

**Prepared Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee
Hearing on “The United States’ Strategic Competition with China”**

8 June 2021

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Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished Senators, thank you for having me today to discuss this central question facing American foreign policy. My remarks today will address China's approach, under Xi Jinping, to what the party-state terms "national security" -- a concept that has profoundly changed the face of repression and internal security inside China, as well as China's security policies abroad.¹

In the United States, national security is largely a matter of foreign policy, while homeland security deals with internal threats and challenges. By contrast, China's concept of national security gives a prominent role to internal threats, often frames external threats through their ability to impact internal regime stability, and employs a wide array of non-military tools to secure the party-state both within and without. China's new national security strategy also calls on China to become more proactive in preventing threats from emerging at all, which explains much of the PRC's recent, more proactive, and more repressive behavior at home and abroad. Much of the behavior we are discussing today is the result of a grand strategy aimed fundamentally at protecting the internal regime security of the Chinese Communist Party.

Xi Jinping's Approach to National Security

Xi Jinping's approach to security -- both domestic security and foreign security policy -- has emerged as a defining feature of his leadership. Most commonly, when Chinese sources talk about these questions, they use the term "national security" (国家安全, *guojia anquan*). Xi's mark on security policy began to emerge most clearly in April 2014, when he presented something called the 总体国家安全观 (*zongti guojia anquanguan*) -- translated by Chinese sources as the "Comprehensive National Security Concept" -- and launched a new party organization called the Central National Security Commission, designed to oversee the new concept's implementation across the party-state.² Then, in January 2015, the Politburo approved China's first-ever national security strategy.³ That strategy has not been publicly released, but appears from official media summaries to reflect the principles outlined in Xi's earlier speeches. Commentators acknowledged at the time that it was "a new thing for China," describing it as "an important theoretical innovation" and a step towards "a national security theory with Chinese characteristics."⁴ Xi Jinping has written or said enough about his thinking on national security that in 2018, a book-length collection of these pieces was published.⁵

¹ Remarks are based on Sheena Chestnut Greitens, *Preventive Repression: Internal Security and Chinese Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping* (draft book manuscript).

² "习近平：坚持总体国家安全观 走中国特色国家安全道路 [Xi Jinping: Adhere to the Concept of Comprehensive National Security and Take the Road of National Security with Chinese Characteristics]," *Xinhua*, 15 April 2014, http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2014-04/15/c_1110253910.htm

³ "Xi Jinping Chairs Political Bureau Meeting on Outline for National Security Strategy," *Xinhua*, 23 January 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2015-01/23/c_1114112093.htm

⁴ Chen Xiangyang, "Seize the Opportunity to Plan China's National Security Strategy in a New Era," *Liaowang*, 2 December 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/1202/c40531-23718303.html>; "Chen Li Talks About 'Excerpts from Xi Jinping's Exposition on General National Security,'" *People's Daily Online (Theory Channel)*, 14 August 2018, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0814/c40531-30227214.html>

⁵ "Book of Xi's discourses on national security published," *Xinhua*, 15 April 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/15/c_137112987.htm.

Many American analysts initially expected that the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) might look more like the United States' National Security Council, which focuses on foreign policy. That turned out to be wrong for several reasons.

First, China's conception of "national security" has a much more prominent role for internal security risks and threats. According to Chinese sources, the "center of gravity" for national security work is explicitly internal.⁶ Most CNSC meetings have involved internal matters, such as Xinjiang and the implications of the pandemic for social stability in China. Chinese strategic thought has a long history of seeing internal and external security as interconnected, as indicated by the phrase *nei luan wai huan*, 内乱外患, which can be translated as "internal disorder and external disaster," with the implication that the former invites the latter. Contemporary Chinese sources, however, differentiate Xi's focus on internal, non-traditional and emergent threats from past leaders' primary focus on traditional external security questions.⁷

In the new strategy, external threats are often refracted through the prism of how they will affect social stability and the party's "political security" at home. As one commenter puts it, "internal and external influences on national security frequently interact, and often go so far as to produce linked effects."⁸ Moreover, many of the tools that the strategy deploys to address these threats are tools traditionally associated with internal security and with China's domestic security apparatus (the political-legal system, 政法系统), rather than the military or national security tools that the United States is accustomed to thinking of in conversations about national security. The United States must prepare for a competition, therefore, that takes place on those terms.

Second, at the most basic level, the objective is to preserve the leadership role of the Chinese Communist Party and of Xi himself. Xi Jinping has called political security the "lifeline" of national security, and political security is defined as "safeguard[ing] the party's leadership, the socialist system, and the authority of the Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core."⁹ In fact, a good way to translate the name of the concept would be "comprehensive *state* security concept," since the term is the same as the one in the name of the Ministry of State Security, which handles political policing in the PRC. Regardless of one's choice of translation, Chinese sources make clear that the core goal is regime protection. Among other implications, this could significantly complicate the task of reassurance in US-China relations; the United States can and should address China's legitimate interests, but cannot and should not be in the business of guaranteeing or reassuring the Chinese Communist Party of its hold on political power.

⁶ Chen Xiangyang, "Seize the Opportunity to Plan China's National Security Strategy in a New Era."

⁷ Tang Aijun, "Ideological Security in the Framework of the Comprehensive National Security Outlook," *Socialism Studies (Shehui zhuyi yanjiu)*, May 2019, translation in Jude Blanchette, "Ideological Security as National Security," CSIS translation, December 2020.

⁸ "Chen Li Talks About 'Excerpts from Xi Jinping's Exposition on General National Security,'" *People's Daily Online (Theory Channel)*, 14 August 2018. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0814/c40531-30227214.html>

⁹ Zhong Guo'an [钟国安], "以习近平总书记总体国家安全观为指引 谱写国家安全新篇章 [Take General Secretary Xi Jinping's Comprehensive National Security Concept as the Guide, Write a New Chapter in National Security]," *Qiusi*, 15 April 2017," <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0415/c40531-29212820.html>. See also "Chen Li Talks About..."

Third, threats are not just threats of physical harm to China's material interests; they also include threats of ideological contamination within the Chinese body politic.¹⁰ Chinese scholars have written about "ideological security" and the need for mechanisms for early detection of ideological threats.¹¹ This definition of threat dates back, in part, to the CCP's attempts to analyze the fall of the Soviet Union; Xi Jinping appears to believe that the lack of ideological fidelity; corruption from within; mismanagement of ethnic affairs; and insufficient control over the coercive apparatus were among the principal factors that doomed Soviet communism,¹² and sources consistently exhort China to avoid destabilizing "color revolutions."¹³ The comprehensive national security concept is an attempt to address these threats to party rule in the ideological as well as the material realm.

Fourth, the framing of "security" under the new concept is very broad.¹⁴ Xi's original formulation lists 11 types of security that fall under the comprehensive national security concept: political, territorial, military, economic, cultural, social, science and technological, information, ecological, financial and nuclear. Other articles sometimes fit ideological security (described as a hybrid between political and cultural security) and health security into the framework. This breadth means that almost anything can be considered a security threat, and/or addressed via the national security tools that China is developing; it explains much of the securitization of domestic and foreign policy that we have seen in the last few years.

Fifth, the worldview reflected in the comprehensive national security concept pairs opportunities and threats in dialectical fashion. The phrase "changes in the world unseen in a century" (世界百年未有之大变局) appears frequently, especially since 2017, and indicates a pair of ideas: that China is indeed approaching the center of the world stage & the goal of national rejuvenation, *and* that risks and threats become greater as that happens.¹⁵ Thus Chinese sources rarely speak only of increased opportunity; that side of the concept is almost always paired with a corresponding increase in risk,

¹⁰ Marika Landau-Wells, "Old Solutions to New Problems: An Introduction to Threat-Heuristic Theory," working paper (18 June 2018).

¹¹ Tang Aijun, "Ideological Security."

¹² On the fall of the CCP, see David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Edward Goldring and Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Rethinking Democratic Diffusion: Bringing Regime Type Back In," *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 53, No. 2 (2020), pp. 319-353; on Xi's views, see Evan Osnos, "How Xi Jinping Took Control of China," *New Yorker*, 6 April 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/born-red>; Alice Su, "[Dreams of a Red Emperor: the relentless rise of Xi Jinping](#)," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 2020.

¹³ "Chinese Police Must Guard Against 'Color Revolutions,' Says Top Official," *Reuters*, 17 January 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-politics-police/chinese-police-must-guard-against-color-revolutions-says-top-official-idUSKCN1PC0BS>.

¹⁴ Xi Jinping, *On a Holistic [Comprehensive] Approach to National Security* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2018).

¹⁵ Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Contribution to the US-China Security Dilemma," in Avery Goldstein and Jacques DeLisle, eds., *After Engagement* (forthcoming).

uncertainty, instability and danger.¹⁶ Without this pairing, it can be hard to understand why the party leading a country that has grown so powerful seems to view itself as so strangely insecure.

The answer to the dilemma that China faces as the result of these changes, according to the new security concept, is for the party-state to become more proactive and preventive in its approach to all potential threats. Many of the metaphors in official discourse are medical: political threats are described as “viruses” or “tumors,” and senior leaders speak of the need to “immunize” the Chinese body politic against politically problematic thinking that could lead to threatening or destabilizing behavior.¹⁷ As a result, China has moved away from the language of “stability maintenance” as well as of “hide and bide” (韬光养晦, *tao guang yang hui*). Instead, we now hear a political discourse centered on “prevention and control” (防控, *fangkong*), which aims to address potential security risks to the party before they ever emerge.¹⁸ Official directives since 2015 have discussed the party-state’s goal of constructing a “multi-dimensional information-based prevention and control system for public-social security” (创新立体化信息化社会治安防控体系).¹⁹

How The Comprehensive National Security Concept Shapes China’s Behavior

The comprehensive national security concept is not mere rhetoric. Adoption of the concept, the new national security strategy, and the party-state’s enhanced focus on prevention and control of political-security threats explain many steps China has taken since 2013 -- steps that might otherwise appear disconnected and unrelated.²⁰

To implement a strategy that views internal and external security threats as deeply interconnected, Xi has reorganized both the military and domestic security forces, and consolidated and elevated the discipline and supervision apparatus to ensure tighter party control.²¹ As with the creation of the Central National Security Commission, these structural and organizational changes are

¹⁶ See for example, Yuan Peng, “*Shijie ‘bainian weiyou zhi da bianju’ zhi wo jian* [My Views on the World’s Great Changes Unseen in 100 Years],” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], no. 1 (2020); Zhong Guo’an, “Take General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Comprehensive National Security Concept as the Guide.”

¹⁷ For a recent example, see the *Global Times* commentary on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown: “Tiananmen Square Embodies Chinese People’s Confidence, Pride,” *Global Times*, 4 June 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202106/1225409.shtml>

¹⁸ “孟建柱：切实提高政法机关服务大局的能力和水平” [Effectively improve the ability and level of political and legal organs to serve the overall situation], *Renmin fayuan bao*, 18 March 2015, <http://www.court.gov.cn/fabu-xiangqing-13840.html>; “习近平：提高防控能力，着力防范化解重大风险 保持经济持续健康发展社会大局稳定 [Xi Jinping: Improve Prevention and Control Capabilities; Try to Prevent and Resolve Major Risks; Maintain Sustainable and Healthy Economic Development and Overall Social Stability],” 21 January 2019, http://www.qstheory.cn/yaowen/2019-01/21/c_1124021825.htm

¹⁹ CCP Central Committee/PRC State Council, “关于加强社会治安防控体系建设的意见 [Opinion Regarding Strengthening the Construction of a Societal Security Prevention and Control System],” 13 April 2015, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-04/13/content_2846013.htm

²⁰ Zhong Guo’an, “Take General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Comprehensive National Security Concept.”

²¹ For an overview of these reforms, see Sheena Chestnut Greitens, “Domestic Security in China under Xi Jinping,” *China Leadership Monitor*, Issue 59 (March 2019), <https://www.prclleader.org/greitens>

explicitly justified by pointing to the inadequacy of China's old bureaucratic structures to deal with today's more complex and threatening security environment.²²

The National People's Congress has passed or amended almost twenty pieces of security legislation that give the party-state enhanced power to deal with both internal and external challenges.²³ The Hong Kong National Security Law passed in summer 2020, which asserts significant extraterritorial authority over individuals and companies, is the latest of these laws²⁴ -- but others have tackled intelligence, counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and other cross-border and non-traditional threats. Moreover, because of the national security concept's emphasis on the intertwining of external and internal threats, members of the Chinese diaspora, including ethnic minority groups, have become particularly vulnerable under this new framework to monitoring, surveillance, "relational" and other forms of repression, even when they are outside the borders of the PRC.²⁵ These new legal tools have troubling implications on a number of fronts, including for higher education. Students come to American classrooms from around the world to study in an environment characterized by free and open intellectual inquiry and pluralistic debate. Laws that seek to apply China's political security standards to members of our educational communities, and to regulate them through the CCP's corporatist organization and practices, pose a risk to these basic American and democratic values.²⁶

Local and provincial budgets for domestic security spending have increased substantially. As media reports have noted, under Xi Jinping this spending began to exceed China's (also-rapidly-growing) expenditures on the military and national defense.²⁷ Much of the increase has been for surveillance technology and data integration tools to facilitate the aim of early warning and "prevention and control," augmenting the party-state's repressive capacity at the grassroots level.²⁸ The operationalization of these systems was probably accelerated by the pandemic; the term "prevention and control" has a dual discursive history in both public health and public security (appearing, for

²² See also Chen Xiangyang, "Seize the Opportunity to Plan China's National Security Strategy in a New Era," *Liaowang*, 2 December 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/1202/c40531-23718303.html>

²³ Greitens, "Domestic Security in China under Xi Jinping."

²⁴ "The Impact of the National Security Law in Hong Kong," *Reuters*, 3 June 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/impact-national-security-law-hong-kong-2021-05-31/>

²⁵ For a discussion of pre-2014 precedents, see Elena Barabantseva, "Who are 'Overseas Chinese Ethnic Minorities'? China's Search for Transnational Ethnic Unity," *Modern China*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (January 2012), pp. 78-109.

²⁶ Mary Gallagher, "Corporatist Organization in a Pluralist Setting: The Challenges of Educational Collaboration and Exchange with the PRC," Penn Project on the Future of US-China Relations (Spring 2021), <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/future-of-us-china-relations/research-education-and-academic-freedom/>; Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "America's Universities Need a China Strategy," *ChinaFile* (forum on the future of China Studies in the US), 27 August 2020, <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/future-of-china-studies-us>.

²⁷ Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Rethinking China's Coercive Capacity: An Examination of China's Domestic Security Spending, 1992-2012," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 232 (Dec. 2017), pp. 1002-1025.

²⁸ Huirong Chen and Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Information Capacity and Social Order: The Local Politics of Information Integration in China," *Governance* (online first); Jessica Batke and Mareike Ohlberg, "State of Surveillance," *China File*, 30 October 2020, <https://www.chinafile.com/state-surveillance-china>

example, in the full name of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention).²⁹ China's response to the COVID-19 pandemic depended a lot on broader surveillance and security infrastructure that the party had already been developing for social control. Tools like grid management, which divides cities into grid areas and assigns teams to collect data to monitor them, were used to enforce lockdowns, conduct health surveillance, and provide services to quarantined residents, as were big-data platforms that could be used for predictive and "intelligence-led" or "informatized" policing.³⁰

China's surveillance build-up has had not only a domestic impact but a global one, as these platforms had been exported to at least 80 countries as of 2019.³¹ It is possible that the pandemic will enable Chinese-style health surveillance to become more normalized, especially in places where vaccination lags and leaders are desperate for public health solution; Chinese researchers have, in published work, praised the efficacy of some of these tools for pandemic "prevention and control."³² The United States needs to address China's efforts to shape the global governance of surveillance technology to ensure that international frameworks protect democracy and basic human rights and freedoms.

Xi's anti-corruption campaigns, which have particularly targeted the military and the political-legal system, are part of the broader effort to consolidate and protect political security, because they seek to ensure that corruption does not erode the party's "ruling foundation" at the grassroots, or make its personnel vulnerable to bribery and compromise by outside intelligence agencies.³³ The national security dimension of the anti-corruption campaign, along with the more general idea that external developments can generate or increase instability at home, has led to a notable increase in the

²⁹ Sheena Chestnut Greitens and Julian Gewirtz, "China's Troubling Vision for the Future of Public Health," *Foreign Affairs*, 10 July 2020.

³⁰ "Community grid system helps China fight virus," *Global Times*, 5 February 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1178528.shtml>; "Grid-based community workers power up China's coronavirus fight," *Xinhua*, 1 March 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-03/01/c_138832911.htm;

³¹ Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Dealing with Demand for China's Global Surveillance Exports," Brookings Global China project (April 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/dealing-with-demand-for-chinas-global-surveillance-exports/>

³² Yujun Wei, Zhonghua Ye, Meng Cui, and Xiaokun Wei, "COVID-19 Prevention and Control in China: Grid Governance," *Journal of Public Health* (September 2020), [10.1093/pubmed/fdaa175](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/341175/); see also Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Surveillance, Security, and Liberal Democracy in a Post-COVID World," International Organization, special issue on the pandemic, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization/article/surveillance-security-and-liberal-democracy-in-the-postcovid-world/15CDF2C062ADCAAD6B5D224630F62B1D>

³³ Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "The *Saobei* Campaign, Protection Umbrellas, and Impact on China's Political Legal Apparatus," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 2020, <https://www.prclleader.org/greitens-1>; Zach Dorfman, "China Used Stolen Data To Expose CIA Operatives in Africa and Europe," *Foreign Policy*, 21 December 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/21/china-stolen-us-data-exposed-cia-operatives-spy-networks/#>

international activities of Chinese law enforcement, and to attempts by the PRC to reshape global law enforcement and policing practices toward compatibility with the CCP's preferred approaches.³⁴

China's new "national security" approach has also produced significant changes in specific regions and policies -- most notably in Xinjiang, where the CCP has escalated a campaign of collective repression against the Uyghur Muslim population.³⁵ In fact, counterterrorism played a prominent role in Xi Jinping's earliest discussions of the comprehensive national security concept, in April 2014.³⁶ One way to understand the escalation that began in spring 2017 is to see it as motivated not only by domestic factors, but also by China's heightened sensitivity to the potential for small changes in the external environment to heighten the risk of internal destabilization, as the comprehensive national security strategy urged.³⁷ In this case, Chinese leaders appear to have focused on a perceived need to prevent terrorism from diffusing back into China via radicalized transnational Uyghur networks and links (however tenuous) to terrorist groups in Southeast Asia, Syria and the broader Middle East.³⁸ This is one variant of the internal-external security nexus that Xi's comprehensive concept called on officials to scrutinize and address. Combined with the preventive logic of "immunization," this framework has produced the sharp escalation in collective repression and grossly disproportionate violations of civil, political and other human rights that the world has witnessed in Xinjiang.

Implications for the United States

The comprehensive national security concept and national security strategy promulgated in 2014-15 by Xi Jinping and the Chinese leadership gives a prominent role to internal threats, particularly to the political security of the Chinese Communist Party. Much of the behavior we observe is the result of a grand strategy that is essentially a state security strategy, aimed fundamentally at protecting the internal regime security of the CCP. The requirement that the party-state take on a more proactive role in "prevention and control" of threats to that security, explains much of the PRC's more assertive and repressive behavior of late.

³⁴ See for example, Thomas Eder, Bertram Lang, and Moritz Rudolf, "China's Global Law Enforcement Drive," MERICS (January 2017), <https://merics.org/en/report/chinas-global-law-enforcement-drive>

³⁵ See testimony from the hearing "The Atrocities Against Uyghurs and Other Minorities in Xinjiang," House Foreign Affairs Committee, 6 May 2021, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2021/5/the-atrocities-against-uyghurs-and-other-minorities-in-xinjiang>

³⁶ Xi Jinping, "Safeguard National Security and Social Stability," 25 April 2014, later published in *The Governance of China* (p. 234); also online at *Qiusbi*, http://en.qsttheory.cn/2020-12/07/c_568712.htm. *Qiusbi* notes that these are the "main points of the speech at the 14th group study session of the Political Bureau of the 18th CPC Central Committee."

³⁷ Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Myunghee Lee, and Emir Yazici, "Counterterrorism as Preventive Repression: China's Changing Strategy in Xinjiang," *International Security* (Winter 2019/20).

³⁸ Xi Jinping noted, for example, that "after the United States pulls troops out of Afghanistan, terrorist organizations positioned on the frontiers of Afghanistan and Pakistan may quickly infiltrate into Central Asia... East Turkestan's terrorists who have received real-war training in Syria and Afghanistan could at any time launch terrorist attacks in Xinjiang." Quoted in Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, "Absolutely No Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detention of Muslims," *New York Times*, 19 November 2019.

Let me conclude by offering four implications of this framework for the United States and its relations with the People's Republic of China.

First, because the end or objective of the strategy is internal security, and the national security concept sees internal and external security as so closely connected, many of the tools that China emphasizes in pursuing its objectives are non-military ones -- including some that project techniques of internal control outward, beyond state borders. This means that while military power remains important for Sino-U.S. competition, the United States must also understand, predict, and be able to address the use of this broader toolkit.

Second, the strategy's emphasis on regime security may complicate the task of reassurance in US-China relations.³⁹ The US must address China's legitimate interests, and might state a negative -- that it does not actively seek to topple the CCP -- but it cannot and should not be in the business of assuring the CCP of its perpetual hold on political power.

Third, the United States must address China's efforts to shape global governance of surveillance technology, to ensure that international frameworks protect democracy & basic human rights and freedoms. The same is true of China's increasing involvement in global law enforcement cooperation and global security governance.

Fourth, the national security concept's interlinking of internal and external security puts increased stress on Chinese diaspora populations worldwide, because diasporas are inherently transnational. This stress manifests in policy challenges such as talent programs and illicit tech transfer, extraterritorial surveillance of ethnic minorities and activists, & concerns about the role of organizations like Chinese Student and Scholar Associations (CSSAs) on American campuses. It is entirely possible to address these challenges in ways that avoid racism and focus on the core problem -- the party-state's extension of its internal structures and practices abroad -- but only if we correctly diagnose the problem in the first place.

I thank you for your time and attention today, and look forward to your questions.

³⁹ For explication of this idea, see Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "China: Two Key Questions," *Democracy* (Summer 2021), <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/61/china-two-key-questions/>