

The Securitization of Culture of Chinese Indonesian: Paths, Failure, and Constraints

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Indonesian Chinese culture is a part of Indonesian multiculturalism. However, it is challenged by “securitization”. Taking two cases as examples to explain the “securitization” of Indonesian Chinese culture. Several securitizing actors claimed that Guan Yu statue and lanterns are symbols of Chinese culture, and they claimed that they threaten the national security of Indonesia. The securitizing carriers attempt to influence the judgment of the audiences through agenda-setting and framing effects. Nevertheless, the audiences have not fully accepted the securitizing move because the Indonesians regarded the anti-Jokowi forces’ tactics and “China Threat Theories” have not yet reached a consensus. The reason for the failure of this securitization process is about aspects, including the on-ground views on the cultural expressions and practices of Chineseness, the public identified the usual tricks of the anti-Jokowi forces, and there is no consensus on the so-called “China Threat Theories” in Indonesia. To preserve and promote Chineseness under the multicultural agenda, several measures have been implemented by the Indonesian government to promote the harmonious development of ethnic groups and multicultural integration in Indonesia to a certain extent.

Keywords: culture of Chinese Indonesian, Chineseness, securitization, anti-Jokowi forces, “China Threat Theory”

Introduction

Indonesia has the largest number of ethnic Chinese in the world, but the Chinese Indonesians are a minority group, accounting for only 1.2%-7% of the total Indonesians.¹ They have been inheriting the culture of Chinese Indonesian in various ways,² such as traditional religious beliefs, festival customs, culture, arts, etc. That is cultural expression of Chineseness. Chineseness is a cultural resource in Indonesia between hybridity and identity (Hoon, 2017). Despite the great divergences in history, religion, and culture with the Indonesian majority,

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¹ Regarding the number of Chinese Indonesians, there is a wide gap between the official data and academic estimates in the world, such as 2.83 million (1.2%), 4.74 million (2%), 10 million (4.1%), and 16 million (6.5%). However, whichever data are adopted, Chinese Indonesians are a minority compared to the total Indonesians.

² The objects of securitization referred to in this paper are elements of the culture of Chinese Indonesians that are related to the traditional Chinese culture.

Chinese Indonesians actively integrate themselves into the mainstream culture and strive to win recognition and support from Indonesian mainstream society. It is known that during Suharto's reign, the cultural expressions of Chineseness were disrupted. The Suharto government alienated and closed schools, media, and associations of Chinese Indonesians, also banned the study of Chinese learning, and prohibited the public display of the culture of Chinese Indonesian and the celebration of Chinese traditional festivals. However, over the period of democratic reform in Indonesia, Chineseness has regained momentum thanks to active promotion by the former Indonesian Presidents Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri. Due to the historical linkages and ancestral connections between the Chinese in the Mainland and the Chinese Indonesians, the motivations of the Chinese Indonesians to inherit and spread the culture of Chinese Indonesian become suspicious concerning their political loyalty. As a result, related activities have been boycotted, leaving the culture of Chinese Indonesian in the predicament of securitization. For example, the giant Guan Yu statue in Tuban County, East Java Province sparked protests from civil society groups. As a result, its statue was forced to be covered for more than six months in 2017 (Detiknews, 2017). The red lanterns decorating the streets of Surakarta in celebration of Chinese New Year in early 2019 were opposed by residents and a demonstration broke out (Solopos, 2019). The cultural expressions of Chineseness in Indonesia are inevitably incorporated into the agenda of politicization and even securitization.

Extant scholarship on overseas Chinese is rich and diverse, and in Indonesia—the country with the largest number of Chinese Indonesians—studies on cultural expressions of Chineseness have attracted great attention. Current research focuses mainly on the re-sinicization phenomenon, the cross-cultural interactions between Chinese and Indonesians, and its obstacles (Wang, 2015; Mo, 2004; Wen, 2008; Lubis, 2012; Coppel, 2003; Suryadinata, 2003; Khosasih, 2007). Among them, Charles A. Coppel (2003) analyzes the historical obstacles to the acceptance of Chinese Indonesians in the multicultural context of Indonesia. He believes that even though Chinese Indonesians have almost forsaken all the Chinese characteristics, they are still regarded as outsiders. Chang-Yau Hoon (2017) analyses how the ethnic Chinese assimilated into the mainstream society during Suharto's New Order and how they embarked on "re-sinicization" following the democratization process after the fall of Suharto. Wang Dandan (2018) discusses issues of mainstream cultural integration, cultural adaptability, and strategies of survival for the Chinese culture in Indonesia. For example, Chinese Indonesians experienced different levels of integration into mainstream culture, encountered misunderstandings and prejudices in the integration process, and many of them are still wary of mainstream marginalization. Most of the Chinese Indonesians, especially the "*Peranakan* Chinese", have their national identity as Indonesia. They strive to integrate themselves into the mainstream Indonesian society and culture, but they are repeatedly questioned and rejected because of their Chineseness. A part of the indigenous population regards the spread of the culture of Chinese Indonesians as an existential threat. Guo Wu (2018) takes Guan Yu statue in Tuban as an example by arguing that the low social status of contemporary Chinese Indonesians and the inability of the Chinese religion to influence Indonesian society are the underlying reasons for this problem. Guo Wu's analysis reveals the partial reality of this problem. Abu Cholifah, a member of the local council of Tuban, believes that this issue is related to the politicization enacted through social media (Xue, 2017).

Politicization is one of the processes of securitization. The link between securitization and existential threats does not constitute a definite causal relationship. Even if the cultural expressions or practices of Chinese Indonesians do not necessarily threaten Indonesian national security, and on the contrary, can promote the

development of Indonesian multiculturalism, it may still be used by the indigenous communities in an attempt to make it a securitization issue, labeling it as a threat to national security. And with the media's hype, if the Indonesian majority gradually accepts this securitizing motive, the preservation and spread of Chinese Indonesian culture will be part of the securitization. Therefore, the research question of this article is: Why the two cases were not successfully secured? Based on the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School, this article takes two cases as examples, to explain the securitization construction process of the preservation and spread of the culture of Chinese Indonesian. It also explains the reasons why the inheritance and dissemination of the culture of Chinese Indonesian have not been securitized and analyzes the constraining factors of the securitization of the Indonesian Chinese culture. It aims to seek possible solutions to address the survival and continuity of the culture of Chinese Indonesian to provide some ideas for avoiding the securitization of the cultural expressions of Chineseness.

Security and Securitization

“Security” refers to security in the context of international relations in this article, which is different from the meaning of life safety and property safety. In the context of international relations, “security” often signifies national security, specifically including national military security, political security, economic security, cultural security, social security, environmental security, energy security, and other fields. However, the academic community has not yet had a recognized definition of “security”.

In 1952, Arnold Wolfers (1952) pointed out “the national security as an ambiguous symbol”, and believed that “security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked” (p. 485). In 1962, Wolfers (1962) further proposed that “security can be approached both objectively (there is a real threat) and subjectively (there is a perceived threat)” (p. 151). In 1998, Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde (1998) believed that “security is about survival when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state, incorporating government, territory, and society)” (p. 21), and emphasized the relationship between “subjective, objective, and intersubjective security”:

Whether an issue is a security issue is not something individuals decide alone. Securitization is intersubjective and socially constructed: Does a referent object hold general legitimacy as something that should survive, which entails that actors can make reference to it, point to something as a threat, and thereby get others to follow or at least tolerate actions not otherwise legitimate? Thus, security ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but among the subjects. (p. 31)

Barry Buzan et al. (1998, p. 23) believed that “security” is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics, so securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization. In other words, securitization is a special kind of politicization, a mode of deeper and more acute contradictions developed from politicization.

The securitization theory is a representative achievement of the Copenhagen School. In theory, any public issue can be located on the spectrum ranging from nonpoliticized through politicized to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure) (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 23-24).

Traditionally, securitization mainly includes military and political issues in the security agenda. At the end of the 20th century, Barry Buzan et al. in their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* also extend security complex thinking into the non-traditional sectors (economic, societal, and environmental). In multi-ethnic countries, immigrants or ethnic minorities also often face the issues of “politicization” or “securitization”. For example, Jef Huysmans (2000) analyzed the securitization of migration in Western European, Bruno Coppieters (2001) took the Southern Caucasus as an example to analyze the politicization and securitization of the Southern Caucasus, and Pål Røren (2013) discussed the securitization of ethnicity in Serbia from 1987 to 1991. The overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia also face the same dilemma. In most countries in Southeast Asia, the overseas Chinese belong to the minority. Even in Indonesia, compared with the huge number of indigenous people, the Indonesian Chinese are still a minority. The economic strength, political participation, and Chineseness also encountered difficulties. In recent years, as the importance of culture and the influence of soft power have become increasingly prominent, the cultural field has gradually been regarded as an existential threat; a part of securitizing actors include it in the security agenda and try to securitize it. For example, the culture of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia often faces the challenge of being politicized and even securitized. Anyhow, since extant scholarship focuses on the securitization of military, political, economic, and other related fields, the research on cultural securitization lags far behind the exigent development. Therefore, this article analyzes the issue of securitization of the Indonesian Chinese culture which has significant pragmatic meanings.

According to the securitization theory, the important actors in the securitization process include the referent objects, securitizing actors, securitizing carriers, and audiences. Based on the Copenhagen School’s theory, Wang Ling (2011) proposes a complete securitization path as follows:

- (1) Initiating the securitization: the securitizing actor with the corresponding speaking right or social resources refers to something as an existential threat through speech-act to create a goal of securitization, and proposes the securitizing move;
- (2) Spreading the securitization: media try to persuade the audience to share the securitization awareness through agenda-settings and frame effects;
- (3) Shaping the securitizing audiences: make audiences accept the securitizing move. (p. 82)

The completion of securitization depends on the third step, that is, whether the audiences accept the securitizing move. Barry Buzan et al. (1998) believe that

- a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such. (p. 25)

Therefore, “a successful securitization thus has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). There were obvious referent objects, existential threats, securitizing moves, securitizing carriers, and audiences in both two cases, but they fail to successfully or destroy the relationship between the components, fail to launch emergency measures smoothly, and ultimately fail to achieve the securitization process.

Research Objects

In Indonesia, it is not uncommon for the culture of Chinese Indonesian to be questioned or seen as a threat, but not all cases conform to the theoretical approach of securitization. According to the theory of securitization, the path of securitization includes three processes, that is the initiation of securitization, the spreading of

securitization, and the shaping of securitizing audiences. The first and second stages are the basis for the realization of the third stage. Therefore, this article uses the cases from 2015 to 2019³ as the database and confirms the research objects of this paper by the assignment method. The specific method is as follows.

If the securitizing actor “has the corresponding speaking right or social resources”, it is assigned a value of 1; if the securitization actor produces “a critical speech-act”, it is assigned a value of 1; if the referent object of securitization is “Indonesia’s national security”, it is assigned a value of 1; if the behavior of securitizing actor rises to “the media or public opinion dissemination behavior”, it is assigned a value of 1. There are only cases that meet the above four conditions to complete the first and second stages of the securitization path, which meet the requirements of the research object of this paper. Since the audience must exist, but it may not necessarily accept the securitization move, which is also the topic discussed in this article, the process of shaping the securitization audience is not used as a reference for the assignment. Therefore, the assignment table is set as follows.

Table 1

Assignment Table

Cases	Assignment factors	Securitizing actor who “has the corresponding speaking right or social resources”	“A critical speech-act”	Take “Indonesia’s national security” as a referent object	“The media or public opinion dissemination behavior”	Whether it meets the requirements of the research object of this paper
2016	Chinese temple in North Sumatera was burned down	×	√	×	√	×
2017	The statue of Guan Yu sparked civil society protests	√	√	√	√	√
2018	PFKPM and PP call on the Pontianak government and police not to approve the Chinese New Year celebration	√	×	×	√	×
2019	The red lanterns on the main street of Solo were opposed	√	√	√	√	√
2019	FMB calls on government to ban Chinese New Year celebrations in Bogor	√	√	×	√	×

Source: Self-made by the author, incomplete statistics.

As shown in Table 1, according to the assignment method, the cases of Tuban and Solo meet the requirements of the research object of this paper. Therefore, this article takes the above two cases as the starting point to analyze the paths, failure reasons, and constrains of securitization of the culture of Chinese Indonesian.

Securitizing Path for the Culture of Chinese Indonesian

In 2017, Guan Yu statue in Tuban was covered because of protests by several civil organizations. This statue was funded by Chinese Indonesians in Surabaya and was completed in 2016. On July 17, 2017, the Speaker of the Indonesian People’s Consultative Assembly, Zulkifli Hasan, attended the commemorative activities for this

³ Since the COVID-19 is a sudden and uncontrollable factor, which has a significant impact on Indonesian society, this article selects some cases in the first five years of the COVID-19 as the database.

temple, which attracted wide attention from the Indonesian society and triggered demonstrations. Finally, this statue was covered for more than half a year under the pressure of public discontent. In another scenario, in January 2019, Surakarta hung red lanterns on the streets to celebrate the Spring Festival, but it was opposed by a few people and demonstrations broke out. Both two cases illustrate the issue of securitization for the expressions and practices of cultural expressions of Chineseness. After initiating the securitizing move, a few civil groups or organizations in Indonesia tried to influence the judgment of the audience through agenda settings and framework effects and persuaded the audience to accept the securitizing move and attempt to achieve securitization. Nevertheless, the audience did not fully accept the securitizing move. So the securitization path was not complete because of the absence of the authoritative class and the participation of rational audiences.

Initiation of the Securitizing Move

The Copenhagen School believes that the securitizing actor is a speech-act group, such as political leaders, bureaucracies, government cabinets, political lobbyists, and pressure groups (Buzan et al., 2003, p. 56). They have sufficient speaking right, a higher social status and authority, and can construct threats through their speech-act. The referent object is the actor whose security needs to be protected, which is identified by the securitizing actor, and the existential threat or threat agent is the creator or source of the threat (Wang, 2011, p. 80). The initiation of the securitizing move refers to the securitizing actors declares that the referent object is threatened by existential threats.

In the case of Guan Yu statue, a few members of the non-governmental organization (Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat) of Surabaya held a demonstration; the chairman and the protest coordinator of this organization, Didik Muadi, demanded that Guan Yu statue be demolished because “Chinese God of War” has nothing to do with Indonesian history (Tribunnews, 2017). At the same time, there were also rumors on Indonesian social media that the existence of a giant Guan Yu statue showed that “the government is controlled by the Chinese Indonesians” (You, 2017). The Surakarta Muslim Troops (Laskar Umat Islam Surakarta) protested against the red lanterns in Surakarta. Endro Sudarsono, a member of the public relations department of this organization, also admitted that the protest videos on the Internet came from them (Tribunnews, 2019). They filmed videos of lanterns in Surakarta, gave speeches, questioned the number of lanterns, and claimed that they felt like being in China. They posted the videos to major social media, accusing (Chinese) lanterns to dominate the city, and they also organized demonstrations to boycott lanterns (Solopos, 2019).

In these two cases, the securitizing actors are civil organizations in Indonesia. Their securitizing moves were similar, that is, “the cultural expressions of Chineseness threaten Indonesian national security”. Indonesia is a country with the largest number of Muslims in the world. Based on *Pancasila*, such non-governmental organizations have a sufficient voice and high social status in Indonesia, which is more likely to inflame people’s emotions and affect people’s judgments. Both Guan Yu and lanterns are expressions of Chinese cultural signs, and they are different from the religion and national culture they advocate. They believed that this may be a way of China’s “cultural penetration” and a “time bomb” that threatens Indonesian national security. Such non-governmental organizations label this existential threat as security, making it a politicized event derived from a non-politicized public event, and using Indonesian national security as the referent object to elevate this politicization event to a securitization event that will affect the national security of Indonesia. As the securitizing actors, the extreme groups in Indonesia declared that the local Islamic culture and the political status of the

indigenous peoples in Tuban and Surakarta were threatened by the Chinese culture in Indonesia or the cultural expressions of Chineseness such as Guan Yu statue and lanterns through “speech-act”, thus launching the securitizing move, that is the cultural expressions of Chineseness threaten Indonesian national security.

Spreading of the Securitizing Move

The spread process of securitization means that the securitizing carriers carry out social mobilization through the agenda-settings and framework effects to persuade the audiences to share securitization awareness (Wang, 2011, p. 82). The securitizing carriers are media; they convey information to the public through agenda-settings and framework constructions, that is, through the number and intensity of reports to influence the thinking issues of the public who are exposed to the information, and use people’s existing knowledge to construct the framework and determine the theme so as to further influence the public’s thoughts or views on affairs (Wang, 2012, p. 41). In both cases above, the Indonesian media created the reality of the above-mentioned securitizing move through agenda-settings and framework constructions, and deepened the public’s recognition of the securitizing move.

For one thing, most news websites and social media in Indonesia were trying to publish and disseminate a large number of relevant reports and videos about these two cases, trying to influence the public’s thinking and discussion topics in the short term. In the case of Guan Yu statue, many media rushed to publish and report news that Guan Yu statue was boycotted and covered up. Most of the reports explained various reasons for the resistance to the statue. For example, the Chinese Guan Yu is the Chinese God of War, and the giant Guan Yu statue symbolizes the government was controlled by the Chinese Indonesians and maintained the national dignity of Indonesia. In the case of lantern, news media and social media have participated in it, especially the videos on WhatsApp and YouTube which received many clicks and re-posts. The main contents were that a large number of lanterns created an atmosphere of being in China, and condemned “Is this in Hong Kong? No, this is in Solo (Surakarta)” (Solopos, 2019). These major social media and news websites reported and re-posted videos of protests and actions of extremist organizations. In Indonesia, which has more than 175 million online audiences (Abdul Muslim, 2019), these news and videos quickly spread among the people and became the main issues of the people in a short time. This led the Indonesian people to resonate with the above-mentioned existential threats, making them a subject of suspicion by public opinion. These reports attracted the attention of the public with high volume and high frequency, which greatly affected the topics of public thinking and the amount of information received.

For another thing, based on the above reports, these media have framed the issue they have constructed within the framework of “national security”, linking the culture of Chinese Indonesians with Indonesian national security. For example, in the case of Guan Yu statue, the report of Tribunews explained Mowadi’s reason for protest, “This is just our (Indonesian) attitude that we (Indonesians) do not want our nation to be trampled on by other nations” (Tribunews, 2017). In the lantern case, Tribunews also reported news related to the videos about LUIS protesting against lanterns, in which Sudarsono believed that the number of lanterns on the streets of Surakarta was too many and was suspected of “cultural dominance” (Tribunews, 2019). In a YouTube (2019) video about lanterns, the demonstrators also claimed that “This is not in China”. Discourses such as “ethnic trampling” and “cultural domination” imply and guide the Indonesian people to recognize the securitizing move of “the inheritance and spread of the cultural expressions of Chineseness threaten Indonesian national security”,

in an attempt to guide the public to focus on and support this securitizing move, and affect public's attention and recognition of these incidents.

Result of the Securitization

The purpose of the securitization is that the securitizing actors use the securitizing carriers to shape the audiences for the referent object which faced the existential threats, so that the audiences accept the securitizing move constructed by the securitizing actors and realize the securitization of a certain topic. The key in shaping the audiences is that their ways of thinking can be constructed by the guidance of media and authority class to encourage the audiences to accept the securitizing move.

Public opinions are socially constructed (Wang, 2011, p. 86), that is, the views and tendencies of the public may change from neutral to negative by the influence of media incitement and exaggeration, or they are still neutral and objective. In the above two cases, the public did not appear to be one-sided. On the one hand, in the case of Guan Yu statue, although a lot of conservative Muslims strongly condemned Guan Yu statue as unreasonable and illegal and urged the statue to be demolished, numerous people, including officials and residents, did not agree with this view. For example, Gunawan, the head of Guan Yu's Temple in Tuban, claimed that "news communicators on social media misled the masses" (BBC, 2017). A part of Islamic organizations in Tuban claimed that they did not oppose the existence of the statue (BBC, 2017). Mitha, a resident of Tuban, Abdul, and others also said that the Guan Yu statue in Tuban is not a problem by itself. On the other hand, in the case of the lantern, the LUIS organization encouraged the public in Surakarta to oppose the lanterns on the streets and organized demonstrations. A related video was circulated on YouTube, but most of the comments below the video did not support the demonstrations on lanterns. Plenty of people commented that "Rational people know that this is the use of the poor by the political elites", "Lanterns in Surakarta have a history for 43 years", "These people just want to destroy *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*", "Associating lanterns with China? Is there any relation"? (YouTube, 2019) These all indicated that the public has not fully accepted the securitizing move.

At the same time, the authoritative class plays a leading role in guiding public opinion (Wang, 2011, p. 87), that is, the opinion of the authoritative class will affect the trend of public opinion, and the public tends to believe in the authoritative class. However, in cases in which the public knows all the information and they can analyze it, it proves the other way around (Zaller, 2012). Considering the Guan Yu statue and lanterns, the Indonesian people will not reject them. There are Guan Yu statues and other temples or statues, which are perceived to be related to the expressions and practices of the culture of Chinese Indonesian all over Indonesia. Many cities in Indonesia also celebrate the Spring Festival, which is also a legal holiday in Indonesia. Additionally, as the main organizers, the conservative Muslim groups have insufficient influence and appeal. Their opposition to the cultural expressions of Chineseness has not received widespread support. Although it is common for Indonesia to question and boycott Chineseness in Indonesia for a long time, in these two cases, no other political authoritative class participated in it or made comments. Hence, the authoritative class's guidance was not brought into play. This also affected the public trust in the securitizing move.

In summary, the securitizing path of the above two cases can be shown in the figure below.

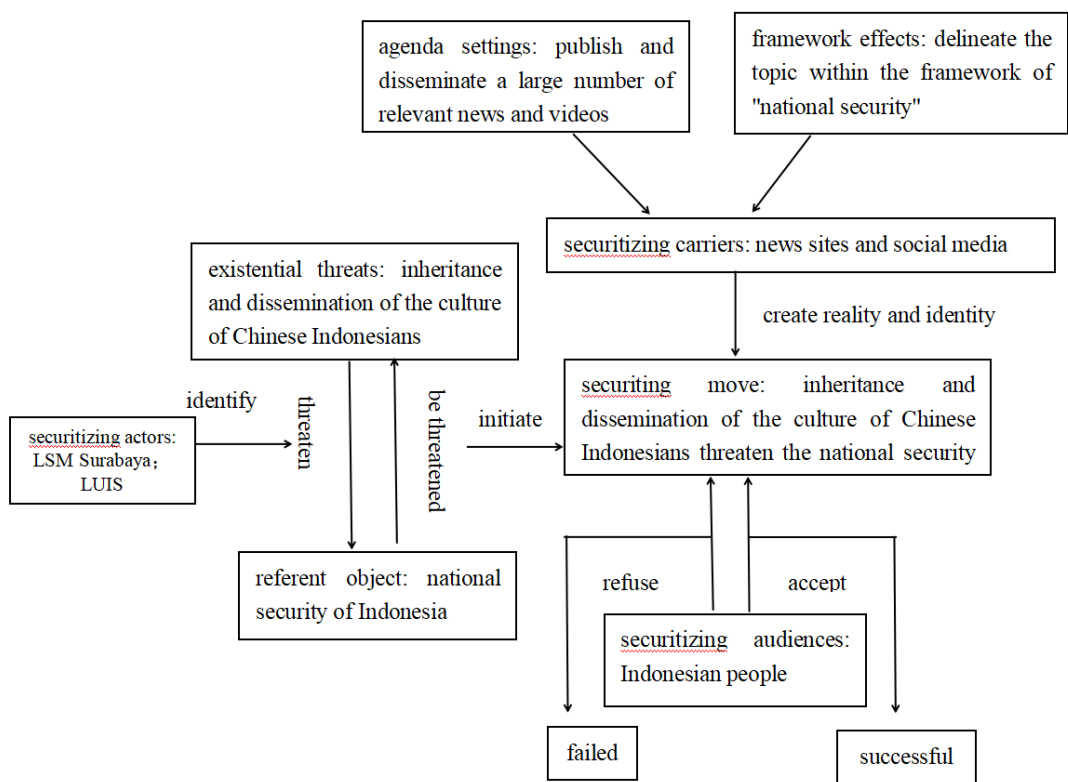


Figure 1. Diagram of the securitizing path.

The securitizing actors attempted to make the audiences accept their securitizing move, but due to the rational and objective judgment of the public, as well as the lack of support from the authoritative class’s speech and actions, the securitizing actors failed to achieve securitization in the last stage. Although the Guan Yu statue in Tuban was instigated by conservative Muslim groups for more than half a year, and the lanterns in Surakarta were also removed, no more serious and large-scale demonstrations against the cultural expressions of Chineseness erupted.

Interpretations of the Unrealized “Securitization” of the Cultural Expressions of Chineseness

Both cases were labeled as threats to Indonesian national security in the name of securitization. Instigated by a few conservative Muslims and their groups, they also received support from a small number of people, but finally this process was unrealized. This article explains the following three main reasons.

First, on-ground views on the cultural expressions and practices of Chineseness. In the history of China-Indonesia cultural communication, Chinese Indonesians have fully played an active role in promoting cultural communication between China and Indonesia and formed cultural expressions of Chineseness with Indonesian characteristics during the integration. For example, there are foreign words from Hokkien in Chinese; Kwetiau combines both Chinese and Indonesian cooking flavors; etc.

Chinese Indonesians played an active role in promoting communication between China and Indonesia down the ages, such as promoting the spread of Islam and the culture of overseas Chinese in Indonesia and promoting China-Indonesian exchange in various fields. This affects the failure of the securitizing move. On one side, the

authoritative class is unlikely to easily participate in disputes involving Chinese Indonesians or Chineseness. The identity of Chinese Indonesians has been recognized since the democratic reforms in Indonesia, and the cultural expressions of Chineseness have also been protected by law. Any attempt to undermine the unity of Indonesian tribes and challenge Indonesian legal authority will not be tolerated. This largely affected the position of the Indonesian authoritative class in opposing the cultural expressions of Chineseness. On the other side, although Indonesian society has certain prejudices against Chinese Indonesians, for instance, there is part of the indigenous population in Indonesia who question the loyalty of Chinese Indonesians to the country (Setijadi, 2017, p. 1), the cultural expressions of Chineseness have been integrated into Indonesian daily life. During the Chinese New Year in 2019, Indonesian hotels, shopping malls, and hospitals also held a series of celebration ceremonies and activities. For example, the Novotel Hotel in North Jakarta prepared Spring Festival decorations, special foods, and lion dance performances to celebrate the Lunar New Year (TribunJakarta, 2019), and Siloam hospital also distributed red packets to patients (Suara, 2019). These cultural practices are not only expressions of Chineseness, but also a part of Indonesian diverse culture. The attributes of Indonesian pluralistic society, the spirit of *Pancasila*, and the tolerance of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* also prompt them to accept the cultural expressions of Chineseness.

Meanwhile, a lot of Indonesian scholars appreciate the contribution of Chinese Indonesians to Indonesia, such as Indonesian historian in the Chinese Indonesians field, Didi Kwartanada (Republika, 2017) and historical education scholar from the Indonesia University of Education, Mi'raj Dodi Kurniawan (History Indonesia, 2018), and so on. Kurniawan appealed that "Chinese Indonesians should not be regarded as foreigners but should be regarded as an ethnic group or tribe in Indonesia, just like Javanese, Sunda, and Batak are the same as other tribes". Chinese Indonesians have indeed played an important role in Indonesian national liberation, economic development, and fostering China-Indonesia communication. In addition, the majority of people in Indonesia do not believe that the cultural expressions of Chineseness threaten Indonesian national security. Whether it is the person in charge of Guan Yu's Temple, the Islamic organization in Tuban, or the residents and netizens of Surakarta, they all expressed their disapproval of the two cases. In the case of Tuban, from official personnel to residents, people did not think there was a problem with the Guan Yu statue. In the case of Surakarta, most of the comments on the online videos accused these conservative Muslims of their actions. The cultural expressions of Chineseness are just normal cultural communication to promote cultural diversity in Indonesia. Therefore, it does not threaten the national security of Indonesia.

Second, the public identified the usual tricks of the anti-Jokowi forces. The anti-Jokowi forces in Indonesia are mainly conservative Muslim groups whose target is the Jokowi regime. They not only deliberately created troubles and social turmoil to manipulate the public opinion orientation about anti-Jokowi, but also criticized the Jokowi's government because they have not fulfilled the responsibility of protecting multiculturalism and multi-religion (Pan, 2017).

During the period of Indonesian Exclusive-Chinese policies, the Chinese Indonesians were suppressed, and the cultural expressions of Chineseness were also greatly restricted. Indonesia had a deep anti-Chinese mood in history and Indonesian people do have not a good impression of China. Meanwhile, Jokowi actively respond to China's "The Belt and Road" initiative, support China-Indonesia joint construction of the "Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Railway", welcome Chinese companies to invest in Indonesia, encourage Chinese tourists to travel to Indonesia, and also have a good relationship with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (also be called as Ahok),

a Chinese Indonesian, the former governor of Jakarta. This makes the anti-Jokowi forces think that Jokowi is “pro-China” and worry that China is “manipulating” Indonesia and is deeply trapped in “China Threat Theories”. Ahok, Chinese Indonesians, and China have therefore become targets of attacks by anti-Jokowi forces. They used the anti-China sentiment of the Indonesian people to repeatedly spread rumors on these topics with the intent to pull Jokowi into the problem, such as “President Jokowi is a Singaporean Chinese” (JawaPos, 2018), “Ahok blasphemes Islam” (Linawati, 2017), “10 million Chinese laborers invaded Indonesia” (Kuwado, 2018), etc.

In the beginning, the Indonesian people were also bewitched and led by rumors of anti-Jokowi forces. The most typical case was the incident about “Ahok blasphemy against the Quran”. In September 2016, Ahok, the first governor of Jakarta from Chinese Indonesians, quoted verses from the Quran in his campaign speech, accusing his opponents of using verses to deceive voters and prevent them from choosing him as their leader.⁴ This video was edited and subtitled with misleading texts, which turned into Ahok’s criticism of the Quran and was widely spread on the Internet. After that, the hard-line Islamic group, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), strengthened the situation and strongly accused Ahok of “blaspheming Islam” and incited the people to participate in the large-scale demonstrations organized by them. Afterward, Ahok apologized for that but denied blasphemy against Islam. The largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, the *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU), also clarified for Ahok. Unfortunately, most people credulously believed the rumors and participated in the protests. Ahok’s appeal failed and went to jail, ruining a great political career. After the verdict, the hard-line Islamic group still instigated the people to continue to protest and tried to increase Ahok’s punishment. Outside the court, a lot of supporters of Ahok expressed their disappointment and sadness at the verdict. Now, even if Ahok has been released from prison, it is difficult for him to back to his former political glory. The reason why they held on to Ahok was not only because this matter was about the dignity of Islam, but also because Ahok is a “double minority”. He is both Chinese Indonesian and Christian. However, he was the governor of Jakarta and was an important role in Jokowi’s government.

With the continuous emergence of such rumors and the government’s clarification of the facts, a large number of rumors collapsed without being attacked. The Indonesian people have gradually seen through the usual tricks of the anti-Jokowi forces about China and Chinese Indonesians and are no longer easy to believe in rumors. In the case of the Guan Yu statue, the statements of official personnel and the disapproval of residents showed the objectivity and rationality of the Indonesian people. In the demonstration video of the lantern case, even though the opponents were fierce and aggressive, most of the comments from the video did not support the views and practices of the opponents.

Third, there is no consensus on the so-called “China Threat Theories” in Indonesia. The securitizing actors attempted to make the expressions and practices of Chinese Indonesians securitization. Their targets are not only the cultural expressions of Chineseness but also the Chinese Indonesians and China. Even though the Chinese Indonesians are also Indonesians, the securitizing actors still doubt their loyalty. Before the normalization of relations between the two countries, the Indonesian military believed that China was a threat to its country (Fitriani, 2018), and the government looked at the ethnic Chinese as “tools” of the Chinese government which

⁴ The original text is as follows: “Jadi jangan percaya sama orang, kan bisa saja dalam hati kecil Bapak-Ibu nggak bisa pilih saya ya kan? Dibohongi pakai Surat Al-Maidah 51, macam-macam itu. Itu hak Bapak-Ibu ya. Jadi kalau Bapak-Ibu perasaan nggak bisa kepilih nih, karena saya takut masuk neraka karena dibodohin gitu ya, nggak apa-apa”.

had worked to establish communism in the country (Storey, 2000, p. 147). Moreover, according to the 2019 survey report of ISEAS in Singapore, 19.1% of Indonesian respondents believed that China's "The Belt and Road" initiative is not good for Indonesia (Tang, Thuzar, & Hoang, 2019, p. 19). And the cultural expressions of Chineseness are regarded by conservative Muslims as a way of "cultural penetration" of China. "China Threat Theories" has a certain market in Indonesia.

Previously, in addition to the two cases of Tuban and Solo, there were also rumors on the internet about "Jokowi is Chinese Indonesia". There were frequent rumors about China in the early days of the election, such as "Chinese citizens can have Indonesian electronic ID cards and have the right to vote" (Saubani, 2019), "China helps the Indonesian Election Commission to repair ballot boxes" (Melekpolitik, 2019), etc. These conservative Muslims did not just securitize these cultural expressions of Chineseness, but were also afraid of "China Threat Theories" and attempted to make China be securitized. According to a report released by the Median Survei polling agency at the end of 2017, out of 1,000 respondents, 22.7% regarded China as the biggest threat to Indonesia. When talking about why China has become the biggest threat to Indonesia, 31.2% believed that China controls the Indonesian economy, 23.7% believed that Chinese products dominate the Indonesian market, 7.5% thought that is communism, 6.5% believed that is Chinese in Indonesia, and 6.4% believed that China brings drugs and pornography (Aco, 2017). The 2019 survey report of ISEAS pointed out that 37.7% of Indonesian respondents believed that "the rise of China will lead to China's entry into the Indonesian sphere of influence" (Tang et al., 2019, p. 18). It can be seen that the rise of China has deepened the concerns on part of the Indonesian people about the "China threat".

However, "China threat" is a multi-dimensional and complex concept that includes at least five aspects: increased economic power; increased military power; increased China influence on other countries; increased China's international role in regional and global institutions; China's self-confidence and brave diplomacy and tough behavior on the South China Sea (Fitriani, 2018, p. 2). In Indonesia, the rise of China is viewed as an opportunity and a threat, and part of Indonesian politicians politicize it (Goodman, 2017). Different stakeholders have different perceptions about China's rising. For example, the Indonesian military holds negative views of China for a long time, and relevant Indonesian scholars have positive and negative views of China's rise (Fitriani, 2018, p. 12). But on the whole, people in Indonesia have different views on China, and not everyone recognizes the "China threat". Nevertheless, Indonesian society has no consensus on the "China threat". The securitization of the cultural expressions of Chineseness is itself a product of re-securitization based on the "China threat". "China threat" has a lot of followers in Indonesia, but because of its complexity, Indonesian society has not reached a consensus on this. Therefore, the securitization process lacking the support of consensus is difficult to be successfully securitized.

Constraints on the "Securitization" of the Culture of Chinese Indonesian

At present, both the expressions and practices of cultural expressions of Chineseness are on the fringe of danger. It is easy to fall into the political struggle in Indonesia and become the victim of anti-Jokowi forces, anti-Chinese's forces, and extremist groups. This has also undermined the unity and development of ethnic groups in Indonesia and undermined the tribal diversity and religious tolerance of Indonesia. Fortunately, Indonesia has adopted a series of restrictive measures, and the securitization problem of the culture of Chinese Indonesian has also been controlled to a certain extent. For example, the Indonesian government has continuously improved the

legal system and strengthened supervision, a few media stick to journalistic ethics, and a part of social organizations and individuals improve their ability to distinguish rumors, etc.

The Indonesian Government Improves the Legal System and Strengthens Supervision

Due to the special identity of the Chinese Indonesians and the influence of “China Threat Theories”, the cultural expressions of Chineseness are often on the cusp, becoming the target of opposition forces and people who do not know the truth. Therefore, there is a risk of being securitized. Chinese Indonesians are part of the Indonesian nation, and their culture is also one of the components of Indonesian diverse culture. To prevent the culture of Chinese Indonesian from being securitized, the Indonesian government has continuously improved the legal system and strengthened supervision so as to prevent and curb the words and deeds of the opposition forces deliberately targeting the cultural expressions of Chineseness, and protect Chinese Indonesians and their culture as much as possible.

In response to acts that undermine national unity and tribal unity, the Indonesian government has formulated and improved relevant laws and regulations, and also strengthen the supervision of Indonesian social media accounts. For one thing, the Indonesian government adheres to the national spirit of *Pancasila* and the national motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and recognizes the legal status and rights of various tribes and their cultures from the legal level, including Chinese Indonesians and their culture. Since the fall of the *Suharto* regime, the Indonesian government has successively abolished the previous policies on Exclusive-Chinese, and once again allowed Chinese Indonesians to speak mandarin, write mandarin, and celebrate traditional Chinese festivals. In 2002, the Spring Festival was incorporated into Indonesian public holidays. As an authoritative government, the Indonesia government fundamentally recognizes the Indonesian multi-cultural, multi-tribal, and multi-religious nature, emphasizes the legitimacy and harmonious coexistence of various cultures, tribes, and religions, which are benefit eliminate the people’s doubts, and does not allow the extremist Muslim groups to suppress other cultures, tribes, and religions.

For another thing, in response to rumors, the Indonesian government has also formulated certain compulsory blocking measures and punishments. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Informatics, about 800,000 websites in Indonesia were accused of spreading rumors in 2017 (Ayu, 2017). In this case, Indonesia has set up a National Cyber and Crypto Agency (*Badan Sandi dan Siber Negara*) to resist rumors of religious extremism and fake news on the Internet. In the meantime, the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Informatics also created an official website to hold up Internet false information in November 2016, namely *TurnBackHoax*, aimed at resisting rumors, inflammatory language, and defamatory news on the Internet. Although these measures cannot completely prohibit false information in Indonesia, nor can influence the Indonesian long-term anti-Chinese emotion, these measures can also reduce various “China Threat Theories” in Indonesia to a certain extent.

A Part of News Media Still Adhere to Journalistic Ethics

Indonesia has more than 175 million online audiences. The opposition party targeted at media’s function and dissemination power and used it as a sharp blade against the cultural expressions of Chineseness. In the cases of Tuban and Surakarta, most news media followed the trend and reported hot news, only grabbing readers’ attention to create gimmicks and gain economic benefits, while ignoring objective facts and being used and influenced by the opposition party. However, a small number of news media still adhere to news ethics under the

general trend and try to objectively describe the reality in their reports, try to break up fake news, and shape the positive effects of the media.

Most news media in Indonesia have specific political or religious backgrounds, and the content they publish is politically colored. For example, the Media Indonesia Group belonging to the National Democratic Party, a pro-government party, whiles CNN Indonesia belongs to the opposition party, Democratic Party, an anti-government party. As the transmitters and voices of facts, a few media are not controlled by politics, anti-Jokowi forces, parties, or extremist groups, but eliminate political prejudice, and actively exert the positive effects of public opinion. Among them, English media like Jakarta Post and Jakarta Globe, Indonesian media like *Antara*, *Kompas*, *Metro TV*, and Chinese media like *Guo Ji Ri Bao* tend to be neutral in reports which are relevant to Chinese Indonesians or China. For example, at the beginning of the Spring Festival in 2019, when the major news media rushed to report on lanterns in Surakarta, the *Kompas* still recognized the legitimacy of the lanterns in its reports and issued an article stating that the lanterns reflect the diversity of Indonesia and also attracted more tourists for Surakarta (Zamani, 2019).

People who lack relevant experience and cognition tend to trust news, but this news should not be news that is specifically targeted after being selected, filtered, and processed. It should be news based on the established facts and objective judgments. The objective reports of a small number of news media also helped the Indonesian people gradually see through the tactics of the anti-Jokowi forces. Although these media are the minority and their power is limited, they can also correct and influence the views of a few people, limit the securitization process above, and affect the judgment and cognition of a part of listeners.

Indonesian and Indonesian Social Organizations Have Kept a Critical Distance From the Securitization Move

Rumors about anti-Jokowi, anti-Chinese Indonesians, and anti-China have lots of problems, so Indonesian social organizations and Indonesian citizens gradually step out of the trap of securitizing actors. They have kept a critical distance from the securitization move.

Indonesian social organizations, especially religious organizations, have higher social authority and status. In response to the increasing prevalence of false information on the Internet, the Indonesian Anti-Hoax Association (*Masyarakat Indonesia Anti Hoax*) has given official instructions to guide Indonesian people to distinguish between news and rumors (Yunita, 2017). The Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society Presidency (*Mafindo*) also has worked hard to combat fake news and requires the government to enact laws and regulations to manage social media as soon as possible to resist fake news or information (Harian Nusantara, 2019). Meanwhile, many Islamic organizations in Indonesia do not easily follow the opinion of a small number of extremist Muslims and clarify the cultural expressions of Chineseness and the image of China at crucial times. For instance, in the case of the Guan Yu statue, a few Islamic organizations in Tuban claimed that they did not oppose the existence of the statue (BBC, 2017). When the Muslim Forum in Bogor requested the cancellation of the New Year and Lantern Festival celebrations in 2019, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion and the Bogor Islamic Scholars Council also ignored its unreasonable request and expressed support for the relevant celebration. And when Western countries and many Indonesian media spread rumors about Xinjiang, China, the *Nahdlatul Ulama* compiled a book about its members' experiences in China, refuting false reports about Islam and Xinjiang in China (Bai, 2019).

The views of the general public can be constructed, but they also have discernibility. According to the survey data about Indonesian rumors by the Indonesian Telematics Society (*Mastel*), Indonesian social media are the main battlefield for Indonesian rumors (Librianty, 2017). Indonesian citizens make good use of the Internet, and they are also easy to be deceived by false information on the Internet. However, as the Indonesian people saw through the tactics of the anti-Jokowi forces, they also improved their discernibility, rationally used social media, and gradually realized the pros and cons of making and spreading rumors. For instance, in the case of the Guan Yu statue, the residents of Tuban interviewed did not believe that there was any fault with the Guan Yu statue. In the case of lanterns, commentators also believed that this was unreasonable wrongdoing under the demonstration videos. Therefore, these two cases which attempted to make the securitization of cultural expressions of Chineseness were ultimately unrealized.

Conclusion

There was a long period of Exclusive-Chinese in Indonesian history. During that period, schools, newspapers, and associations for Chinese Indonesians were banned, and Chinese Indonesians were also forbidden to celebrate traditional festivals or inherit other traditional Chinese cultures. Although the above-mentioned policies were later abolished, Indonesian society is still suspicious of Chinese Indonesians and their Chineseness. It is commonplace to see Chineseness politicized in Indonesia. Moreover, those words and deeds which aim at the culture of Chineseness are mainly concentrated in the cities where Chinese Indonesians live. From 2017 to early 2020, there were a lot of cases that saw the Indonesian public opposing the cultural expressions of Chineseness. In addition to the cases in Tuban and Surakarta, similar cases also occurred in Pontianak, Bogor, and Bangka Belitung.

According to the 2019 survey report of the ISEAS, the most worrying issue among Indonesian people is “ethnic and religious tension” (Tang et al., 2019, p. 11). The differences between the Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous people have been used by extremists as an excuse to securitize the cultural expressions of Chineseness. Studying this issue will enrich our understanding of this problem and provide solutions to ease ethnic and religious conflicts in Indonesia, hence enhancing mutual trust and win-win cooperation between China and Indonesia. At present, the securitization was unrealized; however, with the improvement of the political and economic status of the Chinese Indonesians, the growing strength of China, and the increasingly extensive cooperation between China and Indonesia, the anti-Chinese sentiment in the hearts of the Indonesian people maybe broke out again after the sow dissension by extreme forces. Therefore, there are still a variety of unstable factors in preserving and practicing cultural expressions of Chineseness in purported multicultural Indonesia. Pertinent questions remain to be settled, for example, can Chinese Indonesians legally celebrate traditional Chinese festivals in addition to the Spring Festival? Can related cultural activities be held beyond a fixed area? Considering the current fuzzy situations, the future is unclear and requires more in-depth study.

Extreme Muslim groups not only target the cultural expressions of Chineseness, but also often undermine the unity between Indonesian indigenous people and Chinese Indonesians, inciting anti-Chinese sentiments in Indonesian society and damaging the friendly relation between the indigenous people and Chinese Indonesia. If the cultural expressions of Chineseness become a securitization problem, it will have a huge negative impact on Chinese Indonesians, on the culture of the Chinese Indonesians, and on the China-Indonesia cooperation. Therefore, it is very important to correct the securitization and take de-securitization measures.

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