

CHINA RESTRUCTURES ITS NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM (I)

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Executive Summary

1. In November 2013, after more than a decade-long debate, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) decided at its Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress to establish a National Security Commission (国家安全委员会 NSC) and start a new round of institutional reforms to restructure China's national security system.
2. Since 2013 there have been new developments in three domains: (i) re-conceptualising “national security” and adopting a new approach to overall national security; (ii) instituting a major statutory change by enacting “National Security Law of the People's Republic of China” on 1 July 2015; and (iii) introducing institutional and organisational changes in policy coordination and management on national security and foreign affairs.
3. President Xi Jinping justified the decision of establishing the NSC and reforming national security system with two major reasons – the security challenges China is facing and the institutional deficiency in the current system.
4. China today faces a much more complex and volatile national security environment. It faces both traditional and nontraditional security threats, coming from the outside and inside.
5. Compared with traditional security threats, non-traditional security threats to China's political and social stability, regime security, cyberspace, ideology and value system have become more pronounced in Chinese security thinking. Beijing always feels the pressure of the “colour revolution” from inside and outside.
6. Xi Jinping's “big power diplomacy” (大国外交) is a much more proactive approach to China's foreign relations; the establishment of the NSC is imperative for Xi Jinping to conduct China's big power diplomacy as China rises in world affairs.

7. There is still debate on whether China's NSC should have a more inward or outward focus on security issues; an inward focus would be more on the security of the state as a political entity and an outward focus would emphasise the security of the nation in international relations.
8. Xi Jinping's overall approach to national security with Chinese characteristics conflates domestic security challenges with foreign sources of threats. The "big security" concept gives the Chinese NSC comprehensive authority in deciding all security-related issues in China.