

# China Issues a White Paper Concerning National Security: The “Confidence” and “Anxiety” Presented in the White Paper and their Implications

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## Introduction

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The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China issued a white paper titled “China’s National Security in the New Era” (hereinafter referred to as the “White Paper”) on May 12.<sup>1</sup> The White Paper explains the position of the Chinese authorities concerning national security and is the first such document to be publicly released.<sup>2</sup>

As explained below, China interprets the definition and scope of national security broadly.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the range of the White Paper is also extremely extensive, encompassing such topics as domestic public orders, themes related to so-called “core interests” including the Taiwan issue and maritime rights and interests, and involvement in economic security and international security, among others. Owing to space limitations, it is difficult to analyze each of these individual themes, so this paper will outline the key points of the White Paper and analyze its distinctive statements. Then, based on these distinctive points, we point out that the White Paper conveys a mixture of China’s “confidence” and “anxiety,” and discuss how these sentiments affect China’s domestic and foreign policies.

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## 1. Overview of the White Paper

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The White Paper, including the preface and conclusion, is comprised of a total of eight parts. Below we summarize the content of those parts.

“Preface”

Under the Xi Jinping administration, expressing as the “new era” in China, national security has been strengthened through the promotion of reforms to national security systems and the enhancement of capabilities. Based on this, the objectives of the White Paper are to detail the Xi administration’s innovative philosophies and outcomes in national security operations, share experiences, and promote the peaceful development of other countries and the world.

“1. China injects certainty and stability into a world of change and disorder”

The world is standing at an historic crossroads, facing problems such as increasing geopolitical risks, a backlash against economic globalization, and increasing non-traditional security challenges. Moreover, the Asia-Pacific region is becoming a focal point of great power competition. In contrast with this, China has become one of the world’s most secure countries, against the backdrop of its growing national power and international influence, among other factors. In this context, China is facing pressure from Western sanctions and infiltration, so it is necessary for China to unite under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to promote the building of a great power and contribute to regional stability and world peace.

“2. A Holistic Approach to National Security guides national security efforts in the new era”

The Holistic Approach to National Security is the concept of national security proposed by President (“General Secretary” in the original text) Xi in April 2014, which states that it is necessary to ensure security in 20 fields,<sup>4</sup> including politics, the military, national territory, the economy, etc., and to skillfully manage important relationships between development and security, China’s domestic and overseas security, etc. to systematically augment the national security structure in a form under which each of the fields are coordinated with each other. When promoting national security based on the holistic approach to national security, the leadership of the CCP must be strengthened, and among the fields of national security the most important is ensuring political security, which means preservation of the CCP rule and the socialist system.

“3. Providing solid support for the steady and continued progress of Chinese modernization”

It is necessary to prevent in advance a variety of risks in the process of promoting Chinese-style modernization. For that reason, China must first protect the security of its administration, institutions, and ideology, and prevent hostile forces from engaging in infiltration, sabotage, subversion, or separatist activities. Furthermore, it is necessary to enhance the people’s sense of security, guarantee high-quality development, including making supply chains resilient and making science and technology independent, and ensure the utilization and risk management of new domains (“新興領域” in the Chinese), such as cyberspace, data, and AI. Moreover, we should strive to protect our territorial integrity, including promoting the reunification of Taiwan, and our

maritime rights and interests.

"4. Reinforcing security in development and pursuing development in security"

To achieve both security and development together, it is necessary to foster a favorable external environment, strengthen security based on law, and simultaneously and in parallel promote the utilization of new technologies and legal regulations, among other measures. Furthermore, while it is necessary to further open up to the outside world, we must also develop various measures to counter foreign interference, sanctions, and long-arm jurisdiction (extraterritorial application of law) to protect China's right to development. For that reason, in addition to the legislation which has been developed previously, it is necessary to promote the rule of law externally ("涉外" in the Chinese), including judicial cooperation.

"5. Implementing the Global Security Initiative and promoting the common security of the world"

Outdated ideas such as spheres of influence, stability through hegemony, and the alliance system, etc. are inadequate for meeting the challenges of new security domains, so new philosophies and methods are necessary for the common security of the world. In this context, China has proposed the Global Security Initiative, which is equivalent to a "global version" of the holistic approach to national security, which has gained the support of many countries. Based on the philosophies and principles of this initiative China will promote international security based on the United Nations system, engage constructively in regional problems such as Ukraine, the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula, etc., and participate in and cooperate with the formulation of rules on various issues in global governance, including in new domains.

"6. Advancing the modernization of the national security system and capacity through deepening reforms"

When maintaining national security, the construction of systems is necessary, and for that reason we must develop each of the systems for institutions, the rule of law, strategies, early warning of risks, and crisis management. Moreover, in order to protect national security, we should strengthen the various fields of social governance, securing of energy and resources, the military forces, science and technology, engagement in the international community, and propaganda and education pertaining to national security.

"Conclusion"

China has itself been entrusted with protecting the security of its people and maintaining the peace of the world. Furthermore, at the same time as China pursues its own security, it will also work with other countries to build and enjoy international security.

As described above, while the White Paper is based on the premise that China's national security should be strengthened based on the concept of a holistic approach to national security, it positioned China's national security as a means of promoting "Chinese-style modernization." In addition, it expresses China's commitment to achieving both security and development together and engaging in international security, while also describing the development of the foundations and means necessary to achieve this.

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## 2. The Distinctive Statements in the White Paper

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The content of the statements in the White Paper overlaps in many areas with previous documents on national security issued by the Chinese authorities as well as with speeches by senior officials including President Xi Jinping. Accordingly, the White Paper can be positioned as a document which is the culmination at the present time of the Xi administration's national security concept. In this context, the following three distinctive points can be identified in the statements used in the White Paper.

Firstly, the notion of "Chinese-style modernization" is employed within the context of national security. Chinese-style modernization is a Chinese narrative that asserts the existence of a uniquely Chinese modernization model different from that of the West. According to SUZUKI Takashi, President Xi talked about the details of Chinese-style modernization in a speech given in February 2023 to the 20th Central Committee of the CCP members, alternate members, and cabinet-level officials.<sup>5</sup> In this speech, Xi explains Chinese-style modernization in a way which interprets the modernization experience of "the West" (a category that includes Europe, the United States, Japan) critically.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we can detect in the speech the perception that in the long term the West will decline and an "East" comprised of developing countries led by China will rise, the perception that China is superior to the West in terms of governance stability, and other perceptions.<sup>7</sup> As described above, preservation of the CCP rule, protection of territorial integrity and maritime rights and interests, ensuring economic security, and other matters are asserted in the part of the White Paper which mentions Chinese-style modernization, so it is apparent from the White Paper that China perceives that these objectives are necessary in order for China to ensure an institutional advantage over the West.

Secondly, the White Paper emphasizes engagement in international security issues. China presented a variety of policies concerning engagement in international security issues in its Global Security Initiative Concept Paper (hereinafter referred to as "The Paper") published in February

2023,<sup>8</sup> and the content of the statements in the White Paper is basically the same as those in "The Paper." On the other hand, the White Paper rejects previous forms of international security, such as the alliance system. At the same time, the White Paper emphasizes development of a security environment based on "the common security of the world," which is focused on "common security,"<sup>9</sup> the belief that security should be pursued the coexistence of one's own security with that of others. Therefore, we can also point out that a distinctive feature of the White Paper is that it sets out a view of security that is "idealistic" in a certain way. This can be detected from the statement in the White Paper that "the pursuit of absolute security will only lead us to fall into a security dilemma. Ideological divisions, the formation of camps targeting specific countries, and exclusive 'small circles' will only create division and confrontation."

Thirdly, the White Paper places importance on the "rule by law." This focus can be detected from the facts that sixteen laws established or amended under the Xi's administration, including the National Security Law, Counter-Espionage Law are presented in the Appendix of the White Paper,<sup>10</sup> laws related to foreign relations also established under the Xi administration, such as the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, Law on Foreign Relations, etc., are mentioned in the main text as well, and the rule by law is positioned as one of the pillars of building a national security system.

There are two conceivable reasons behind the priority given to the rule of law in the White Paper. The first is an intention to clearly state in law a broad policy for protecting national security based on the Holistic Approach to National Security. This is thought to have been done with the intention of not only strengthening control domestically, but also legitimizing "law enforcement" or "punitive measures" abroad based on various laws and regulations.<sup>11</sup> It is necessary to note that while the White Paper opposes the above "long-arm jurisdiction," China itself is promoting "long-arm jurisdiction." For example, President Xi has insisted on the construction of a legal system that would allow Chinese law to be applied extraterritorially.<sup>12</sup>

The second point is that China is keeping in mind the possibility of taking the lead in fields where there is ample room for norm formation, with an eye toward participating in international rule-making. In this context, XIE Bo, a professor at the Southwest University of Political Science and Law, claims that it is necessary to actively advance the development of laws in fields, including new domains, saying "in domains where current national security legislation has gaps, such as outer space, the deep sea, electromagnetic spectrum, overseas interests, and military operations abroad, China needs to switch from the previous method of 'passively responsive' legislation to legislation that 'takes the initiative in these emerging fields'."<sup>13</sup>

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## **Conclusion: China's Self-Perceptions and Worldview Mixing "Confidence" and**

## **“Anxiety” and Their Implications**

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In a related development, the White Paper was published at a time when the second Trump administration, which was inaugurated this year, is clearly adopting an oppositional stance toward China while also retreating from international engagement, including a major reduction in foreign aid. The White Paper presents a view of security consisting of “the common security of the world” in a form which contrasts with the “alliance system” and “hegemony” concepts which are considered to have in mind the approach to international security taken by the United States, and declares that China can ensure security based on this view. Moreover, the White Paper positioned China’s model of modernization, or “Chinese-style modernization,” which China considers superior to the model of the United States and other Western countries, as being a purpose of the promotion of national security. Based on the nature of the above statements in the White Paper, we can detect manifestations of China’s “confidence” that there is a possibility that China will surpass the United States and other Western countries going forward both as a provider of international security and in the form of its own system of governance.

At the same time, however, in contrast with this confidence, “anxiety” that external pressures are threatening the rule of the CCP can also be seen in the White Paper. Based on this sense of anxiety, it is anticipated that China will continue to strengthen domestic control going forward and it is also predicted that China will continue to take a hardline stance on issues such as Taiwan and maritime disputes, while intensifying competition with the West in areas including economic security and establishment of international rules.

The self-perceptions and worldview in the White Paper-where confidence and anxiety intertwine,-may actually undermine China’s security in some respects. For example, while the White Paper presents a view of international security that could be seen as idealistic, actually China itself has taken actions regarding territorial and maritime issues that could be seen as “hegemonic.” This has provoked backlashes from neighboring countries, the United States, and other countries, intensifying confrontation with them, and this does not work to the advantage of the security of China. Furthermore, while China advocates opening up to the outside world, it has developed and is enforcing a range of national security laws that can be applied extraterritorially. It can be pointed out that this situation discourages investment from overseas, and also has a negative effect on development, which is inextricably linked to security, and could damage China’s image abroad. In this way, we can conclude that the superiority of its own country that China emphasizes is offset in some respects by its actions based on its sense of anxiety.

(Document completed on May 28, 2025)

<sup>1</sup> Whenever the content of the “White Paper” is mentioned in this paper, unless otherwise noted, it is a citation from “China’s National Security in the New Era” by the State Council Information Office, *People’s Daily* [人民日報], May 13, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Mathieu Duchâtel indicated that there is some unofficial information suggesting China formulated guidelines for a national security strategy for the next five years in 2021 and this White Paper is intended to present guidelines for 2026 to 2031 (Mathieu Duchâtel, “Reading China’s White Paper on National Security in the New Era”, Expressions by Montaigne, May 13, 2025, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/reading-chinas-white-paper-national-security-new-era>). The guidelines document for the five years from 2021 indicated by Duchâtel is highly likely to be the National Security Strategy (2021–2025) deliberated on in the Chinese Communist Party Politburo in November 2021 (its content has not been made public). For more information regarding the National Security Strategy, refer to the “Deliberations on the National Security Strategy (2021–2025), the Regulation on the Armed Forces’ Honor System, and the National Science and Technology Advisory Commission 2021 Advisory Report in Meetings of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo Presided Over by Xi Jinping [中共中央政治局會議審議《國家安全戰略（2021～2025年）》《軍隊功勳榮譽表彰條例》和《國家科技諮詢委員會 2021 年諮詢報告》 習近平主持]”, *www.gov.cn* [中國政府網], November 18, 2021. [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/18/content\\_5651753.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/18/content_5651753.htm)).

<sup>3</sup> National security [安全] can be translated as “the security [安全保障] of a nation” but in this commentary we use the expression “(national) security [安全保障]” in the case that we are indicating security as a general noun, while in the case that we are mentioning documents or assertions by China we use “(national) security [安全]”, the form in line with the original text.

<sup>4</sup> The 20 fields of politics, national territory, military, economy, culture, society, science and technology, cyberspace, ecology (the environment), resources, nuclear issues, outer space, the deep sea, the polar regions, biotechnology, finance, food, AI, data, and overseas interests.

<sup>5</sup> Xi Jinping [習近平], “Comprehensively Promoting Construction of a Great Power and the Great Cause of National Rejuvenation through Chinese-Style Modernization [以中國式現代化全面推進強國建設、民族復興偉業]”, *Qiushi Journal* [求是] 2025 No. 01.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the specific characteristics of Chinese-style modernization in the speech by President Xi, refer to SUZUKI Takashi [鈴木隆], “Chinese-Style Modernization as a New Modernization Model for the 21st Century: On Xi Jinping’s Speech of February 7, 2023”, *Bulletin of The Institute Of International Affairs* [國際情勢紀要], No. 95, March 2025, pp. 43-44.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> “The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper [全球安全倡議概念文件]”, *www.gov.cn* [中國政府網], February 21, 2023, [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-02/21/content\\_5742481.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-02/21/content_5742481.htm). Also refer to M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s Security Initiative at Two: A Journey, Not Destination”, *China Leadership Monitor*, June 2024, for research which analyzes the statements in “The Paper”.

<sup>9</sup> ENDO Seiji [遠藤誠治], “Is Common Security Possible?” in “What is Security?” edited by ENDO Seiji [遠藤誠治] and ENDO Ken [遠藤乾], *Iwanami Shoten*, 2014, p. 286.

<sup>10</sup> Respectively, the National Security Law, Counter-Terrorism Law, Law on the Management of Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations’ Activities within Mainland China, Cybersecurity Law, Nuclear Safety Law, National Intelligence Law, Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Export Control Law, Law on National Defense (Amended), Biosecurity Law, Data Security Law, Land Borders Law, Counter-Espionage Law, Law on Foreign State Immunity, Law on Guarding State Secrets, and Food Security Law. “Law of the People’s Republic of China on” is stated in the official names of all of the laws, but in this commentary we omit “People’s Republic of China.”

<sup>11</sup> For example, regarding the point that China’s Ministry of Public Security is engaged in activities, including covert activities, based on the Holistic Approach to National Security, refer to GOTO Yohei [後藤洋平] and SETO Takashi [瀬戸崇志], “The Chinese Ministry of Public Security as an External Influence Agency: Recent Covert Operations and Their Internal Logic as Traced through Open-Source Analysis”, *NIDS Commentary* No. 371, April 25, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Xi Jinping [習近平], “Adhering to the Path of Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics and Advancing the Development of the System of Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics [堅持走中國特色社會主義法治道路 更好推進中國特色社會主義法治體系建設]”, *www.gov.cn* [中國政府網], February 15, 2022, [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-02/15/content\\_5673681.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-02/15/content_5673681.htm).

<sup>13</sup> XIE Bo [謝波], “Using the Rule by Law to Maintain and Shape National Security [運用法治思維維護和塑造國家安全]”, *gmw.cn* [光明網], August 5, 2022, [https://theory.gmw.cn/2022-08/05/content\\_35934665.htm](https://theory.gmw.cn/2022-08/05/content_35934665.htm).

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