



National Security after China's 20th Party Congress: Trends in Discourse and Policy

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The 20th Party Congress in October 2022 affirmed the centrality of Xi Jinping's vision of national (or state) security in Chinese domestic and foreign policy. Trends in national security discourse and policy at the start of Xi's third term indicate that Chinese leaders continue to emphasize elements of the "comprehensive national security concept" framework established in 2014: the centrality of political/regime security, the interconnectedness of internal and external security threats, an emphasis on preventive solutions to security challenges, and the need to deepen reforms in national security law, organization, and policy to address an increasingly challenging security environment. At the same time, evolution is observable in four key areas of China's national security policy: the changing prioritization of security vs. development; an enhanced focus on state security and counter-espionage work; emphasis on strengthening national security education; and efforts to harness foreign policy to shape China's external environment in ways that are favorable to regime security.

The 20th Party Congress in October 2022, and the subsequent National People's Congress in spring 2023, ushered in a new team of national security leaders in China and affirmed the centrality of Xi's vision of national security in the PRC's current and future policies.¹ What does the way that national security was incorporated more broadly into this moment in Chinese politics, and developments since those political events, tell us about Xi Jinping's thinking – and China's likely future direction – on domestic and national security?

Trends in both national security discourse and policy since the 20th Party Congress suggest more continuity rather than change, indicating that the PRC is likely to continue implementing and building on the framework of the "comprehensive national security concept" (总体国家安全观, *zongti guojia anquanguan*)² established by Xi Jinping during his first two terms in office. His October 2022 work report reflects themes that have been consistently promulgated and developed over the past ten years, including the centrality

¹ On Xi's early efforts to remake national security policymaking and capabilities in China, see Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Domestic Security in China under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 59 (March 2019), <https://www.prcleader.org/greitens>; Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "How China Thinks about National Security," *The China Questions II*, ed. Michael Szonyi, Maria Adele Carrai, and Jennifer Rudolph (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

² "National" can also be translated as "state" security – it is the same word that appears in the name of the Ministry of State Security. "Comprehensive" has variously been translated as "total," "overall," or "holistic."

of political or regime security, the inter-penetration of internal and external security threats, an emphasis on preventive approaches to security challenges, and the need for ongoing reforms in national security organization, law, and policy to meet the increasingly challenging security environment that China faces. The new team of national security leaders appears to be ready to apply and implement Xi's conceptual framework for national and regime security rather than to debate or to revise it.

At the same time, however, China's approach to national security appears to be evolving in at least four areas: 1) increasing clarity about the party's altered view of the relationship between development and security; 2) enhanced prominence for and a focus on state security work and management of counter-espionage threats; 3) emphasis on strengthening national security education; and 4) attempts to build and strengthen external and foreign security policy to shape China's external environment in ways more favorable to national and regime security. While none of these areas are wholly new, each has attracted increased attention in recent months in terms of both discourse and policy.

This essay is the first of a two-part series examining China's approach to national security after the 20th Party Congress. This first essay focuses on developments in China's national security discourse and policy; and the second, appearing in the December edition of *China Leadership Monitor*, will focus on the key players in China's new national security leadership.

Conceptualizing National Security After the 20th Party Congress

Since his ascent to the top of China's political system in 2012, Xi Jinping has shifted the party's approach to national security. In 2013, he promulgated the "comprehensive national security concept" and launched the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) as a coordinating body within the party. Xi's works on national security have been published in an edited volume, and the Comprehensive National Security Concept Research Center at CICIR, a think-tank affiliated with the Ministry of State Security (MSS), has released a multivolume series examining various dimensions of the concept.³ The comprehensive national security concept emphasizes what it calls "political security," which is essentially regime security: safeguarding China's socialist system, party leadership, and the authority of the Central Committee with Xi Jinping at the core.⁴ It is

³ The series is 总体国家安全观系列丛书 [Comprehensive National Security Concept Series] (Beijing: CICIR, 2021). A table of contents can be viewed online at <http://www.cicir.ac.cn/NEW/publication.html?id=184574a1-9689-438f-af06-afc0bd7f3238>

⁴ Chen Yitan, "Excerpts from Xi Jinping's Exposition of the Comprehensive National Security Concept," *People's Daily*, 14 August 2018, theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0814/c40531-30227214.html

highly preventive, portraying internal and external security as closely related and calling for an increased focus on non-traditional security challenges.⁵ Based on media and government reporting from China, the CNSC focused primarily on domestic security in its initial years of operation, though it also has dealt with foreign policy, especially in cases where external developments might impact social stability and regime security of China's party-state.

The prominence of “national security” was readily apparent at the 20th Party Congress and the National People's Congress. In the 20th Party Congress work report, “security” is mentioned 91 times,⁶ and for the first time, national security appears as a stand-alone section in the work report (“Section XI: Modernizing China's National Security System and Capacity and Safeguarding National Security and Social Stability”).⁷ The report notes that a decade ago, “The systems for safeguarding national security were inadequate, and our capacity for responding to various major risks was insufficient. Many shortcomings were affecting the modernization of national defense and the military.” The report then credits the party leadership with adoption of Xi's “holistic” approach (another way of translating “comprehensive”) and with steadily improving “the leadership, legal strategy, and policy systems for national security,” thereby strengthening national security “on all fronts.” The report's language often pairs “national security” with an immediately following reference to modernization efforts in national defense and the armed forces. There are also many paired references to “both development and security” throughout the text of the work report.

Section XI of the work report begins by calling national security “the bedrock of national rejuvenation,” and asserts that “national security must be implemented in every aspect and in the entire process of the party-state's work.” The report can be read as an affirmation and codification – at the most authoritative level – of many of Xi Jinping's previous statements, and statements by other senior party leaders, on these topics. The report retains a very broad idea of “comprehensive” national security, giving it a scope that touches on nearly every aspect of party work and public policymaking in China. It maintains the foundational nature of political security and continues Xi's long-standing emphasis on national security work as necessarily preventive, calling for continued work on “risk monitoring and early warning systems.” It invokes the “Fengqiao experience” (枫桥经验), a Mao-era method of enlisting people to watch for, report on, and resolve social stability problems at the local level; since his time in Zhejiang, Xi Jinping has consistently praised the Fengqiao experience as a model for “mass prevention and mass governance”

⁵ Chestnut Greitens, “How China Thinks about National Security.”

⁶ Austin Ramzy, “China's Communist Party Congress: Xi Warns of ‘Dangerous Storms’ Facing China,” *New York Times*, 15 October 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/15/world/china-party-congress-xi-jinping>

⁷ Xi Jinping, “Full Text of the Report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China,” 16 October 2022, http://my.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202210/t20221026_10792358.htm

(*qunfang qunzhi*) that employs grassroots social management to resolve conflicts and problems “as they emerge at the community level” so that “small things don’t leave the village, big things don’t leave the township” (小事不出村，大事不出镇).⁸ The work report also is consistent with past framings in referring to “coordinated steps to ensure external and internal security”; it describes political security as the “fundamental task” and international security as a “support” in national security work. Finally, the report applies that framework in its discussion (in a separate section) on the administration of Hong Kong and Macao – unsurprising given promulgation of the Hong Kong National Security Law in summer 2020.

A second key event in Chinese national security policy occurred in May 2023: the first publicly-announced meeting of the Central National Security Commission since the 20th Party Congress.⁹ The meeting was attended by Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, and Cai Qi, who are deputy heads of the CNSC, and also members of the Politburo Standing Committee; the CNSC appears to have expanded its vice heads from two to three members of the Politburo Standing Committee (plus Xi Jinping, as chair). Interestingly, the vice chairs do not include Ding Xuexiang, who previously served as director of the CNSC Office, but they do include Cai Qi, who also previously served in the CNSC Office during the 2014–16 period. (In past periods, the head of the CCP General Office – Cai Qi’s current role – has also headed the CNSC Office, but it is unclear whether Cai currently holds the latter role.) More information on the significance of personnel changes in the national security domain and the increasing emphasis on national security experience among senior CCP leaders, appears in the second essay, forthcoming in *China Leadership Monitor* later this year.

⁸ “杨明伟：枫桥经验”的历史来源和现实启示：毛泽东、习近平关注的一个重大问题，”思想火炬, 14 October 2018, <http://www.kunlunce.com/llyj/fl1/2018-10-14/128585.html>; “创新群众工作方法关键是要依法办事，”法制网, 法制日报举报, 14 October 2013, <https://www.163.com/news/article/9B4JT80000014AED.html>

In English, see “How Xi Jinping is Mobilizing the Masses to Control Themselves,” *The Economist*, 10 November 2022, <https://www.economist.com/china/2022/11/10/how-xi-jinping-is-mobilising-the-masses-to-control-themselves>; China Media Project, “The Fengqiao Experience,” 16 April 2021, <https://chinamediaproject.org/the-ccp-dictionary/fengqiao-experience/>

⁹ “习近平主持召开二十届中央国家安全委员会第一次会议强调：加快推进国家安全体系和能力现代化 以新安全格局保障新发展格局” [Xi Jinping Presides over the First Meeting of the 20th Central National Security Commission, Emphasizing: Accelerate and Advance Modernization of the National Security System and Capabilities for the New Security Pattern and New Development Pattern], *Renmin Ribao*, 31 May 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-05/31/nw.D110000renmrb_20230531_1-01.htm

At the May 2023 CNSC meeting, Xi Jinping called on the party to correctly grasp the “complex and severe” national security situation, saying (as he has in the past) that difficulties had increased significantly. He called on listeners to speed up modernization of China’s national security system to ensure the integration of development and security and to shape a favorable external security environment for national security. The meeting also emphasized improving governance of data and artificial intelligence; accelerating development of a system for “national security risk monitoring and early warning”; and the importance of public communications and education about national security.

The meeting readout reported that the CNSC approved documents on the latter two topics. Many of these themes had appeared earlier – and the focus on early warning is one manifestation of Xi’s consistent emphasis on preventive national security work. The continuity among topics mentioned briefly in the 20th Party Congress work report in October and the documents approved by the CNSC in May, however, suggests that Xi’s remarks are not merely rhetorical framing; rather, they serve as a roadmap guiding policy formulation and implementation.

One other framing development worth noting is the emergence in 2022 of a new 提法 (*tifa*) in national security discourse: 构建新安全格局 (*goujian xin anquan geju*, *constructing a new security pattern/architecture*). For reasons that are unclear, Chinese sources have translated *geju* as “architecture” when referring to security but as “pattern” when referring to development, as in the case of Xinhua’s English-language coverage of Xi’s remarks at the May 2023 CNSC meeting, where he is described as having “urged efforts to safeguard China’s new pattern of development with a new security architecture and break new ground on national security work” (whereas the Chinese text reads, “以新安全格局保障新发展格局,” using the same term for both development and security).¹⁰ An

¹⁰ “Xi Urges Accelerated Efforts to Modernize National Security System, Capacity,” Xinhua, 30 May 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230530/09938d74d3cb4a7281581269f8ac448f/c.html> As noted, the Chinese readout is “习近平主持召开二十届中央国家安全委员会第一次会议强调：加快推进国家安全体系和能力现代化 以新安全格局保障新发展格局” [Xi Jinping Presides over the First Meeting of the 20th Central National Security Commission, Emphasizing: Accelerate and Advance Modernization of the National Security System and Capabilities for the New Security Pattern and New Development Pattern], *Renmin Ribao*, 31 May 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-05/31/nw.D110000renmrb_20230531_1-01.htm

A note on translation: Chinese state media has recently tended to use “security architecture” to translate the *tifa*, but wider discussions (even of the new *tifa*) still frequently use “pattern.” Moreover, previous discussions of 安全格局 that are *not* referring to the new *tifa* use “pattern” much more often than “architecture” to translate the term. After consulting several dictionaries and the above examples of usage, I have

article published in *Qiushi* by Minister of State Security Chen Yixin that same day highlights the special chapter on national security in the 20th Party Congress work report and then mentions Xi's call for the "construction of a new development pattern and a new security pattern" and the need to focus on "what kind of security pattern to build and how to build it."¹¹

According to Chen Xiangyang, who directs CICIR's Comprehensive National Security Concept Research Center, the *tifa* "building a new security pattern" was catalyzed by the CCP Central Committee's call to better coordinate and integrate development and security (统筹发展和安全) as well as to effectively respond to the "profound historical changes in China's national security in the new era."¹² Chen cites this as a way of carrying forward both the Resolution on Party History approved by the CCP Central Committee in November 2021¹³ and the 2021–25 National Security Strategy (which is the second iteration, approved at a Politburo meeting also held in November 2021); later, he also invokes the 14th Five-Year Plan.¹⁴ At the meeting on the National Security Strategy (2021–25), both "firmly establishing the comprehensive national security concept" and "accelerating the construction of a new national security pattern" were described as "necessary to protect national security in the new era."¹⁵ As the content of China's

opted to use "pattern" here. The difference between "national security system" (体系), a term used previously, and "national security pattern/architecture" (格局) is also unclear.

¹¹ Chen Yixin, "深入学习贯彻党的二十大精神 加快构建新安全格局" [Study and Implement In-Depth the Spirit of the CCP 20th Party Congress to Accelerate Construction of a New Security Pattern], *Qiushi*, 15 April 2023, https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/2023-04/16/content_5752098.htm

¹² Chen Xiangyang, "构建新安全格局是统筹发展和安全的迫切需要" [Constructing a New Security Pattern Is an Urgent Need for Coordinating Development and Security], 国家安全研究 [National Security Research] (CICIR), no. 1 (2022).

¹³ "中国共产党第十九届中央委员会第六次全体会议公报," https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/11/content_5650329.htm

¹⁴ 中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十四个五年规划和2035年远景目标纲要" [14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China (2021–2025) and the Outline of Long-Term Goals for 2035], Xinhua, 12 March 2021, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-03/13/content_5592681.htm

¹⁵ "中共中央政治局召开会议审议《国家安全战略（2021—2025年）》《军队功勋荣誉表彰条例》和《国家科技咨询委员会2021年咨询报告》中共中央总书记习近平主持会议" [The Politburo of the CPC Central Committee Holds a Meeting to Review the "National Security Strategy (2021-2025)," the "Military Merit and Honor Recognition Regulations," and the "National Science and Technology Advisory Committee 2021 Consultation Report." General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping Presides Over the Meeting], <https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021->

National Security Strategy is not public, use of the term “new security pattern” is an important referent to the document’s content. In his discussion of this *tifa*, Chen also uses the phrase “内主外辅” (*neizhu waifu*, internal as main and external as auxiliary) to describe China’s approach to national security, reminding observers that the party has always placed internal and political (regime) security at the heart of its comprehensive national security concept.¹⁶

Rethinking Security and Development

The new *tifa* highlights a shift in the way that development and security are discussed in official CCP discourse, with security increasingly ascendant and prioritized over development. At the NPC in March 2023, for example, Xi asserted that “Security is the foundation of development and stability is the prerequisite for prosperity.”¹⁷ This idea has been part of Xi’s thinking for some time, as he asserted in a speech to provincial officials in January 2016 that national security and social stability are the premise of development and “nothing is possible without security and stability” (没有安全和稳定，一切都无从谈起),¹⁸ but it has appeared with increasing frequency and regularity over the course of Xi’s tenure. (The 2016 quote, in fact, appeared again on a 2023 poster publicizing National Security Education Day that describes national security as the “top priority.”)¹⁹ This discursive evolution indicates a gradual shift by the party away from the primacy of development and economic growth; instead, party leaders now speak of security and development as equally important, referring to security as the “prerequisite” for development.²⁰

One manifestation of this change appears in the recent crackdown on foreign firms. The crackdown, which is reportedly being led by the Ministry of State Security rather than by

[11/18/content_5651753.htm](#) Chen notes an expectation that going forward, the strategy will be updated every five years.

¹⁶ The full phrase is 内外兼修、内主外辅、内功优先.

¹⁷ “‘Great Wall of Steel’: Xi Vows to Protect China Economy, Security,” *Al Jazeera*, 13 March 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/13/great-wall-of-steel-xi-vows-to-protect-china-economy-security>

¹⁸ “习近平在省部级主要领导干部学习贯彻党的十八届五中全会精神专题研讨班上的讲话,” *Renmin ribao*, 10 May 2016, <http://jhsjk.people.cn/article/28337020>

¹⁹ “学习卡 | 这件“头等大事”，是实现中国梦的关键一步,” *Xinhua*, 15 April 2023, http://www.news.cn/politics/2023-04/15/c_1129526184.htm Many thanks to Iain Johnston for bringing this to my attention.

²⁰ Howard Wang, “Security is a Pre-requisite for Development: Consensus-Building Toward a New Top Priority in the Chinese Communist Party,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 32, no. 142 (2023): pp. 525–539.

economic regulators, risks driving away the foreign presence previously thought to be necessary to boost continued economic growth.²¹ Even the phrase “new development pattern” (in the phrase “safeguard the new development pattern through the new security architecture/pattern”) refers to a collection of policies that, like dual circulation, attempts to boost economic self-sufficiency to mitigate the vulnerabilities of economic openness and to counter possible “external headwinds” that could stunt China’s progress toward national rejuvenation.²²

As observers have noted, this shift in priorities risks causing confusion at the subnational level as these officials have few tools to pursue national security objectives, and they must figure out how to meld quantifiable economic performance indicators with unclear and subjective metrics of success in the realm of “protecting national security.”²³ Different actors in China’s “fragmented authoritarian” political system are likely to weigh and then operationalize these two priorities differently according to their organizational missions and toolkits, creating confusion for both internal audiences and for external observers trying to assess the ever-shifting boundaries of political acceptability.

Increased Prominence for State Security and Counter-Espionage

China’s apparent corporate crackdown also highlights a second trend in national security policy: the increasing prominence of state security and counter-espionage work. In April 2023, the NPC passed a revised Counter-Espionage Law, which took effect on July 1.²⁴ The first Counter-Espionage Law had been promulgated in November 2014, just after announcement of the comprehensive national security concept; this is the first revision

²¹ Lingling Wei, “China Puts Spymaster in Charge of U.S. Corporate Crackdown,” *Wall Street Journal*, 18 May 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-crackdown-foreign-companies-chen-yixin-9b403893>

²² Sheena Chestnut Greitens, “Xi’s Security Obsession,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 2023), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xis-security-obsession> On the “new development pattern,” see “What’s New for China’s New Development Pattern and Why Is It Critical?” *Xinhua*, 3 February 2023, http://en.moj.gov.cn/2023-02/03/c_852071.htm

²³ Jude Blanchette, “The Central National Security Commission Meets,” Pekingology (podcast), CSIS, 15 June 2023, <https://www.csis.org/podcasts/pekingology/national-security-commission-meets-0>

²⁴ Chinese text of the law appears at <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202304/a386e8ffa3d94047ab2fod89b1ea73c4.shtml> For context, see Laurie Chen, “China Approves Wide Ranging Expansion of Counter-Espionage Law,” *Reuters*, 26 April 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-passes-revised-counter-espionage-law-state-media-2023-04-26/>

since the law was passed.²⁵ The revision expands both the definition of espionage and the range of potential targets, potentially including activities carried out by corporate firms operating in China.²⁶ This expansion of the law's scope accompanied detention of employees of at least two foreign firms and the curtailment of external access to data used for both academic and market research,²⁷ and it has raised concern about the overall climate for foreign businesses in China. It also highlights the fact that Xi Jinping has, in keeping with his publicized remarks, continued to tighten national security laws in China, particularly in areas where foreign activities are perceived to be potentially threatening or destabilizing, even if such tightening might reduce economic growth.²⁸

In August 2023, the Ministry of State Security launched a WeChat account. Its first post began by referencing the new Counter-Espionage Law, and then it called for work by both state security organs and “extensive participation by the people,” with the latter to be “commended, rewarded, and protected” for reporting on espionage threats.²⁹ Later that month, MSS announced that it had made arrests in two alleged “CIA espionage cases,” one involving a government employee and the other described as a “staff member of a

²⁵ An article-by-article comparison of the 2014 and 2023 laws appears at Jeremy Daum, “Bad as It Ever Was: Notes on the Espionage Law,” 2 May 2023, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/bad-as-it-ever-was-notes-on-the-espionage-law/>

²⁶ PRC State Council Information Office, “China Revises Counter-Espionage Law,” Xinhua, 27 April 2023, http://english.scio.gov.cn/m/chinavoices/2023-04/27/content_85257483.htm; Chun Han Wong and Dan Strumpf, “China Spy Law Adds to Chilling Effect of Detentions,” *Wall Street Journal*, 27 April 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-expanded-spy-law-adds-to-chilling-effect-of-detentions-ce8cea1a?mod=article_inline

²⁷ Liza Lin and Chun Han Wong, “China Increasingly Obscures True State of Its Economy to Outsiders,” *Wall Street Journal*, 6 December 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-data-security-law-ships-ports-court-cases-universities-11638803230?mod=article_inline

²⁸ Yew Lun Tian and James Pomfret, “China’s Return to Global Stage Checked By National Security Focus,” *Reuters*, 9 May 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-return-global-stage-checked-by-national-security-focus-2023-05-08/>

²⁹ Ministry of State Security, “反间谍需要全社会动员!” [Counter-Espionage Requires Mobilization by the Whole Society!], 31 July 2023, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/KHGKLZ2q98giMAaJTIVJ3g> For an English summary, see “China Wants to Mobilise Entire Nation in Counter-Espionage,” *Reuters*, 1 August 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-wants-mobilise-entire-nation-counter-espionage-2023-08-01/>

military industrial group.”³⁰ The trend toward increased public discussion of espionage and counter-espionage may be a result of the directive on enhancing public education on national security, approved by the CNSC in May 2023.

State security has always occupied a prominent place in Xi’s perception of threats and his approach to security. (Recall that an equally valid translation of “national security is “state” security.) As Peter Mattis and Matthew Brazil have noted, counter-espionage campaigns have been an important theme in Xi’s governance since at least 2014.³¹ Xi came to power shortly after Chinese authorities reportedly discovered and disrupted a network of U.S. intelligence agency informants in China; in July 2023, CIA Director Bill Burns’ public acknowledgment of efforts to rebuild these networks prompted the Foreign Ministry to warn that China would take “all necessary countermeasures to firmly safeguard our national security.”³² One of the earliest documents circulated by the CCP Central Committee’s General Office during Xi’s tenure, the infamous Document No. 9 (officially titled “Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere”), warns of the risk of destabilization posed by infiltration by Western values and ideology.³³ Eight years later, in the 2021 Resolution on Party History, the CCP Central Committee warned of the risks of “encirclement, suppression, disruption, and subversion,”³⁴ and the Russia-China Joint Statement of February 2022 pledged that the two countries would strengthen cooperation to counter interference by external forces on their periphery and to oppose color revolutions.³⁵ The country’s first and pre-eminent research institute on the

³⁰ “China Unveils Second CIA Espionage Case Within 15 Days,” *Global Times*, 21 August 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202308/1296686.shtml>

³¹ Peter Mattis and Matthew Brazil, *Chinese Communist Espionage: An Intelligence Primer* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019).

³² Mark Mazzetti, Adam Goldman, Michael S. Schmidt, and Matt Apuzzo, “Killing CIA Informants, China Crippled US Spying Operations,” *New York Times*, 20 May 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/20/world/asia/china-cia-spies-espionage.html>; “Beijing Voices Concern Over CIA’s Building of Spy Network in China,” *CGTN*, 24 July 2023, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-07-24/Beijing-voices-concerns-over-CIA-s-building-of-spy-network-in-China-1lHvKyRGHYc/index.html>

³³ For some contextualization and a translation of the circular, see “Document No. 9: A ChinaFile Translation,” 8 November 2013, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>

³⁴ “CCP Central Committee Resolution on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century,” 11 November 2021, <https://china.usc.edu/ccp-central-committee-resolution-major-achievements-and-historical-experience-party-over-past>

³⁵ “Moscow to Hold Russia-China Security Talks on Monday,” *Reuters*, 21 May 2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/moscow-hold-russia-china-security-215108462.html>; “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the

Comprehensive National Security Concept is at CICIR, and during Xi's third term, officials with a background in state security and counter-intelligence have achieved noticeable prominence (see Part 2 of this report for more on these personnel appointments). All these developments are consistent with the long-standing emphasis on state security in Xi's conceptual framework, but they suggest that in his third term such elements are gaining prominence.

National Security Education

A third theme in the evolution of the comprehensive national security concept and its instantiation in policymaking is an increasing focus on national security education. Again, it would be a mistake to suggest that this focus is wholly new; the CCP has held a "National Security Education Day" on April 15th each year since 2016, in accordance with the directive in the 2015 National Security Law.³⁶ For National Security Education Day in 2023, Xi Jinping emphasized that national security is the "foundation" of national rejuvenation, affirmed the breadth of the concept, and suggests that as China's social development continues, the concept may continue to expand; he then devotes specific paragraphs to national defense and the military, economic/financial security, food, and energy.³⁷ Thus, despite some indication that Chinese scholars and analysts are thinking about the risks of over-securitization, the concept seems likely to expand in scope in the foreseeable future.³⁸

While holidays such as National Security Education Day often function to remind citizens of the importance of national security and to explain key features of the concept – especially when the comprehensive national security concept was first introduced – at other times, the holidays link national security to specific current events. In 2019, for example, CCTV connected national security to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, reminding listeners that Xi Jinping had elevated national security to "the top

International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development," 4 February 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>

³⁶ "China Marks First National Security Education Day," *CCTV*, 15 April 2016, <http://english.cctv.com/2016/04/15/VIDEWWAaj9AFAMr9Sr6RjOyH160415.shtml>; "China's State Security Ministry Issues Posters Ahead of Seventh National Security Education Day," *Global Times*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1259195.shtml>

³⁷ "坚持总体国家安全观 筑牢国家安全屏障" [Adhere to the Comprehensive National Security Concept, Build a Strong National Security Barrier], *Xinhua*, 16 April 2023, http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/16/c_1129528492.htm

³⁸ 张超 and 吴白乙, "泛安全化陷阱'及其跨越" [On Overcoming the 'Oversecuritization Trap'], *国际展望* [*International Outlook*], 14, no. 2 (March/April 2022).

priority” (头等大事) and that “national security is closely related to each of us.”³⁹ In 2022, the official press described the theme of the National Security Education Day was to “strengthen the comprehensive national security concept, understand the achievements in national security in the new era, and create a good atmosphere for a victorious convening of the 20th Party Congress,” and it specifically emphasized the obligations of citizens to protect and uphold national security.⁴⁰ In that year, the Ministry of State Security issued posters outlining the key areas of state/national security, emphasizing the centrality of party leadership and warning citizens about foreign spies.⁴¹ Hong Kong also began holding a “National Security Education Day” in 2021, after adoption of the Hong Kong National Security Law in summer 2020.⁴²

National security education is not limited to a single day, however. As the national security system has developed inside China, subordinate national security commissions have appeared down to the county level, providing a coordination system by which to disseminate content on national security, including through local National Security Education Days.⁴³ Moreover, decisions such as that by the Ministry of State Security to launch a WeChat channel may indicate increasing emphasis on public education and public mobilization; the inaugural WeChat post of the MSS, for example, calls for a range of activities to enhance counter-espionage security publicity and education for the entire society (反间谍安全防范宣传教育).

National security is also becoming more formally embedded into China’s education system. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued implementation guidelines to

³⁹ “关于国家安全，习近平这些话字字千钧” [On National Security, These Words of Xi Jinping’s Are Very Important], *CCTV*, 15 April 2019, <http://news.cctv.com/2019/04/15/ARTIvVwo2oDRuwBgonZdXWmI190415.shtml?spm=C94212.Phlf4iDGsV5V.S55344.1>

⁴⁰ “官宣！2022 年全民国家安全教育日普法宣传活动主题确定” [Official Announcement! The Theme of the 2022 National Security Education Day Legal Awareness Promotion Activities Has Been Ascertained], *Xinhua*, 7 April 2022, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-04/07/content_5683915.htm

⁴¹ “China’s State Security Ministry Issues Posters Ahead of Seventh National Security Education Day,” *Global Times*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1259195.shtml>

⁴² “Hong Kong Marks First National Security Education Day,” *Al Jazeera*, 15 April 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/15/hong-kong-marks-its-first-national-security-education-day>

⁴³ Joel Wuthnow, “A New Chinese National Security Bureaucracy Emerges,” *RealClear Defense/Jamestown Foundation*, 29 November 2021, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/11/29/a_new_chinese_national_security_bureaucracy_emerges_805476.html

strengthen national security education at the primary school, secondary school, and university levels, calling it a “fundamental, long-term, strategic project of the party and the country.”⁴⁴ Efforts outlined under these guidelines include the development of national security education textbooks, teacher training, incorporation of national security education into performance appraisals and evaluations of educational institutions, and the establishment of specialized national security institutes as part of establishing national security studies as a “first-class discipline” (一级学科). As a result, several universities have established new departments, institutes, or centers dedicated to the study of national security.

National Security in China’s Foreign Policy

The final notable trend in national security discourse and policy is its extension into the realm of Chinese foreign policy. Xi’s announcement of the Global Security Initiative (GSI) at the Boao Forum on Hainan Island in April 2022 was a key development in these efforts.⁴⁵ While the GSI draws on some of the key longstanding and traditional themes in Chinese foreign policy, it repackages and blends those themes with the discourse used to develop and frame the comprehensive national security concept. Analysts at CICIR, in some of the earliest Chinese writing on the GSI, framed it as a “vivid practice for guiding China’s diplomatic work based on the comprehensive national security concept,” while others have referred to it as a way to coordinate China’s domestic security and the common security of the world.⁴⁶ The GSI was formally enshrined into Chinese law when

⁴⁴ “China Releases Guidelines on National Security Education,” *China Daily*, 28 October 2020, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202010/28/WS5f9906a0a31024adoba819bd.html>

These guidelines were based on an opinion issued in 2018. Ministry of Education, “关于加强大中小学国家安全教育实施意见” [Opinions of the Ministry of Education on the Implementation of Strengthening National Security Education in Universities, Secondary Schools, and Primary Schools], 9 April 2018, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A12/s7060/201804/t20180412_332965.html

⁴⁵ “习近平提出全球安全倡议” [Xi Jinping proposes Global Security Initiative], *Xinhua*, 21 April 2022, http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2022-04/21/c_1128580296.htm; Sheena Chestnut Greitens, “Xi’s Quest for Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xi-jinping-quest-order>

⁴⁶ Translation available at “Deep Comprehension of the Global Security Initiative: Coordinating Our Own Security and Common Security,” 9 May 2022, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/220629_Global_Security%20Initiative.pdf?Jz3I.5nhXOxoWEdCLOzi48lmiizARIHr

the Foreign Relations Law was passed in spring/summer 2023; Wang Yi described the law as urgently needed to safeguard sovereignty, security, and development.⁴⁷

The idea that external and internal security must be coordinated has been interwoven into Chinese discourse since the launch of the comprehensive national security concept and it has been applied to various security circumstances during Xi's term of office. In 2020, for example, in a commentary applying the comprehensive national security concept to epidemic "prevention and control," Chen Wenqing discusses the need to pay attention to the "unity of one's own security and common security," and to "achieve positive/benign interaction between external and internal security."⁴⁸ Over time, however, suggestions have emerged in this discourse that foreign policy is a tool or supportive mechanism by which to achieve the key internal, political security aims of the CCP. Xi Jinping's 20th Party Congress work report, for example, refers to "coordinated steps to ensure external and internal security," but then it goes on to describe political security as the "fundamental task" and international security as a "support" in national security work. Chen Xiangyang, director of CICIR, has used the phrase "内主外辅" (*neizhu waifu*, internal as main and external as auxiliary) to describe China's approach to national security.⁴⁹

While a full examination of the Global Security Initiative and its impact on Chinese foreign policy is outside the scope of this analysis, it is worth noting several themes that have emerged during its first eighteen months. One is the need to revise regional and global security architecture based on China's assessment of a "deficit in global security

⁴⁷ Wang Yi, "贯彻对外关系法，为新时代中国特色大国外交提供坚强法治保障" [Implement the Law on Foreign Relations and Provide Strong Legal Guarantees for Major-Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era], *Renmin ribao*, 29 June 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-06/29/nw.D110000renmrb_20230629_1-06.htm

⁴⁸ Chen Wenqing, "总体国家安全观的生动实践和丰富发展: 深入学习贯彻习近平总书记关于疫情防控的重要论述" [Vivid Practice and Rich Development of the Comprehensive National Security Concept: Study and Implement In-Depth General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Treatise on Epidemic Prevention and Control], *Qiushi*, 15 April 2020, http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2020-04/15/c_1125856695.htm

⁴⁹ The full phrase is 内外兼修、内主外辅、内功优先. Chen Xiangyang, "构建新安全格局是统筹发展和安全的迫切需要" [Constructing a New Security Architecture is an Urgent Need for Coordinating Development and Security], *国家安全研究* [*National Security Research*] (CICIR), no. 1 (2022).

governance” and its opposition to a U.S. alliance architecture that it castigates as exclusive, zero-sum, and destabilizing.⁵⁰

Second, while the inadequacies of global security governance in China’s view are not limited to non-traditional security, one manifestation of the GSI has been China’s push to create new forums, networks, and architecture to address non-traditional security threats, particularly in law enforcement or in “international public security cooperation.” Under the GSI, China has offered to train up to 5,000 personnel to deal with global security threats,⁵¹ and at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in fall 2022, Xi Jinping announced China’s willingness to train 2,000 law enforcement personnel and to establish a PRC-SCO counterterrorism training facility.⁵² Last fall, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong hosted the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (established as the Lianyungang Forum in 2015).⁵³

Third, the Global Security Initiative has, at times, been invoked as part of China’s efforts to “create a peaceful environment for the realization of human rights.” Chinese official media assert that “peace and security are fundamental prerequisites for the protection and promotion of human rights,” and that the GSI “provides a Chinese solution for maintaining a safe environment for human rights protection.”⁵⁴

Fourth, and related, Chinese officials have used the GSI as a framework within which to assert that China shares common interests in “political security” with the Global South and the developing world. During a BRICS meeting in July 2023, Wang Yi stated that

⁵⁰ Wang Yi, “Acting on the Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace and Tranquility,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 April 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/202205/t20220505_10681820.html Xi Jinping stated in a 27 September 2017 speech to Interpol that “global security governance has many inadequacies” to deal with the world’s changing security environment. See <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0927/c64094-29561212.html>

⁵¹ Foreign Ministry of the PRC, “Global Security Initiative Concept Paper,” 21 February 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html

⁵² “习近平出席上海合作组织成员国元首理事会第二十二次会议并发表重要讲话,” *Xinhua*, 16 September 2022, http://www.qstheory.cn/yaowen/2022-09/16/c_1129009633.htm

⁵³ Hong Kong Police Force, “Global Public Security Cooperation Forum,” no. 1225 (18 January 2023–7 February 2023), <https://www.police.gov.hk/offbeat/1225/eng/9004.html>

⁵⁴ “为实现人权创造安宁的环境” [Creating a Peaceful Environment for the Realization of Human Rights], *Renmin Ribao*, 19 June 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-06/19/nw.D110000renmrb_20230619_2-03.htm

“countries in the ‘Global South’ face the important mission of resisting external intervention and infiltration and maintaining political and regime security (维护政治安全和政权安全的重要使命), so they must jointly maintain and support each other’s efforts to maintain national security and stability.⁵⁵ During the BRICS summit, a Chinese diplomat in India explicitly linked BRICS interests to GSI.⁵⁶

These indicators, while they fall short of a fully outlined and resourced policy initiative, suggest that Xi and the Chinese leadership are increasingly viewing foreign policy as inseparable from the overall effort to ensure regime security and that Chinese foreign policy may increasingly and visibly be oriented toward that end.

Conclusion

The 20th Party Congress affirmed the centrality of Xi Jinping’s vision of national (or state) security in Chinese domestic and foreign policy. Trends in national security discourse and policy at the start of Xi’s third term indicate that Chinese leaders continue to emphasize elements of the “comprehensive national security concept” framework that was established in 2014: the centrality of political/regime security, the interconnectedness of internal and external security threats, the emphasis on preventive solutions to security challenges, and the need to deepen reforms in national security law, organization, and policy to address an increasingly challenging security environment. At the same time, evolution is observable in four key areas of China’s national security policy: 1) the changing prioritization of security vs. development; 2) the enhanced focus on state security and counter-espionage work; 3) emphasis on strengthening national security education; and 4) efforts to harness foreign policy to shape China’s external environment in ways that are favorable to regime security. The Global Security Initiative is a key mechanism by which China seeks to extend its conception and practice of regime security into foreign policy, thus far taking the form of nascent attempts to revise global security governance in ways that bypass or reduce the importance of the American alliance system; active efforts to promote and legitimize China’s model of domestic security to global audiences; and invocation of the GSI to defend China’s narratives on human rights and as a point of common interest with other countries in the “Global South.”

⁵⁵ The phrases he used in the latter part of his speech are “共同维护国家安全稳定” and “支持彼此维护本国安全稳定的努力。” See “王毅出席第十三次金砖国家安全事务高级代表会议” [Wang Yi Attends 13th Meeting of BRICS High-Level Security Representatives], *Renmin Ribao*, 26 July 2023, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-07/26/nw.D110000renmrb_20230726_3-02.htm

⁵⁶ Ma Jia, “共创金砖合作光明未来 [Create a Bright Future for BRICS Cooperation],” *Renmin Ribao*, 22 August 2023, paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-08/22/nw.D110000renmrb_20230822_5-17.htm

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