

**CHINA'S COUNCIL OF STATE SECURITY:
EVOLUTION, RATIONALITY
AND OPERATIONS**

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EAI Background Brief No. 905

Date of Publication: 26 March 2014

Executive Summary

1. The establishment of the Council of State Security of the People's Republic of China (CoSS) is a major regrouping of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s top power structure. It will add a new power arm to the Party centre, paralleling the Party bureaucracy, state administration and military command.
2. The CoSS's leadership team reflects its importance in China's governance structure: President Xi Jinping as the chair, assisted by two deputies – premier Li Keqiang and congressional president Zhang Dejiang – the number two and three men in the Party/state hierarchy. The CoSS is thus the country's highest authority for all key national security (NS) matters.
3. In full operation the CoSS will unify Chinese NS leadership in the formulation of NS strategies, crisis management at home and abroad, coordination of NS policies and actions by Party/army/state agencies and institutional links between China's CoSS and its counterparts world-wide.
4. One key new feature of the CoSS is its duo-emphasis on dealing with both internal and external security challenges, as compared to its predecessor—the National Security Leading Small Group—which oversaw national defense and security related foreign affairs, and traditional security issues.
5. The primary concern of the CoSS is, however, CCP regime security. It exercises integrated leadership in both traditional and non-traditional security, including economic security, anti-terrorism, internet/cyber security, environmental challenges, and even food safety. The management of these security challenges is a test to the Party's legitimacy.
6. Beijing sees its foreign affairs being threatened by US' Asia pivot that has visibly squeezed China's strategic space. Maritime territorial disputes have resulted in routine standoffs that require prompt and authoritative diplomatic and military responses from China's apex of power.

7. The heightened security situation at home and abroad underlines the timely creation of the CoSS which is integral to Xi's effort of power recentralization to rectify structural problems in China's political system. In a way the CoSS is reflective of Xi's leadership style: tackling challenges through political means (power) and in a head-on manner.
8. The CoSS will endeavor to improve existing NS establishments, consolidate NS material and institutional infrastructure and formulate long-term NS strategies and policies. Yet its top mission is crisis management of internal and external emergencies.
9. On the other hand, the CoSS can create new problems if it is not under due legal and institutional oversight. Power recentralization as a means to resolve systemic problems may become an end in itself. The CoSS's inevitable interference with people's life to protect state security may negatively affect state/society relations.