united front under Xi Jinping. *The China Story*. [Online] [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2015/forum-ascent/the-expansion-of-the-united-front-under-xi-jinping/>
- Gueorguiev, D. 2021. *Retrofitting Leninism: Participation without democracy in China*. New York: Oxford Academic.
- Habermas. J. 1976. *Legitimation Crisis*. London: Heinemann.
- Hamilton, C. and Ohlberg, M. 2020. *Hidden Hands*. Melbourne: Oneworld Publications
- Han, H. 2022. 让世界读懂中国——当代中国主题图书国际影响不断增强. 《光明日报》. [Online]. 14 March. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <http://www.cnpubg.com/export/2022/0314/57416.shtml>
- Haraszti, M. 1989. *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism*. London: Penguin.
- Harman, N. 2021. 2021 Roll Call of Published Translations from Chinese into English. Paper Republic. [Online]. 13 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from:

<https://paper-republic.org/pers/nicky-harman/2021-roll-call-of-published-translations-from-chinese/>

- Harman, N. 2022. 2022 Roll Call of Published Translations from Chinese into English. Paper Republic. [Online]. 18 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://paper-republic.org/pers/nicky-harman/2022-roll-call-of-published-translations-from-chinese-into-english/>
- Hartig, F. 2016. How China understands public diplomacy: the importance of national image for national interests. *International Studies Review*. 18(4), pp.655-680.
- Hawkins, A and Wasserstrom, J. 2019. Why 1984 isn't banned in China. *The Atlantic*. [Online]. 13 January. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/why-1984-and-animal-farm-arent-banned-china/580156/>
- Hays Gries, P. 2004. Popular nationalism and state legitimation in China. In *State and society in 21st century China: crisis, contention, and legitimation*. Hays Gries, P. and Rosen, S. (Eds). New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Hazlewood, Jack (2016). China spends big on propaganda in Britain... but returns are low. Hong Kong Free Press. [Online]. 3 April. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://hongkongfp.com/2016/04/03/china-spends-big-on-propaganda-in-britain-but-returns-are-low/>
- He, Q. 2008. *The Fog of Censorship: Media control in China*. New York: Human Rights in China.
- Hessler, P. 2022. A teacher in China learns the limits of free expression. *The New Yorker*. [Online]. 16 May. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available online: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/05/16/>
- Ho, P.C. 2018, Goodbye, SAPPRFT (but not Chinese censorship). The China Project. [Online]. 21 March. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2018/03/21/goodbye-sapprft-but-not-chinese-censorship/>
- Hockx, M. 2022. Truth, goodness, and beauty: literary policy in Xi Jinping's China. *Law & Literature*, pp.1-17.
- Hockx, M. 2015. *Internet literature in China*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoffman, S. 2017. Programming China: The Communist Party's Autonomic Approach to Managing State Security, *Merics China Monitor*. [Online]. 12 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://merics.org/en/report/programming-china>
- Holbig, H. 2013. Ideology after the end of ideology: China and the quest for autocratic legitimation. *Democratization*. Vol. 20, No. 1, pp.61-81.

- Holbig, H. 2022. Canonising Xi Jinping Thought – Ideological engineering and Its real-world relevance. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.41-46.
- Holbig, H. 2022. Canonising Xi Jinping Thought – Ideological Engineering and Its Real-world Relevance. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.41-46.
- Holbig, H. 2011. Reclaiming Legitimacy in postrevolutionary China. In *Political Legitimacy in Asia: New Leadership Challenges*. Kane, J. (ed). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hong, Z. 2007. *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- Hoover Institution. 2018. China's Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance. Hoover Institution Press. [Online]. 29 November. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.hoover.org/research/chinas-influence-american-interests-promoting-constructive-vigilance>
- HPRC, 2015. 12th Five-Year Plan. 国民经济和社会发展第十二个五年规划纲要(全文). [Online] 10 November. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: http://hprc.cssn.cn/gsyj/zhutiyj/18j5zqh/lcwngh/201511/t20151110_4129572.html
- Hu, Z., Ji, D. and Gong, Y. 2017. From the outside in: CCTV Going Global in a new world communication order. In: Thussu, D.K., de Burgh, H., & Shi, A. (Eds.). *China's Media Go Global*. London: Routledge. Pp.187-203.
- Huaxia Taike (华夏泰科), 2021. 2021 年顺义区实体书店扶持资金及申报条件, 补贴 100-500 万. 指尖申报科技. 28 December. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.bilibili.com/read/cv14608472>
- Human Rights Watch, 2019. China's global threat to human rights. Human Rights Watch. [Online]. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/global>
- Huntington, S. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Huo, J. 2010. Remembering Beijing's Moat System. Beijing Today. [Online]. 1 December. [Accessed 27 February 2023]. Available from: http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctenglish/se/txt/2009-08/10/content_211287.htm
- Ingraham, C, 2016. *The Washington Post*. The long, steady decline of Western literature. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/09/07/the-long-steady-decline-of-literary-reading/>

- Jia, M. 2020. Annual report on China's reading habits released. *China Daily*. [Online]. 21 April. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202004/21/WS5e9e9a0ea3105d50a3d17be1.html>
- Jia, M. 2022. Three-Body Trilogy broadens worldwide appeal for Chinese sci-fi. *China Daily*. [Online]. 13 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202201/13/WS61dfedf5a310cdd39bc80e2b.html>
- Jiang, M. 2021. Translation as cultural diplomacy: a Chinese perspective, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 27:7, pp.892-904.
- Jiao, Y. 2021. China Publishing Media Newspaper. What are the policies across the country to promote reading for all? http://www.nxgcdr.net/wh/whds/202105/t20210506_381906.html
- Jin, Z. 2022. China's sprawling world of web fiction. The China Project. [Online]. 17 August. [Accessed on 2 March 2022]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2022/08/17/chinas-sprawling-world-of-web-fiction/>
- Johnson, Ha. 2009. Dissidents and officials face off at Frankfurt Book Fair's China symposium, *Publishing Perspectives*. [Online]. 13 September. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://publishingperspectives.com/2009/09/dissidents-and-officials-face-off-at-frankfurt-book-fairs-china-symposium/>
- Johnson, I. 2016. Inside and Outside the System: Chinese Writer Hu Fayun. *New York Review of Books*. 28 November. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2016/11/28/china-inside-and-outside-system-hu-fayun/>
- Joske, A. (2020). The party speaks for you: Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. [Online]. 9 June. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you>
- Kang, B. 2022. People are reading fewer paper books due to changing reading habits. *China Daily*. [Online]. 15 March. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/15/WS622fde1ea310cdd39bc8c8bf.html>
- Ke, B. 2023. Chinese students made to sign 'loyalty pledges' to CCP before going to Sweden, report reveals. NextShark. [Online]. 17 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://nextshark.com/chinese-student-loyalty-pledges-sweden>
- Keay, J. 2009. *China – A History*. Harper Press. London, UK
- Kim, T, 2018. NBC. Warren Buffett believes this is 'the most important thing' to find in a business. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/07/warren-buffett-believes-this-is-the-most-important-thing-to-find-in-a-business.html>

- King, G., Pan, J., and Roberts, M.E. 2013. How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression. *The American Political Science Review*. 107(2), pp.326–343.
- Klimes, O. 2017. *China's cultural soft power: The central concept in the early Xi Jinping era (2012-2017)*. Acta Universitatis Carolinae. pp.127-150.
- Kokas, A. 2019. Producing global China: The Great Wall and Hollywood's cultivation of the PRC's global vision. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. 13:3, pp.215-227.
- Kong, D. 2015. *Imaging China: China's cultural diplomacy through loan exhibitions to British museums*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester.
- Kong, S. 2005. *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China*. California, USA: Stanford University Press.
- Kraus, R.C. 2004. *The Party and the Arty in China: The new politics of culture*. Maryland, US: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kubat, A. 2018. Morality as legitimacy under Xi Jinping: The political functionality of traditional culture for the Chinese Communist Party. In *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 47, 3, pp.47–86.
- Kwan, R. 2022. NBC News. Taiwan cheers 'Top Gun: Maverick' for defying Chinese censors. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10868357/Top-Gun-reinstates-Taiwanese-flag-Mavericks-jacket-removing-trailer-angering-China.html>
- Kynge, J., Anderlini, J. and Hornby, L. 2017. Inside China's secret 'Magic weapon' for worldwide influence. *The Financial Times*. [Online] 26 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/fb2b3934-b004-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4>
- Lachs, N. 2019. Goodbye to The Bookworm, Beijing's premier independent bookstore. The China Project. [Online]. 5 November. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2019/11/05/goodbye-to-the-bookworm-beijings-premier-independent-bookstore/>
- Lai, H and Lu, Y. (eds). 2012. *China's soft power and international relations*. New York: Routledge.
- Laliberté, A. and Lanteigne, M. (eds). 2008. *The Chinese Party-State in the 21st century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy*. UK: Routledge.
- Lam, O. 2017. China bans 'Soft Burial', an award-winning novel about the deadly consequences of land reform. Hong Kong Free Press. 12 June. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://hongkongfp.com/2017/06/12/china-bans-soft-burial-award-winning-novel-deadly-consequences-land-reform/>

- Lang, B. 2022. China Wanted to Cut Spider-Man: No Way Home's Statue of Liberty Scene - And Sony Refused. CBR.com. [Online]. 2 May. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.cbr.com/spider-man-no-way-home-china-statue-of-liberty-sony-refuse/>
- Lei, Z. (雷志龙). 2009. 凤凰网文化. 陈崎嵘: 作协有会员 8930 名作家没新作不会被除名. http://culture.ifeng.com/gundong/detail_2011_06/01/6757444_0.shtml
- Levi King, D. 2020. What's Going Wrong with Chinese Literature in Translation? Radii. [Online]. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://radii.co/article/translated-chinese-literature>
- Levi King, D. 2022. The role of the author in China. In: (eds) Abrahamsen, A. Harman, N. Jones, E. Hargreaves, J. Zhu, Y. Lirong, Y and Levi King, D. *Paper Republic Guide to Contemporary Chinese Literature*. [Kindle Edition]. London: Paper Republic, pp.23-28. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.amazon.com/Paper-Republic-Contemporary-Chinese-Literature-ebook/dp/B09TMC9GNW>
- Li, E. 2017. Why Shanghai's best-known liberal bookshop is closing down. *The South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 16 July. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2100533/why-shanghais-best-known-liberal-bookshop-closing-down>
- Li, G. (李桂君) and Wang, C. (王楚), 2011. 北京市实体书店的分布现状与存在的问题. 《出版发行研究》. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <http://rdbk1.ynlib.cn:6251/Qw/Paper/461579>
- Li, J and Zhang, N. 2017. Chinese literature still facing challenges reaching broader audience overseas. *Global Times*. [Online]. 2 July. [Accessed on 3 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201707/1054515.shtml>
- Li, J, Dai, Y, Shi, Q and Xian, J. 2020. Study of situation awareness of cultural security based on social media analysis. *International Journal of Distributed Sensor Networks*. Vol. 16(1)
- Li, X. (李晓东). 2017. 光明日报. 好书店是城市地标. https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2017-07/09/nw.D110000gmrb_20170709_4-04.htm?div=-1
- Lieberthal, K. and Oxenberg, M. 1988. *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures and Processes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lim, L. 2009. A Pop Idol Writer For China's New Generation. National Public Radio. [Online] 28 May. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available here: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104569352>
- Lim, L. 2014. *The people's republic of amnesia: Tiananmen revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Lim, L. and Bergin, J. 2018. Inside China's audacious global propaganda campaign. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 7 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping>
- Link, P. 2000. *The uses of literature: Life in the socialist Chinese literary system*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Link, P. 2002. *New York Review of Books*. China: The anaconda in the chandelier. New York Review of Books.
- Lipset, S.M. 1959. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. New York: Doubleday.
- Liu, W. (刘微), 2022. 人民网。中宣部：2021 年全国博物馆举办展览 36000 场 接待观众近 8 亿人次. <http://ent.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0818/c1012-32505843.html>
- Lorentzen, P. 2014. China's Strategic Censorship. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2), pp.402–414.
- Lovell, J. 2006. *The politics of cultural capital: China's quest for a Nobel Prize in literature*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lu, Y (卢扬). and Zheng, R (郑蕊). 北京数千家书店亏损超八成. 《北京商报》. [Online]. 16 August. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <http://finance.sina.com.cn/stock/t/2016-08-16/doc-ixuxnpy9679570.shtml>
- Luo C., Chai Q. and Chen H. 2019. "Going global" and FDI inflows in China: "One Belt & One Road" initiative as a quasi-natural experiment. *World Economy*. 2019;42: pp.1654–1672.
- Lynch, D.C. 2013. Securitizing culture in Chinese foreign policy debates – implications for interpreting China's rise. *Asian Survey*. 53(4), pp.629-652.
- Ma, J. 2023. *South China Morning Post*. China's Communist Party wants to be everything everywhere all at once: but will centralised social control work? <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3214305/chinas-communist-party-wants-be-everything-everywhere-all-once-will-centralised-social-control-work>
- Ma, Y.Z. 马云志, Hao X.Y. 郝相赟, 2018. 切实维护网络意识形态安全. 求实网. [Online]. 13 November. [Accessed on 27 February 2023]. Available from: http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2018-11/13/c_1123706019.htm
- Man, J. 2023. Radio Free Asia. Taiwanese publisher of banned books is detained in Shanghai. [Online]. 20 April. [Accessed on 24 April 2023]. Available from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/publisher-detained->

04202023133641.html?fbclid=IwAR37Ieqq0-T3M_YQfPjE_PeVp2IHUxXs6ZR_88HhxrsmoJZ8IPCg5Ggh8c

- Margolis, J.E. 2010. Understanding Political Stability and Instability. *Civil Wars*. 12:3, pp.326-345
- Martina, M. 2014. China withholds details of full military spending. Reuters. 5 March. [Online]. Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-parliament-security-idUSBREA240B720140305>
- Martinsen, J. 2006. What Use is the China Writers Association? Danwei. 22 November. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2006/11/china-writers-association-what-good-is-it-joel-martinsen/>
- McDougall, B. 1980. *Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art: A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- McDougall, B.S. 2003. *Fictional authors, imaginary audiences: modern Chinese literature in the 20th Century*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- McGregor, R. 2022. The CPC as a Global Force: A Long-Term View. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.175-180.
- Megan, W. 2022. *The Subplot* [Kindle Edition]. New York: Columbia Global Reports.
- Meng, B. 2018. *The Politics of Chinese Media: Consensus and Contestation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mertha, A.C. 2018. *The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Contemporary China*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Miao, Y. 2020. Romanticising the past: Core Socialist values and the China Dream as legitimisation strategy. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. 49(2), pp.162-184.
- Mitter, R. 2020. *China's good war: how World War II is shaping a new nationalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Mosur, P. 2019. Live From America's Capital, a TV Station Run by China's Communist Party. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 28 February. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/business/cctv-china-usa-propaganda.html>
- Murphy, Rachel. 2004. Turning Peasants into Modern Chinese Citizens: "Population Quality" Discourse, Demographic Transition and Primary Education. *The China Quarterly*. 177. 1 - 20.

- Myklebust, J.P. 2020. Confucius institutions close as China relations deteriorate. *University World News*. [Online]. 16 May. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200513092025679>
- NPPA, 2023. National Press and Publication Administration. 第二十次全国国民阅读调查结果发布 2022 年成年国民综合阅读率持续稳定增长. [Online] 23 April. [Accessed on 28 August 23]. Available from: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1763940607525040713&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- Nathan, A. 2003. Authoritarian Resilience. *Journal of Democracy*. 14 (1): pp.6-17.
- Netelenbos, B. 2016. *Political Legitimacy Beyond Weber: An Analytical Framework*. Amsterdam: Palgrave McMillan.
- Niewenhuis, L. 2019. All the international brands that had apologised to China. *SupChina*. [Online]. 25 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://signal.supchina.com/all-the-international-brands-that-have-apologized-to-china/>
- Nossel, S. (2021), Chinese Censorship in going global. *Foreign Policy*. [Online]. 26 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/26/chinese-censorship-enes-kanter-celtics-browder-is-going-global/>
- Nye, J. 1991. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books.
- O'Brien, R. 2020. The Chinese Communist Party's Ideology and Global Ambitions. (Speech) Arizona Commerce Authority, Phoenix, Arizona . [Online] 26 June. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/chinese-communist-partys-ideology-global-ambitions/>
- OECD, 2010. *The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity, Conflict and Fragility*. Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD). Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Osnos, 2015. Born Red. *The New Yorker*. [Online]. 30 March. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/born-red>
- Palmer, A. 2018. The Case of Hong Kong's Missing Booksellers. *The New York Times*. 3 April. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/03/magazine/the-case-of-hong-kongs-missing-booksellers.html>
- Pandell, L. 2016. Wired. Wired Book Club: Is *Three-Body Problem*'s Translation Better Than the Original? <https://www.wired.com/2016/10/wired-book-club-ken-liu-interview>.

- Parker, J. 2014. Murdoch's Fox sells China Star TV stake. ABC News. [Online]. 2 January. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available here: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-03/murdoch27s-fox-sells-china-star-tv-stake/5183292>
- Parton, C. 2021. The Chinese Communist Party's Sixth Plenum. Council on Geostrategy. Geopolitics Programme. No. GPE04, November 2021
- Patapan, H. and Wang, Y. 2018. The Hidden Ruler: Wang Huning and the making of contemporary China. *Journal of Contemporary China*. 27:109, pp.47-60.
- Pei, M. 1994. *From reform to revolution: the demise of communism in China and the Soviet Union*. Mass. USA: Harvard University Press.
- Pei, M. 2016. *China's Crony Capitalism: The Dynamics of Regime Decay*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Peng, W. and Keane, M. 2019. China's soft power conundrum, film coproduction, and visions of shared prosperity. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 25:7, pp.904-916.
- People's Daily* (人民日报). 2016. 实体书店曾经历 10 年衰退 如今发展蓝图已铺就. 《人民日报》. [Online]. 25 June. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available on: <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/2016/06-25/7917207.shtml>
- People's Information. 2021. "Going Out": Why Does Cantonese Literature Interest Overseas Readers? <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1700505280583008541&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- Perris, A. 1983. Music as propaganda: Art at the command of doctrine in the People's Republic of China. *Ethnomusicology*. 27 (1), pp.1–28.
- Peschel, S. 2019. How the Nobel Prize affects book sales. DeutscheWelle. [Online]. 12 October. [Accessed on 3 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.dw.com/en/how-the-nobel-prize-affects-book-sales/a-51607765>
- Phillips, T. 2015. Publishers under pressure as China's censors reach for red pen. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 13 November. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/13/china-censorship-xi-jinping-authors-publishers>
- Phillips, T. 2017. Cambridge University Press faces boycott over China censorship. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 21 August. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/aug/21/cambridge-university-press-faces-boycott-over-china-censorship>
- Phillips, T. 2017. Cambridge University Press faces boycott over China censorship. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 21 August. [Accessed 27 February 2023]. Available from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/aug/21/cambridge-university-press-faces-boycott-over-china-censorship>

- Pieke, F. 2022. The CPC's Global Power. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.86-94.
- Pu, X.Y. 2022. National Security and Chinese Foreign Policy. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.181-188.
- Qian, M. 2017. Penguin Classics and the Canonization of Chinese Literature in English Translation. *Translation and Literature*. 26, pp.295-316.
- Qiao, L. 2017. China Shuttters Islamic Bookstore in Beijing, Detains Owner on 'Terrorism' Charges. Radio Free Asia. [Online]. 10 October. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/bookstore-10102017111036.html>
- Qing, K.G and Shiffman, J. 2015. Beijing's covert radio network airs China-friendly news across Washington, and the world. Reuters. [Online]. 2 November. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>
- Qu, J. 2022. 伦敦书展“走出去”重点书潜力书（版权图书 50 种）. 《中国出版传媒商报》. [Online]. 30 March. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <http://www.cnpubg.com/export/2022/0330/57547.shtml>.
- Quinn, B. 2018. Royal Court dropped Tibet play after advice from British Council. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 4 April. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/apr/04/unseen-letters-shed-light-on-royal-court-censorship-row-british-council>
- Rabinovitch, S. 2008. The rise of an image-conscious China. *China Security*. Vol. 4, no. 3, pp.32-46.
- Rachman, G. 2019. Chinese censorship is spreading beyond its borders. *Financial Times*. [Online]. 14 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/cda1efbc-ee5a-11e9-ad1e-4367d8281195>
- Repnikova, M. 2017. *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power under Authoritarianism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Repnikova, M. and Fang, K. 2018. Authoritarian participatory persuasion 2.0: Netizens as thought work collaborators in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*. 27:113, pp.763-779.

- Repnikova, MM. 2022. The Balance of Soft Power: The American and Chinese Quests to Win Hearts and Minds. *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 101, Iss. 4. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/soft-power-balance-america-china>
- Reporters sans Frontiers, 2021. World Press Freedom Index. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#>
- Reporters Without Borders, 2019. China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order. Reporters Without Borders. [Online] [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://training.rsf.org/rsf-report-chinas-pursuit-of-a-new-world-information-order/>
- Reynolds, M. and Goodman, P. 2023. *Deny, Deflect, Deter: Centering China's economic coercion*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies. [Online] [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/202303/230321_Goodman_CounteringChina%27s_EconomicCoercion.pdf?VersionId=UnF29IRogQV4vH6dy6ixTpfTnWvftd6v
- Richardson, P. 2006. *Reducing the cultural deficit: China assays the world book market*. Leiden: Logos.
- Ringen, S. 2016. *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Roberts, J.A.G. 2003. *The Complete History of China*. Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing.
- Roberts, M. 2018. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion inside China's Great Firewall*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Robinson, D. and Tannenbergh, M.. 2019. Self-censorship of regime support in authoritarian states: Evidence from list experiments in China. *Research and Politics*. July-September 2019, pp.1-9.
- Rousseau, J. 2002. *The social contract and the first and second discourses*/Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Eds Susan Dunn. New York: USA.
- Rudd, K. 2022. *The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Ryan, F., Impiombato, D. and Pai, H. 2022. Frontier influencers: the new face of China's propaganda. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. [Online]. 20 October. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/frontier-influencers>
- Safeguard Defenders. 2022. China announces expansion of Sky Net and long-arm policing. Safeguard Defenders. [Online]. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: https://safeguarddefenders.com/sites/default/files/China%20announces%20expansion%20of%20Sky%20Net%20and%20long-arm%20policing_0.pdf

- Schrader, M. (2020). Friends and Enemies: A Framework for Understanding Chinese Political Interference in Democratic Countries. Alliance for Securing Democracy. [Online]. 22 April. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/friends-and-enemies-a-framework-for-understanding-chinese-political-interference-in-democratic-countries/>
- Schuman, M. 2015. A Nod to Confucius Will Not Purge Communist China of Corruption. *Financial Times*. [Online]. 17 June. [Accessed on 27 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/04854592-14e9-11e5-9509-00144feabdc0>
- Schuman, M. 2020. *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*. PublicAffairs: New York.
- SCIO, 2021. China to launch national reading campaign for 2021. The State Council Information Office. March 18. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2021-03/18/content_77322293.htm
- Shambaugh, D. 2013. *China goes global: the partial power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shambaugh, D. 2015. *China's Soft Power Push: The Search for Respect*. Foreign Affairs, 94. [Online]. 16 June. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-06-16/china-s-soft-power-push>
- Shanghai Observer (上观), 2020. 产业·观察 | 《关于促进全民阅读工作的意见》引发强烈反响 业界学界这样说. 27 October. [Online]. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available on: <https://sghexport.shobserver.com/html/baijiahao/2020/10/27/285858.html>
- Shanghai Observer (上观), 2020. 产业·观察 | 《关于促进全民阅读工作的意见》引发强烈反响 业界学界这样说 <https://sghexport.shobserver.com/html/baijiahao/2020/10/27/285858.html>
- Shanghai Observer (上观), 2020b. 2020 年丝路书香工程项目公示名单来啦. 《上观》. [Online]. 28 September. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://sghexport.shobserver.com/html/baijiahao/2020/09/28/270451.html>
- Shenzhen Qiaobao, 2022. 深圳侨报. 实体书店喜迎深圳政策“及时雨” 龙岗 23 家书店共获 634 万元资助. http://www.lg.gov.cn/xxgk/xwzx/zwdt/content/post_9933897.html
- Sherwin, A. 2012. London book fair interrupted by protest at China's rights abuses. *The Independent*. [Online]. 16 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/london-book-fair-interrupted-by-protest-at-china-s-rights-abuses-7648263.html>

- Shi, F. (施 芳), 2022. 北京推动实体书店转型发展：爱“阅”之城，书香润泽. 《人民日报》 [Online]. 27 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available on: http://www.wenming.cn/zg/sdzg_53675/202204/t20220427_6350918.shtml
- Shi, J. (史竞男), 2017. 实体书店复苏 鲁苏浙大书城数量居前三. 《新华社》. [Online] 20 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://news.xinhuanet.com/zgjx/2017-12/20/c_136839695.htm
- Shi, J. (史竞男). 2017. [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-12/05/content_5244685.htm). “书香中国·北京阅读季”开展 3 万余场阅读活动 覆盖人群超千万. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-12/05/content_5244685.htm
- Shih, G. 2019. In China library officials burn books that diverge from Communist party ideology. *The Washington Post*. [Online]. 9 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-china-library-officials-burn-books-that-diverge-from-communist-party-ideology/2019/12/09/5563ee46-1a43-11ea-977a-15a6710ed6da_story.html
- Short, P. 2000. *Mao: A Life*. New York: Macmillan.
- Skaar, H., Elvebakk, L., and Nilssen, J. 2018. Literature in decline? Differences in pre-service and in-service primary school teachers’ reading experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Volume 69, pp.312-323.
- Smith, R. 2020. *China’s engine of environmental collapse*. London: Pluto Press.
- Soja, Ed. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Spence, J.D. 1981. *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and their revolution, 1895-1980*. New York: Penguin.
- Squires, C. 2004. A Common Ground? Book Prize Culture in Europe. *Javnost - The Public*, 11:4, 37-47.
- Sun, L (孙磊). 2021. “走出去”：广东文学为什么让海外读者感兴趣？. 《羊城晚报》. [Online]. 23 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1700505280583008541&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- Sun, S. 2017. *Drugs for the mind: Censorship in China*. Amsterdam: Eva Tas Foundation.
- Sun, W. 2015. Slow boat from China: Public discourses behind the ‘going global’ media policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.
- Sun, Y. 1995. *The Chinese reassessment of Socialism, 1976–1992*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Tai, M.C. 2022. The Rise of the Chinese Techno-Security State. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.165-174.
- Tang, D. 2020. China can't censor us, Norwegian library says. *The Times of London*. [Online]. 6 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/china-cant-censor-us-norwegian-library-says-08fnfdbnr>
- Tang, F and Ji, S. 2021. China extends battle lines to manage capital outflows as Beijing doubles down on 'economic security'. *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 1 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available online: <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3158048/china-extends-battle-lines-manage-capital-outflows-beijing>
- Tatlow, D.K. 2019. The Chinese influence effort hiding on plain sight. *The Atlantic*. [Online]. 12 July. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/07/chinas-influence-efforts-germany-students/593689/>
- Telling, O. 2022. British Publishers censor books western readers to appease China. *The Financial Times*. [Online]. 15 March. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/63cbf209-656f-4f99-9ee3-722755c228ed>
- Tengxun Wang, 2021. 2021 年丝路书香工程项目公示, 324 种图书入选! 《腾讯网》【Online】. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: Available online: <https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20210608A05LCK00>
- Teufel Dreyer, J. 2018. A weapon without war. Foreign Policy Research Institute. [Online]. 6 February. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/02/weapon-without-war-chinas-united-front-strategy/>
- The Economist*, 2021. In China's publishing business, you have to duck and dive. 15 July. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. <https://www.economist.com/china/2021/07/15/in-chinas-publishing-business-you-have-to-duck-and-dive>
- Tobar, H. 2012. Is Mo Yan courageous, or is he a patsy? *Los Angeles Times*. [Online]. 17 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-is-mo-yan-courageous-or-is-he-a-patsy-20121217-story.html>
- Tu, G. 涂桂林. 2015. 中国出版业发展报告. (2015). 《2014~2015 中国出版业发展报告》. 9 October. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available on: <http://www.xinwenren.com/chuban/201510099286.html>

- Turin, D.R. 2010. The Beijing Consensus: China's alternative development model. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 2(01).
- Van Crevel, M. 2017. *Walk on the Wild Side: Snapshots of the Chinese Poetry*. MCLC Resource Centre Publication. The Ohio State University. Ohio, USA. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/walk-on-the-wild-side/>
- Victor, D. 2021. John Cena apologises to China for calling Taiwan a country. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 25 May. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/25/world/asia/john-cena-taiwan-apology.html>
- Vlassis, A. 2016. Soft power, global governance of cultural industries and rising powers: the case of China. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 22:4, pp.481-496.
- Walters, L. 2019. Inside the decision to scrap controversial Confucius doco. Newsroom. [Online] 4 April. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/confucius-institute-doco-scrapped-amid-questions-of-reputational-damage>
- Wang, C (王楚), 2011. 北京市实体书店的分布现状与存在的问题. 中央财经大学管理科学与工程学院; 王楚, 中央财经大学管理科学与工程学院. 《出版发行研究》. Retrieved from <https://www.1xuezhhe.exuezhhe.com/qk/art?id=461579&dbcode=1&flag=2&pageIndex=1>
- Wang, F and Tsoi, G. 2021. Fang Fang: Author vilified for Wuhan Diary speaks out a year on. BBC. 19 January. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54987675>
- Wang, J and Stenberg, J. 2019. Soft power from Ningxia to Cairo: Chinese-to-Arabic translation of modern and contemporary literature. *Translation Studies*, 12 (3), 321-337.
- Wang, J. (eds). 2011. *Soft power in China: public diplomacy through communication*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wang, V. 2021. Chinese citizen journalist sentenced to 4 Years for Covid reporting. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 28 December. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/28/world/asia/china-Zhang-Zhan-covid-convicted.html>
- Wang, X. 2022. 守正创新做好新时代新征程宣传思想工作. 《学习时报》. [Available Online]. 9 April. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2022/0409/c419350-32395019.html>

- Wang, Y. (王遥) and Ah, T (阿唐). 2019. 书号收缩下的大陆出版业：从自我审查到紧跟“党政方针”. 《端点星》. [Online]. 8 April. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://terminus2049.github.io/archive/2019/05/08/publication-regulation.html>
- Wang, Z(王志艳). 2016. 《全民阅读“十三五”时期发展规划》发布. 《新华网》. 27 December. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-12/27/c_129421928.htm
- Weber, M. 1919. Politics as a vocation. In: The vocation lectures/Max Weber. Eds Owen D. and Strong, T.B. 2004. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Weber, V. 2021. *China's quest for foreign technology: beyond espionage*: edited by William C. Hannas and Didi Kirsten Tatlow Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY, Routledge, 2021. *Journal of Cyber Policy*. 6(2), pp.262–263.
- Wei, Y(魏玉山). 2016. 2016 年中国民营书业发展报告. 《中华读书报》. 19 April 2017. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from http://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdsb/html/2017-04/19/nw.D110000zhdsb_20170419_2-06.htm?div=-1
- Weise, K. 2019. *Amazon Gives Up on Chinese Domestic Shopping Business*. *The New York Times*. [Accessed on 2 August 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/18/technology/amazon-china.html>
- Wendang Wenku (文档文库), 2020. 一带一路’战略下的丝路书香工程. 《文档文库》 [Online]. 25 April. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available on: <https://www.dyhddl.cn/k/doc/9fe864ef2e60ddccda38376baf1ffc4fff47e2d4.html>
- Werleman, CJ. 2022. The West must stand up to China’s media takeover. *The Byline Times*. [Online]. 17 February. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://bylinetimes.com/2022/02/17/the-west-must-stand-up-to-chinas-media-takeover/>
- Westerman, F. 2011. *Engineers of the Soul: The Grandiose Propaganda of Soviet Russia*. New York: The Overlook Press.
- Whiting, S.H. 2017. Authoritarian “rule of law” and regime legitimacy. *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 50(14).
- Wong, CH and Zhai, K. 2021a. China repackages its history in support of Xi’s national vision. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Online]. 15 June. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available online: https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-repackages-history-xi-propaganda-communist-party-centenary-11623767590?mod=article_inline
- Wong, CH and Zhai, K. 2021b. China’s Xi flexes power with plan to rewrite Communist Party History. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Online]. 18 October. [Accessed on 1 March 2023].

Available online: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-flexes-power-with-plan-to-rewrite-communist-party-history-11634562713>

- Wu, C. and Wilkes, R. 2018. Local-national political trust patterns. *International Political Science Review*. Volume 39, No 4. September 2018, pp.436-454.
- Wu, S. 2015. “Modernising” Confucianism in China: A repackaging of institutionalization to consolidate Party leadership. *Asian Perspective*. 39(2), pp.301-324.
- Wuthnow, J. 2022. Securitisation and Governance in the Xi Jinping Era. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. (Eds). Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp. 149-156.
- Xi, J. 习近平. 2014. 习近平：建设社会主义文化强国 着力提高国家文化软实力. 人民网。 [Online]. 1 January. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0101/c64094-23995307.html>.
- Xiao, M., Mozur, P., and Beltran, G. 2021. Buying Influence: How China manipulates Twitter and Facebook. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 20 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/12/20/technology/china-facebook-twitter-influence-manipulation.html>
- Xie, E. 2020. Coronavirus: Chinese professor targeted after praising Fang Fang’s Wuhan Diary. *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 16 April. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3081765/coronavirus-chinese-professor-targeted-after-praising-fang>
- Xie, T. 2015. China’s Soft Power Obsession. *The Diplomat*. [Online]. April 14. [Accessed 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/chinas-soft-power-obsession/>
- Xie, X.(谢笑妍) and Gu, J (顾佳). 2021. 图书出版行业深度研究报告：内容产业根基，阅尽千山自成峰。《招商证券》. 22 April. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20210422A07LZ700>
- Xinhua, 2015. 新华社。（授权发布）习近平：在文艺工作座谈会上的讲话. [Online]. 14 October. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/14/c_1116825558.htm
- Xinhua, 2016. Xi urges artists, writers to inspire nation with works. Xinhua. 30 November. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available online: http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2017/09/28/content_281475890533768.htm

- Xinhua, 2017. 2017“书香中国·北京阅读季”开展 3 万余场阅读活动 覆盖人群超千万. 新华社. [Online]. 5 December. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-12/05/content_5244685.htm
- Xinhua, 2019. 8 more countries set up Confucius institutes or classrooms in 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/11/c_138623776.htm
- Xinhua, 2019. China boasts more bookstores, increasing sales. Xinhua. [Online]. 9 January. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/09/c_137731040.htm
- Xinhua, 2019. 习近平致信祝贺中国文联中国作协成立 70 周年. 16 July. [Online]. Accessed on 28 February 2023.
- Xinhua, 2021. China sees growth in bookstores despite COVID-19 epidemic. Xinhua. [Online]. 30 March. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-03/30/c_139847612.htm
- Xinhua, 2022. China to promote reading habit among public. Xinhua. [Online]. 22 October. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-10/22/c_139458946.htm
- Xinlang Dushu (新浪读书), 2017. 第十四次全国国民阅读调查报告出炉: 2016 年人均阅读 7.86. [Online]. April 18. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available here: <http://book.sina.com.cn/news/whxw/2017-04-18/doc-ifyeimqy2574493.shtml>
- Xu, C. 2012. Chinese cultural security from the perspective of ideology. *Wuhan li gong da xue xue bao*. She hui ke xue ban. 25(4), pp.480–484.
- Xu, J. 2018. Marriott announces 'rectification plan' to regain trust. *China Daily*. [Online]. 18 January. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201801/18/WS5a600374a310e4ebf433e9ac.html>
- Xu, L. and Fang, Q. 2008. Chinese Publishing Industry Going Global: Background and Performance. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 24, pp.64-72.
- Xu, Y (许旻). 2021. 中国图书亮相“全球书架”，更多中国故事涌入海外主流渠道. 《文汇客户端》. [Online]. 27 November. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://wenhui.whb.cn/third/baidu/202111/27/436333.html>
- Xu, Z., Chen, B., and Wang, Y. 2019. Exporting China's Scholarly Books: Current Conditions for Chinese Publishers. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 51(2), pp.105-128.
- Xuexi Xiaozu, 2016. 独家 | 习近平自述：我的文学情缘. 《学习小组按》. 14 October. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <http://shanghai.xinmin.cn/xmsz/2016/10/14/30509483.html>

- Yan, L. 2016. An Examination of China's Censorship System. In: (eds) Rojas, C. and Bachner, A. *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.263-274.
- Yang, Q. (杨庆祥) 2020. 新华网. 创意写作: 返本开新再出发.
<https://news.ruc.edu.cn/archives/285696>
- Yang, Q. (杨庆祥), 2020. 返本开新再出发. 《人民日报》. [Online]. 13 August. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://news.ruc.edu.cn/archives/285696>
- Yang, Y. 2017. *Film as an instrument of China's soft power: practice, outcomes and dilemmas*. PhD thesis, The University of Leeds. School of Media and Communication.
- Yang, Y. 2022. Sinification of Marxism – The CPC's most regent ideological challenge. In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*. Eds Pieke, F. and Hofman, B. Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, pp.54-50.
- Yao, M. 2016. China writers suffer from lack of good translations. *Shanghai Daily*. [Online]. 9 December. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: <https://archive.shine.cn/feature/art-and-culture/China-writers-suffer-from-lack-of-good-translations/shdaily.shtml>
- Yau, E. 2019. The Bookworm, a centre of literary life in Beijing, to close, unable to renew its lease amid crackdown on 'illegal structures'. *South China Morning Post*. [Online]. 5 November. Accessed on 1 March 2023. Available from: <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/3036439/bookworm-centre-literary-life-beijing-close-unable-renew-its>
- You, W. 2017. *Globalization, translation and soft power – A Chinese perspective*. Frankfurt: Babel, 63(4), pp.463-485.
- You, W. 2020. Globalization, Science Fiction and the China Story: Translation, Dissemination and Reception of Liu Cixin's Works across the Globe. *Critical Arts*, 34:6, pp.56-70.
- Yue, B. 2017. How publishers spied a winner in thriller writer. *China Daily*. [Online]. 30 September. [Accessed on 2 March 2023]. Available from: http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-09/30/content_32664531.htm
- Yun, Q. 2018. *China's Publishing Industry: From Mao to the Market*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Zeng, F. (曾锋) and Huang, X. (黄小菲), 2022. 2022 年, 实体书店稳不稳? 《出版人杂志》. 15 February. [Online]. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from: https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_16694176
- Zeng, J. 2016. *Party's capacity to rule: Ideology, legitimacy and Party cohesion*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Zhan, S (展圣洁). 2022. 去年北京市共有 272 家书店获扶持, 扶持标准有这些. 《新京报》. [Online]. 14 January. [Accessed on 1 March 2023]. Available from:
- Zhang, H. 2020. Chinese Blockbusters and Culture Self-Confidence. *Javnost - The Public*, 27:2, pp.140-153.
- Zhang, J. (张杰) and Xun, C(荀超). 2013. 莫言当网络文学大学校长 称写作界限越来越模糊. 《凤凰网文化》. [Online]. 31 October. [Accessed on 28 January 2023]. http://culture.ifeng.com/whrd/detail_2013_10/31/30825848_0.shtml
- Zhang, L., Nathan, A.J., Link, P., Schell, O. 2001. *The Tiananmen Papers*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Zhang, R. 2021. CPPCC members advocate national reading day. China.org.cn. [Online]. 9 March. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available on: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2021-03/09/content_77289130.htm
- Zhao, J. 2022. China's sprawling world of web fiction. The China Project. 17 August. [Online]. [Accessed on 28 February 2023]. Available from: <https://thechinaproject.com/2022/08/17/chinas-sprawling-world-of-web-fiction/>
- Zhao, Jin. 2022. The China Project. China's sprawling world of web fiction. <https://thechinaproject.com/2022/08/17/chinas-sprawling-world-of-web-fiction/>
- Zhao, Y, 2023. The China Project. U.S. passes new bill to curb Beijing-appeasing edits in Hollywood films. <https://thechinaproject.com/2023/02/07/u-s-passes-new-bill-to-curb-beijing-appeasing-edits-in-hollywood-films/>
- Zhu, Y. 2012. *Two Billion Eyes: The Story of China Central Television*. New York: The New Press.
- Zou, M. 2020. 'Healthy, positive, correct': China's censorship machine tightens its grip on online literature. *South China Morning Post*. [Online] 16 June. [Accessed on 1 March 202]. Available here: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3089308/healthy-positive-correct-chinas-censorship-machine-tightens-its>