

Thoroughly Study and Implement a Holistic Approach to National Security to Safeguard Chinese Modernization

Center for Studies on a Holistic Approach to National Security*

Abstract: 2024 marks the tenth anniversary of a holistic approach to national security. As an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, a holistic approach to national security provides fundamental guidance for China's national security work in the new era and is, therefore, of great theoretical and practical significance. This approach has several distinct features: it reflects the trends of our times, is deeply rooted in China's national culture, and follows a people-centered, struggle-oriented, systematic, strategic, innovative, and practice-based approach. By upholding and developing a holistic approach to national security, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has comprehensively strengthened the Party's absolute leadership over national security, reshaped the systems and mechanisms for national security across the board, and made brilliant achievements in national security work in the new era. Given the context of the momentous changes unseen in a century that shape today's world, the national security situation facing China is increasingly complex and grim, characterized by many challenges and new characteristics. On the new journey toward rejuvenating the nation and building China into a strong country, we should fully implement the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, firmly pursue a holistic approach to national security, and accelerate the modernization of China's

* The Center for Studies on a Holistic Approach to National Security was established in April 2021, with a Secretariat based at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations and an Office responsible for daily administration. It is a specialized institution that systematically studies China's holistic approach to national security while simultaneously communicating the strategic philosophies embedded in this approach to domestic and international audiences and providing high-quality policy recommendations for maintaining China's national security.

national security system and capacity to ensure steady and sustained progress in Chinese modernization.

Keywords: Chinese modernization, holistic approach to national security, national security situation

The year 2024 marks the tenth anniversary of General Secretary Xi Jinping's original proposal of a holistic approach to national security. Over the past decade, this approach has guided our national security work in the new era. Presently, momentous changes unseen in a century are accelerating worldwide, and China is at a crucial stage toward national rejuvenation, grappling with increasingly complicated internal and external environments and faced with the daunting task of maintaining national security. We should thoroughly study and pursue a holistic approach to national security while marking its tenth anniversary, deepen our understanding of China's achievements in national security work since entering the new era as well as the new changes in, challenges for, and characteristics of China's national security situation, and accelerate our efforts to build a new security architecture commensurate with China's new development pattern. Thus, we can provide a solid security guarantee for advancing Chinese modernization.

Five Great Significances of a Holistic Approach to National Security

On April 15, 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping creatively proposed a holistic approach to national security, which has provided guidance for national security work in the new era.¹ A holistic approach to national security is the first major strategic philosophy that has been confirmed as the guiding ideology for national security work in the history of the Communist Party of China (CPC). It encapsulates the practical experience and collective wisdom of our Party and our people, who have resolutely safeguarded China's sovereignty, security, and development interests over the past century, represents the latest achievement in adapting Marxist national security theories to the Chinese context, and is an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism

¹ "Xi Stresses Pursuing a Holistic Approach to National Security and Adhering to the Path of National Security with Chinese Characteristics," *People's Daily*, April 16, 2014.

with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. This holistic approach to national security is of great theoretical and practical significance.

Making an original contribution to the development of Marxist national security theories. A holistic approach to national security upholds the Marxist stance, viewpoint, and methodology and adopts a holistic and strategic perspective alongside a broad, global vision. For the first time in the CPC's philosophical history, this approach stresses ensuring both development and security and makes it clear that security is also part of the people's needs for a better life. Based on its keen understanding of the essence of national security with Chinese characteristics, this approach has put forward a series of important ideas that are original and reflective of the times, guiding national security work. Moreover, this holistic approach to national security has been incorporated into all areas and stages of the work of the Party and the country, theoretically guiding China's historic leap from being large to becoming strong. It represents modern China's philosophical and theoretical contributions to the world.

Providing guidance for maintaining and shaping national security in the new era. At present and for some time to come, China will face increased strategic pressure from the outside world as it moves closer to the center of the world stage and as the Chinese nation gets unprecedentedly close to realizing its rejuvenation. The risks and challenges confronting China will continue to increase, both internally and externally. China's national security situation will become even more grim and complex. Under such a circumstance, to rejuvenate the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization, we must firmly pursue a holistic approach to national security. We must ensure security in the pursuit of development, promote national security in all areas and stages of the work of the Party and the country, and resolutely defend China's sovereignty, security, and development interests. Meanwhile, we should push the Peaceful China Initiative to a higher level. This will help achieve mutual reinforcement between a new security architecture and a new development pattern.

Pointing the direction for pursuing a path of national security with Chinese characteristics. The path of national security with Chinese characteristics is, in essence, an embodiment of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics

in the field of national security. Fundamentally speaking, adhering to the path of national security with Chinese characteristics is to ensure that the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will not be delayed or interrupted. As an old Chinese adage says, “On reaching the last leg of a journey, you are only half way there.” The closer we are to our goal of rejuvenating the Chinese nation, the less we can afford to slack off. We must continue to improve our national security system and capacity to prevent systemic risks, avoid being upended by a crisis, and provide a solid guarantee for the endeavor of building China into a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation.

Setting a shining example for upholding the Two Integrations. Only by integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China’s specific realities and fine traditional culture and only by applying dialectical and historical materialism can we find correct answers to the major questions presented by the times and discovered through practice and can we ensure that Marxism always retains its vigor and vitality. By inheriting and developing fine traditional Chinese strategic culture, a holistic approach to national security has summarized the CPC central collective leadership’s strategic thoughts on national security since 1949 and enriched them with new elements consistent with changing times through renewed perspectives and updated knowledge. Ensuring both development and security and promoting a human community with a shared future, this holistic approach to national security has reached a new historical height and demonstrated the mighty power of truth and unique ideological appeal in the practice of national security with Chinese characteristics.

Offering a Chinese approach to advancing and improving global security governance. A holistic approach to national security embraces many values, ways of thinking, and mechanisms derived from China’s national security governance with its distinctive characteristics, which can serve as a useful reference for countries that want to maintain social security and stability while preserving their independence. China’s holistic approach to national security rejects such anachronistic ideas as zero-sum game, absolute security, and alliance-based confrontation. On the contrary, it promotes common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable global security while pursuing cooperative and inclusive national security, and has thus far received positive

response and wide recognition from the international community.

Eight Distinctive Features of a Holistic Approach to National Security

Treating national security as a whole is the keyword of China's current approach we just discussed. In terms of the areas it covers, China's holistic approach to national security emphasizes a comprehensive security concept; in terms of methodology, it stresses adhering to systematic thinking and appropriate coordination; in terms of practice, it calls for holistic efforts. A holistic approach to national security has ten core principles¹ that must be adhered to, reflecting the deepened, expanded, and elevated understanding, by the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, of the patterns underpinning national security work. Combining theory and practice as well as epistemology and methodology, this approach has eight distinctive features.

Reflective of the changing times. A holistic approach to national security is rooted in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The era is the mother of thought; practice is the fount of theory. Entering the new era, China's national security situation has undergone dramatic changes in the context of the once-in-a-century global transformations, the COVID-19 pandemic, and China's great leap toward national rejuvenation. The world today has entered a new period of turbulence and change, characterized by significantly increased instability and uncertainty and the coexistence of risks and opportunities. China's national rejuvenation is at a critical stage, faced with rare opportunities and, concurrently, a grim and complex external environment, which implies higher requirements for national security work. Meanwhile, a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is well under way, bringing revolutionary changes to the means and ways of national

¹ Namely, upholding the Party's absolute leadership over national security work; adhering to the path of national security with Chinese characteristics; taking the people's security as our ultimate goal; ensuring both development and security; giving top priority to political security; strengthening security in all respects; highlighting the tasks of forestalling and defusing national security risks; advancing common international security; modernizing China's national security system and capacity; and strengthening the competence of staff working for national security. Xi Jinping, "Pursue a Holistic Approach to National Security and Build a Holistic National Security Architecture," in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Vol. IV)* (Foreign Languages Press, 2022), 390–391.

security struggles along with many new challenges. China faces the arduous task of safeguarding national security on its journey toward building a modern socialist country in all respects. It is through in-depth reflections on the prevailing trends of the times and tireless explorations of the path of national security with Chinese characteristics that China has introduced and developed a holistic approach to national security.

Rooted in China's national culture. A holistic approach to national security draws on wisdom and nutrients from the best of traditional Chinese strategic culture. Fine traditional Chinese strategic culture is rich in ideas related to national security, including: awareness of potential dangers, just like the old saying—one should be mindful of potential danger in times of peace, the risk of downfall in times of rise, and potential chaos in times of stability; the people-centered doctrine, such as that “the people are the foundation of a country and only when the people lead a good life can the country thrive”; advocacy for peaceful coexistence, such as that “people should seek harmony and coexistence”; acting in good faith and being friendly to others, because “amity and good neighborliness are invaluable to a country”; seeking an internal–external balance, for instance, “When dealing with a country’s internal affairs, the principle of harmony should be adhered to; when dealing with a country’s external affairs, justice should be the criterion”; combining toughness with softness, because too much of either will be dangerous; a mixture of strictness and leniency, as in the case of King Wen and King Wu, whose rules were like “slack and taut bowstrings.” The above concepts provide fertile soil for the formation and development of a holistic approach to national security.

People-centered. People-centeredness is an essential attribute of Marxism. The people’s creative practices are the inexhaustible source of our theoretical innovations. The ultimate goal of national security work is to safeguard the people’s interests. The people make up the broadest and deepest foundation for national security. A holistic approach to national security stands firmly with the people, puts the people and their lives above all else, and stresses that everything done in national security work is for the sake of the people and should rely on the people, thus providing answers to the major question—for and by who national security is going to be.

Struggle-oriented. Having the courage to fight and the fortitude to win is

what has made our Party and our people invincible. A peaceful environment is achieved through struggle instead of compromise. On the new journey that lies ahead, the risks and tests awaiting us will grow increasingly complex; inconceivable perils may even arise. The various struggles that we face are long-lasting rather than short-lived; they will accompany us through the whole process of advancing toward the Second Centenary Goal. In the face of major risks and powerful rivals, always expecting a peaceful life without engaging in struggles is unrealistic. Being frail or afraid will not help. A holistic approach to national security always strives to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Fully appreciating the historical features of the great struggle we are currently advancing, this approach stresses that everyone in the Party must have the courage and ability to carry on our fight and prevail over all risks and challenges, predictable or unpredictable.

Systematic. Safeguarding national security is a systematic process involving complicated factors. At present, the national security issues facing China encompass far more subjects, extend over a greater range, and cover a longer time span than at any time in the country's history. Internally and externally, the factors at play are more complex than ever before. Therefore, we must resolutely pursue a holistic approach to national security. To carry out national security work in the new era, we must promote national security in all areas and stages of the work of the Party and the country and make plans and arrangements for national security in coordination with those for economic and social development. To modernize China's national security system and capacity, we must enhance systematic and dialectical thinking, make plans in a holistic manner, and advance them through coordination. Priority should be given to resolving the imbalances and inadequacies in national security work, so as to achieve coordinated governance, positive interplay, and common improvement of security in all aspects.

Strategic. Good strategies are fundamentally important for a political party as well as for a country. The cause of our Party and our people will prosper when we judge accurately, plan appropriately, and seize the initiative strategically. The CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has grasped the situation with foresight and made a series of major strategic plans and arrangements important to the future of our Party and our country,

including establishing a national security commission under the Central Committee, formulating the Outline for National Security Strategy and the National Security Strategy (2021–2025), strengthening legislation on national security, promulgating and enforcing the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and building a new security architecture. A holistic approach to national security emphasizes that no matter how the international situation may change, we must maintain strategic focus, confidence, and patience, combining strategic resolve with tactical flexibility.

Innovative. The fundamental path toward high-level security lies in innovation. Presently, China's national security situation and the forms of national security struggles have both changed profoundly. Against this background, we must accurately identify changes, adeptly respond to them, and work to steer them in our favor. Otherwise, we may risk strategic passivity and miss the strategic opportunities. Thoroughly reviewing the systematic and revolutionary innovations made in national security work since the 18th CPC National Congress, a holistic approach to national security has put forward innovative concepts such as coordinating development and security, maintaining national security while creating the conditions for ensuring it, and modernizing China's national security system and capacity, which will keep us well-positioned for the future.

Practice-based. A holistic approach to national security has withstood the test of time and is full of practical greatness, providing guidance for maintaining and shaping national security in the new era. This approach is mutually reinforcing and simultaneously progressing with China's national security practice in the new era. It shoulders the historical mission of guaranteeing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and will guide us strategically in exploring new opportunities and breaking new ground amidst crises and changes.

Five Remarkable Achievements of National Security Work under the CPC's Leadership in the New Era

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, we have resolutely pursued a

holistic approach to national security, steadily improved the leadership, legal, strategy, and policy systems for national security, and significantly modernized China's national security system and capacity. National security has thus been strengthened on all fronts. We have withstood risks, challenges, and trials in all domains and won the great victory of ensuring high-quality development through high-level security, effectively safeguarding the flourishing of our Party and the lasting peace and stability of our country.

We have strengthened the Party's centralized and unified leadership over national security work across the board and achieved historic transformations in national security institutions and mechanisms. Under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, we have creatively established a national security commission under the Central Committee and, for the first time in the Party's history, created a centralized, unified, high-performing, and authoritative leadership system for national security. Thus, we have systematically addressed major questions regarding national security work in the new era, such as “who leads, what to lead, and how to lead,” achieving a historic transformation from fragmentation to centralization, inefficiency to efficiency, and passivity to proactivity. Under General Secretary Xi Jinping's leadership, we have followed the principles of unified leadership, appropriate planning, coordinated actions, and high performance and efficiency in national security work, exercising power in both centralized and separated ways. By solving many tough problems that were long on the agenda but never resolved and accomplishing many things that were wanted but never got done, we have strengthened national security work on all fronts, firmly grasping the overall initiative in maintaining national security.

Meanwhile, the Party Central Committee prioritizes top-level design. It has put in place the main frameworks for China's national security system, improved the legal, strategy, and policy systems for national security, and established the mechanisms for coordinating national security work, thereby boosting the synergy and overall performance of national security work. A strategic decision was made at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee to improve China's national security system, charting the course for modernizing our governance system and capacity related to national security in the new era. The Outline for National Security Strategy

passed in January 2015 and the National Security Strategy (2021–2025) issued in November 2021 mapped out the strategic plan—thus providing strategic support—for coordinating national security work in key areas, regions, and directions, unprecedented in the history of our Party and our country. Combining the various elements, areas, resources, and means related to national security, the Party Central Committee has redoubled the efforts to build a new security architecture commensurate with China’s new development pattern, strengthened inter-departmental collaboration in key areas, and established or improved mechanisms for national security including policy consultation, inter-departmental communication, intelligence information, risk assessment, security review, crisis management, supervision and accountability, and capability assurance. Together these measures provide institutional guarantees for ensuring China’s national security on all fronts.

We have systematically enhanced China’s capacity and performance in maintaining and shaping national security and effectively forestalled and defused major risks and potential dangers. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has always been prepared for worst-case scenarios and mindful of potential dangers, placed emphasis on preventing and defusing major risks that may affect China’s modernization process, resolutely safeguarded the security of China’s state power, systems, and ideology, and effectively responded to a series of immense risks and challenges. Its capabilities to forestall and defuse major risks have been fully tested. The Party Central Committee has put in place coordination mechanisms in priority areas of national security alongside institutions and mechanisms concerning information sharing, comprehensive support, review and regulation, and emergency response. To address specific security risks, especially economic ones, China has set up a system of security review for foreign investment, safeguarding opening up at a higher level; established data security review systems and emergency response mechanisms in accordance with the law, extending national security work to emerging science and technology sectors in a timely manner.

Shaping national security is to maintain it at a higher level in a more forward-looking manner. Entering the new era, the Party Central Committee has paid high attention to the coordination of maintaining and shaping national

security, especially the usage of innovative tools and means to shape national security. General Secretary Xi Jinping has successively proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative. Putting into practice these three initiatives is an important way of shaping China's national security. Meanwhile, building the capacity to guarantee the provision of materials, technology, equipment, talent, laws, and mechanisms necessary to maintain national security will greatly enhance the concentration of resources, facilitate their allocation, and make communication of information much smoother. This will also improve our capacity to shape national security.

We have comprehensively improved the legal system for national security and consolidated the legal foundations of China's new security architecture. Entering the new era, we have steadily improved the legal system for national security. As a result, national security work has become increasingly law-based and institutionalized. Our capability to conduct national security struggles with legal tools has significantly strengthened. An increasingly refined legal system for national security with Chinese characteristics provides institutional guidance for enforcing, administering, and observing national security laws. The National Security Law of the People's Republic of China, which was reviewed and passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 2015, has become the basic law underpinning the path of national security with Chinese characteristics. Guided by this basic law, more than 20 specialized legislations on national security have been introduced, including the National Intelligence Law, Counter-Espionage Law, Counter-Terrorism Law, Law on the Administration of Activities of Overseas Nongovernmental Organizations, Export Control Law, Data Security Law, Cryptography Law, Personal Information Protection Law, Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, and Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In addition, over 110 laws and regulations containing national security provisions have been formulated or revised, creating a four-tiered architecture composed of the Constitution, the basic law regulating national security, specialized laws in specific areas of national security, and national security provisions in various sectoral or separate laws. We have basically put in place a full-fledged, well-functioning legal system for national security with Chinese

characteristics, which is based on China's realities, reflective of changing circumstances, and suited to the current environment.

Legal tools have been actively used in recent years to maintain national security. Especially the Counter-Espionage Law of the People's Republic of China, which was revised in April 2023, is of great guiding significance for strengthening counter-espionage efforts on the new journey of the new era. The Counter-Espionage Law provides powerful legal tools for preventing and subduing espionage activities and maintaining national security under the new circumstances, and consolidates the legal basis for safeguarding China's new development pattern with a new security architecture and ensuring high-quality development through high-level security. This newly revised law will have a major and far-reaching impact on modernizing China's national security system and capacity on the track of the rule of law.

We have effectively defended China's sovereignty, security, and development interests and strengthened national security in key areas. In the face of the economic and trade friction deliberately provoked by the United States and the all-round containment and suppression it has implemented against China, our people, under the Party's leadership and with an indomitable fighting spirit, have taken justified and effective countermeasures and firmly defended national interests and dignity. At the same time, the China-US relationship remains in a state of being "at odds, but not at war." We have thus shaped a generally stable external security environment favorable for steady economic growth. Currently, a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is well under way. China faces squarely the new problems stemming from the rapid development of new industries, sectors, and forms of business in the era of the digital economy, and has forestalled and defused a series of new security challenges that have the potential to trigger systemic financial risks, solidifying the bottom line of security.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, we have effectively maintained the security of China's state power and systems. By restoring order in Hong Kong and ensuring a turn for the better in the region, upholding peace and stability in the South China Sea, and winning a series of tough battles related to Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, territorial waters, and human rights, we have pushed back

against hostile foreign forces that attempt to interfere in our internal affairs. Political security, as our fundamental task, has been further strengthened. Meanwhile, we have ensured the security of food, energy, resources, and key industrial and supply chains and made breakthroughs in preventing and controlling economic and financial risks as well as in core technologies in key fields. Our capacity for safeguarding security in the new domains of cyberspace, data, artificial intelligence (AI), biology, outer space, deep sea, and polar regions has developed from scratch and grown stronger, improving the security assurances for achieving positive interplay between domestic and international economic flows. Economic security, as our foundation, has been consolidated. In this process, China's national security authorities have fully performed their duties to carry out anti-espionage struggles, actively maintained the security of major national agendas, and played a critical role in safeguarding national security.

We have significantly enhanced the national security awareness of all citizens and solidified the people's defense line of national security. The Party Central Committee has laid great stress on national security publicity and education. By designating April 15 as National Security Education Day, we have conducted national security education in government agencies, schools, enterprises, villages, communities, and online. By building a first-level discipline of national security studies, we have strengthened the ranks of national security professionals. The publication of a series of books and advertising videos on national security has turned more people into the "responsible person" for national security. Using integrated media to promote knowledge of national security, we have cultivated many experts on national security publicity and education. The 1.4 billion Chinese people now have broader channels to participate in national security governance, their awareness and capability of guarding against national security risks have improved, and they have been further alerted to the importance of national security. In this way, we have solidified the public foundation and gathered a formidable force for maintaining national security.

In 2023, China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) opened an official WeChat account, strengthening national security publicity and education in

innovative forms. By grasping the current development trend of integrated media and we-media, the MSS has promoted the voice of the Party, responded to social concerns, unveiled major cases, and interpreted national security-related regulations in a popular way, arousing unprecedented public attention to national security work. Its responses to issues of social concern, such as the Counter-Espionage Law, have effectively allayed misgivings and contributed to sound economic and social development in China. This can be seen as a good example of safeguarding high-quality development through high-level security. The disclosure of some cases, in particular, has dealt a heavy blow to hostile forces and inspired the patriotic pride of the Chinese people.

New Changes in China's National Security Situation in the Current and Coming Periods

At present, momentous changes unseen in a century are accelerating worldwide. A new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is well under way. The rapid development and application of AI is reshaping human social norms with potentially disruptive consequences. Ideological confrontation is intense globally. The spread of extremist ideas poses many deep-level hazards for the world and for China as well. Meanwhile, the once-in-a-century pandemic has had far-reaching effects; a backlash against globalization is rising; and unilateralism and protectionism are mounting. The global economic recovery is sluggish. Regional conflicts and disturbances are frequent, as represented by the ones between Russia and Ukraine and Palestine and Israel. Global issues are becoming more acute. The world has entered a new period of turbulence and change. Against such a backdrop, China's national security situation will undergo the following changes.

Coexistence of opportunities and challenges. In the context of accelerating once-in-a-century global changes, the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will not be easily achieved. The stronger China grows, the greater impediments and pressure it will encounter, and the more external risks it will face. However, as General Secretary Xi Jinping said, "The fact that time and momentum

are on our side gives us self-assurance, resolve, and confidence.”¹ At present, the opportunities and challenges China faces are both unprecedented in their extent, but in general, opportunities outweigh challenges. To achieve victory despite risks, turn crises into opportunities, and break new ground amidst changes, we must plan in advance and follow the trend of the times.

Close interactions between domestic and international factors. Interdependence between countries is growing as economic globalization progresses, and the linkage, transnational nature, and diversity of security issues are increasingly prominent. Many security issues have transcended national borders, interacting with each other domestically and internationally. Risk spillovers and transmissions are mutually reinforcing. If not handled in a timely fashion, domestic security issues may spill over into regional or even global ones; conversely, no country can stay aloof or immune from transnational security issues. The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the once-in-a-century global changes are mutually intertwined. Many security issues have a bearing on domestic political, economic, and social security as well as on stable inter-state relations. China’s security is inextricably connected with the common security of the world. Therefore, we must be highly vigilant against the “backwash effect” (i.e., operations take place domestically but have their origins abroad) and the “linkage effect” (i.e., domestic and international interactions and transregional coordination).

Intense overt and covert struggles. On the new journey of the new era, overt and covert struggles will intensify in the field of national security. China will be confronted with various types of external encirclement, suppression, disruption, and subversion. Anti-China political infiltration, subversion, collusion, and sabotage, as well as separatist and espionage activities by foreign intelligence agencies and other hostile forces will continue, with the main bodies carrying out these activities becoming more complicated, areas concerned further expanded, targets involved more diversified, means used more covert, and harms caused more serious. As a special task force to

¹ “Understanding the New Development Stage, Applying the New Development Philosophy, and Creating a New Development Dynamic,” January 11, 2021, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-04/30/content_5604164.htm. This is a speech made by General Secretary Xi Jinping at a seminar for provincial and ministerial level officials on studying and implementing the guiding principles of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee.

consolidate and defend the Party's leadership, safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics, China's national security authorities will face more severe challenges, more daunting tasks, and more glorious missions.

Combination of new and old issues. Under the new circumstances, the scope of national security is expanding. Some old issues are resurging due to the application of new technological means, while security threats keep emerging in new domains such as the deep sea, the polar regions, the outer space, and AI. National security is not a simple superposition of security in multiple areas but a large network full of nodes, which are closely linked, indicating that wherever problems arise, the overall national security will suffer. In view of preventing and defusing national security risks, we urgently need to control new risks while reducing the existing ones, de-escalate contentious issues, and prevent unexpected changes. We should maintain security in all areas to achieve coordinated governance and common consolidation of security in key, basic, emerging, and unknown areas.

Intertwined virtual and real battlefields. “Internet security and informatization are major strategic issues that concern a country's security and development as well as people's lives and work”; “Failure in the cyberspace domain will spell disaster for the Party's long-term governance.”¹ In the digital age, national security governance concerns the Party's long-term governance, China's lasting stability, economic and social development, and the people's wellbeing. Under the new circumstances, cyber warfare is becoming increasingly realistic, cyber battlefields globalized, cyber confrontations frequent, and cyber attacks and defenses intensified. China faces grave challenges stemming from intensified major-country competition in the cyberspace, excessive reliance on key and core technologies controlled by others, attacks on critical information infrastructure, frequent cybersecurity incidents, and rapid advancements in new cyber technologies. There emerges a dangerous trend toward mutual influence, infiltration, reinforcement, and conversion between the two fronts (online and offline) and two battlefields (real

¹ Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and National Security Commission of the CPC Central Committee, eds., *Study Outline on China's Holistic Approach to National Security* (Xuexi Publishing House and People's Publishing House, 2022), 113.

and virtual) of national security.

Accelerated escalation of mild risks to severe ones. The emergence, accumulation, and intensification of national security risks can be deemed a gradual process where problems add up, with their nature gradually evolving. When quantitative changes reach the break-even point, a crisis will erupt, ending up with significant issues affecting national security at a certain stage. Under the new circumstances, national security risks do not exist in isolation. Contrarily, various types of risks are highly correlated; they reinforce each other, spread at rapid rates, and will easily escalate under certain conditions. If timely measures are not taken to prevent the interconversion between risks in different areas, contagion will occur, resulting in the transmission, combination, evolution, and escalation of risks and ultimately endangering the Party's governance and China's national security.

Blurred boundary between peace and war. Under the new circumstances, the arena of inter-state competition has become more multidimensional. National interests are expanding from visible domains such as land, sea, air, and space to invisible ones such as the Internet, electromagnetics, and cognition. Grey areas have proliferated, which can be used for rivalry and confrontation without igniting a conventional war or provoking strong reactions from the international community. With expanded arenas of confrontation, evolving forms of warfare, and shifting methods of combat, such forms of confrontation as political war, economic war, diplomatic war, public opinion war, technological war, financial war, trade war, and energy war have come to the forefront of inter-state rivalry. Confrontation across all fields, coordination between different areas, and systemic integration have become the new normal for national security and the new characteristics of “hybrid warfare,” rendering it even more difficult to maintain and shape national security.

Practical Requirements for Pursuing a Holistic Approach to National Security and Safeguarding Chinese Modernization on the New Journey

Faced with the new realities, tasks, and challenges on the journey that lies

ahead, we must carry forward our fighting spirit, resolutely pursue a holistic approach to national security, and accelerate the modernization of China's national security system and capacity. We should take a realistic and pragmatic approach, safeguard China's new development pattern with a new security architecture, and steadily advance Chinese modernization.

Deeply grasping and comprehensively strengthening the ideological appeal of a holistic approach to national security. We must conscientiously study General Secretary Xi Jinping's latest expositions on national security.

(i) We must acquire a full understanding of the new challenges arising from a complicated international environment and the new requirements resulting from the evolution of the principal contradiction facing Chinese society, so as to ensure security in the pursuit of development. (ii) We must adhere to systematic thinking, as stressed by a holistic approach to national security, and implement such requirements as counterbalancing with the whole system, planning in all fields, coordinating in all directions, using all means, and mobilizing the entire society. (iii) We must pay high attention to national security and make tireless efforts to consolidate the Party's leadership, safeguard China's sovereignty, security, and development interests, and uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics on our new journey. (iv) We should take practical measures to safeguard China's political security, core secrets, and overseas interests and strive to build China into a strong country and rejuvenate the Chinese nation. (v) We should step up our efforts in terms of strategic planning, priority areas, and innovative measures to break new ground in national security work. (vi) We should continue to improve the theoretical framework for national security with Chinese characteristics and accelerate the development of disciplinary, academic, and discourse systems for national security studies with Chinese characteristics.

Fully harnessing the practical greatness of the path of national security with Chinese characteristics. Upholding the Party's absolute leadership is crucial for effectively carrying out national security work. It is also a distinctive characteristic and important advantage of the path of national security with Chinese characteristics. (i) We must resolutely uphold the Party's absolute leadership, especially the Central Committee's centralized and unified

leadership, over national security work and ensure that the Party fully exerts its core role in providing overall leadership and coordinating the efforts of all sides in the practice of national security with Chinese characteristics. We must never waver in upholding the Party's leadership and socialism with Chinese characteristics and ensure that the path of national security with Chinese characteristics will grow ever broader. (ii) We must improve our capacity for political judgment, thinking, and implementation, thoroughly understand the decisive significance of the Two Affirmations, and strengthen our commitment to the Four Consciousnesses, the Four-sphere Confidence, and the Two Upholds. (iii) We must resolutely implement the decisions made by the Party Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core, strictly observe political discipline and rules, take a clear and firm stance on key issues, and have the courage to carry on our fight at critical moments. (iv) We should continue to refine a centralized, unified, highly efficient, and authoritative leadership system for national security, strengthen top-level design, overall planning, and coordinated advancement of major national security efforts, and ensure seamless connection of the responsibility chain for national security in key areas. (v) We must ensure that Party committees (leading Party members groups) assume their responsibilities in national security work, mobilize Party organizations at all levels to maintain national security, fully leverage the institutional advantages of Party organizations established throughout the country down to the community level, and uphold the Party's leadership in all areas and stages of national security work.

Consistently strengthening the systemic synergy created by coordinating development and security imperatives. To safeguard China's new development pattern, we must accelerate our efforts to foster a new security architecture, which represents both the top-level design and overall planning for national security work in the new era and a systematic integration of effective innovation efforts. (i) Advancing in a whole-of-system manner. We should improve the coordination and command systems for major areas of struggles and train professional officials that meet the requirements of such struggles, so as to translate system advantages into actual combat effectiveness. (ii) Planning in all fields. We should bring all behaviors that may endanger national security into view, so as to achieve coordinated governance and common consolidation

of security in all areas. (iii) Coordinating in all directions. We must keep in mind both domestic and international imperatives. Domestically, we must take political security as our fundamental task. Internationally, we should strengthen our capacity to ensure overseas security and promote the building of a human community with a shared future. (iv) Using all means. We should coordinate the use of political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, judicial, educational, and technological means to seize the initiative in national security work. (v) Mobilizing the entire society. We should integrate our strategic planning and usage of strategic resources and strength in various areas of national security. Furthermore, to safeguard China's new development pattern with a new security architecture, we must make plans and arrangements for national security in coordination with those for economic and social development. Thus, we can achieve greater coordination and mutual enhancement between China's new development pattern and new security architecture, fully harness the synergy created by balancing development and security, and speed up efforts to safeguard China's political security, make breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, proactively shape a favorable external environment, and maintain social security.

Comprehensively enhancing our combat capabilities in maintaining and shaping national security. Chinese modernization is a sure path toward building a stronger China and rejuvenating the Chinese nation, and modernizing China's national security system and capacity is an integral part of such modernization. (i) Improving the national security system. We must improve the leadership system for national security, ensuring that the responsibility system for national security is fully implemented and the Party Central Committee's decisions and plans in this regard are carried out in letter and in spirit; improve working mechanisms for national security and create a modernized combat-ready system; improve the allocation of national security resources and establish a coordinated, multi-dimensional, and highly effective system for protecting national security across all domains. (ii) Strengthening our capacity to maintain national security. In terms of political security, we should make good use of three tactics, namely, coordinating joint actions, using both channeling and blocking measures, and addressing symptoms and root causes. We can draw strength from Chinese modernization and make national security work more

specialized, more law-based, more widely participated, and smarter, which will help us win the tough and protracted battles to prevent and defuse national security risks, including those related to cyber ideology. In terms of security in critical areas, we must ensure the security of food, energy, resources, and key industrial and supply chains, strengthen our capacity to safeguard overseas security, and protect China's maritime rights and interests. In terms of risk prevention, we should make a transition from "follow-up actions, passive response" to "early warning, proactive shaping." In terms of technology empowerment, we need strategic thinking to arrive at "optimal blueprints," systematic thinking to cultivate "best brains," and service-oriented thinking to attain "maximum efficiency." And we must always be prepared for worst-case scenarios to build the "firmest barrier," enhancing our capacity to use science and technology to maintain national security.

Always regarding the people as the foundational force of national security work. The core of a holistic approach to national security is that it takes the people's security as its ultimate goal. Commitment to the organic unity of the people's security, political security, and putting national interests first is an important characteristic of the path of national security with Chinese characteristics. On the new journey, we must ensure that everything done for national security is for the sake of the people and should rely on the people and remain committed to realizing, safeguarding, and advancing the fundamental interests of all our people. (i) We must uphold the organic unity between the Party's leadership, the running of the country by the people, and law-based governance, implement the Party's mass line in all aspects and stages of national security work, and take the people as the main force to maintain national security. It is the responsibility of the whole society to safeguard national security. We must ensure that everyone contributes to and shares the benefits of national security. (ii) We must comprehensively strengthen national security education as a foundational and long-term policy. While enhancing the ability of leading officials at all levels to ensure security in the pursuit of development, we should raise the people's awareness and readiness regarding national security, so as to lay a solid public foundation for building China into a strong country. We should integrate law-enforcing and case-handling activities with education and publicity campaigns about laws and our enemy's movements,

interpret laws through unveiled cases in a more targeted and effective manner, and enhance knowledge of national security laws and awareness of our enemy's movements among key groups in key areas and agencies, so as to improve the whole society's capabilities to guard against national security risks.

(edited by Chen Qingyi)