



# China's Holistic Security Concept Explained

**OE Watch Commentary:** Speaking at the first meeting of China's National Security Commission (中央国家安全委员会) in April 2014, Xi Jinping argued for the adoption of a "holistic view of security." The Holistic Security Concept (总体国家安全观) has since become one of Xi's hallmark ideas on security and been widely adopted by Chinese Communist Party media. In 2015, the concept was inserted into China's semi-regular military white paper as demonstrated by the accompanying excerpts.

The concept's core characteristic is its combination of internal and external security factors as a single idea. Xi argues that, particularly from the perspective of a political party which dominates a nation but which is subject to internal and external threats, all aspects should be taken into consideration. Holistic security highlights the twin challenges Chinese leaders face: a complex international environment in which China has both long-standing security interests and increasingly global on one hand, and dramatic domestic issues that range from severe desertification, social inequality and economic transformation. Xi's argument is that if the (Party) state wishes to survive it must address these issues as a single set of problems, rather than breaking them out into traditional fields such as internal or external, military vs development.

Placing all of China's internal and domestic pressures under the same framework also raises the importance of the Party as center of power. All issues—be they military or even agricultural—are expected to be addressed in a whole-of-government, regimented or even campaign-like manner. Speaking in April 2018 at the 19th meeting of the National Security Commission, Xi emphasized that for China stability and development were key goals, and that achieving them required understanding China's National Security through the holistic framework. This helps explain why, for example, aspects such as culture are viewed as potential vectors for ideas that could weaken national security, and therefore require active guidance. While China can be expected to continue its rapid military modernization and advance in other traditional security fields, it is clear that their leadership has 'widened its lens' and will be tackling other issues with the understanding that they will have a direct impact on China's overall security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

**Source:** “习近平：全面贯彻落实总体国家安全观 开创新时代国家安全工作新局面 (Xi Jinping: Comprehensively Implement the Holistic National Security Concept, Begin a New Era of National Security Work in the New Situation),” 17 April 2018. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0417/c64094-29932536.html>

*We must not only be good at using the development results to consolidate the strength of national security, but also be good at creating a safe environment conducive to economic and social development, political security and the organic unity of the supremacy of national interests. People's security is the objective of national security. Political security is the foundation of national security. The supremacy of national interests is the norm of national security, to prevent and effectively deal with risks, to maintain and shape national security, to shape higher-level, more forward-looking safeguards, to play a role as a responsible big nation, to work together with other countries in the world to promote the establishment of a community of human destiny, and to adhere to scientific overall planning.”*

**Source:** “Xi Jinping, “A Holistic View of National Security,” *The Governance of China*, Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd, Beijing, China, 2014.

*We must pay close attention to both traditional and non-traditional security, and build a national security system that integrates such elements as political, homeland, military, economic, cultural, social, science and technology, information, ecological, resource and nuclear security. We should pay close attention to both development and security. The former is the foundation of the latter while the latter is a precondition for the former.*

**Source:** “中国的军事战略 (China's Military Strategy),” *China Ministry of Defense*, 26 May 2015. [http://www.mod.gov.cn/auth/2015-05/26/content\\_4586723.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/auth/2015-05/26/content_4586723.htm)

*In the new circumstances, 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, it is necessary to uphold a holistic view of national security, balance internal and external security, homeland and citizen security, traditional and nontraditional security, subsistence and development security, and China's own security and the common security of the world.*

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## When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>