

Regime security has been a central concern of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) dating back to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and an acute sense of internal and external threat has been a central component of the CCP's DNA since its inception in 1921. No single other goal has occupied as much time, as many resources, and the amount of attention as has the struggle to ensure that the party remains the unrivaled and unthreatened permanent single ruling authority of China. Efforts to promote and consolidate "national security" prior to the elevation of Xi Jinping in late 2012 were perceived by many Chinese policymakers and security officials as inconsistent, uncoordinated, and insufficiently institutionalized. At the same time, domestic and external events emerged after the turn of the millennium which reinforced to many the inadequacies in existing national security policymaking as well as the gaps in how Beijing conceptualized the very nature of national security and national security risks. Xi Jinping has changed all of this, having overseen a profound expansion of the scope, scale, and capabilities of China's national security apparatus. A key driver of these changes is the Overall National Security Outlook (总体国家安全观), which Xi first announced in 2014.¹ This essay examines the origins and growth of the Overall National Security Outlook and offers an assessment of how the growing prioritization of national security will impact China's future development and external behavior.

Since Xi Jinping became the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in late 2012, he has not only changed the direction and substance of Chinese foreign policy, but also formulated new strategic doctrines and concepts that underlie China's national security strategy. Some of the most substantive changes have arisen as the direct result of the Overall National Security Outlook (总体国家安全观) (ONSO), which was publicly unveiled on April 15, 2014. The Outlook was and is less a set of discrete policy instructions and more a broad framework to drive both abstract and concrete actions in a number of domains, including ideological campaigns, security governance and institutional reform, new legal architecture, and an adaptive process for anticipating and responding to emerging and legacy national security challenges.² In his first

¹ There are at least three widely accepted translations of 总体国家安全观: the "holistic national security concept," the "comprehensive national security concept," and the "overall national security outlook." Chinese state propaganda uses the "holistic national security concept" and the "overall national security outlook" somewhat interchangeably, with what appears to be a slight preference for the former.

² For more information on the ONSO, see Tai Ming Cheung, *Innovate to Dominate: The Rise of the Chinese Techno-Security State* (Cornell University Press, 2022); Sheena Greitens, "Internal Security & Grand Strategy: China's Approach to National Security under Xi Jinping," Statement

announcement of the Outlook (February 17, 2014), Xi “stressed the need to accurately grasp new features and trends of the changing national security situation,” a view shared by many national security hawks in China who believed that new domestic forces and international threats were overtaking the capabilities of the existing national security architecture.³

The ONSO also reflected a shifting assessment of China’s “period of strategic opportunity” (重要战略机遇期), first announced by Jiang Zemin in 2002 but built on the foundation of Deng Xiaoping’s 1985 assessment that “peace and development are the theme of the times” (和平与发展的时代主题). Under Xi Jinping, this assessment has been modified to reflect a darker assessment of China’s strategic environment: “In recent years, the theme of the times of peace and development has faced serious challenges, and the world is neither peaceful nor tranquil.”⁴ Some Chinese analysts see the ONSO as a necessary response to China’s current and critical dilemma – how to continue to exert its influence on the global stage while managing the accompanying pushback and risks. As the read-out from a recent conference on national security held at Peking University concludes, “[China] must grasp the key link to avoid a dilemma, either moving forward and confronting greater risk, or retreating backwards and therefore losing international power and prestige.”⁵ Some hold that China’s growing power threatens America’s sense of status and hegemony, and, thus, America will adopt increasingly belligerent and confrontational actions to undermine China’s continued rise.

The ONSO also signals an important shift in how the party balances economic development and national security, with the latter now taking precedence over the former.⁶ As Xi stated in 2016, “to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation's Chinese dream, to ensure that people live and work in peace and happiness, *national security is the top priority* (头等大事)”⁷ [emphasis added]. Similar language is included in the 2021 History Resolution: “Comrade Xi Jinping has stressed that our Party should make national security its top priority.”⁸ This does not

before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission Hearing on “U.S.-China Relations at the Chinese Communist Party’s Centennial,” January 28, 2021, <https://www.readkong.com/page/internal-security-grand-strategy-china-s-approach-to-1729854> ; Joel Wuthnow, "Transforming China’s National Security Architecture in the Xi Era," Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on “CCP Decision-Making and the 20th Party Congress,” January 27, 2022, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Joel_Wuthnow_Testimony.pdf

³ http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2014-02/17/content_2610754.htm

⁴ <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0418/c1002-32401150.html>

⁵ “守正创新，筑牢国家安全底线，推动国家安全学学科发展：2022年‘总体国家安全观与新时代中国国家安全’论坛会议综述，”国际政治研，2022(2)

⁶ In the security discourse, this adjustment is framed as a “correct handling of relationships,” an approach that befits the CCP’s Marxist heritage.

⁷ <https://www.12371.cn/2022/04/15/ARTI1649981318858737.shtml>

⁸ https://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202111/16/content_WS6193a935c6d0df57f98e50b0.html

mean that the party no longer cares about economic growth and development, which remain the foundation for national power. Rather, this represents an attempt to readjust the prioritization of the party-state apparatus away from the narrower focus on material conditions and GDP growth rates and toward the ecosystem of factors that might undermine the CCP's hold on power.

At the broadest level, the ONSO addresses two main categories of risk: traditional (传统) and non-traditional (非传统). Traditional risks include threats to China's territorial integrity and threats emanating from foreign military powers. Essentially, these threats emerge externally, and they largely subsist within existing structures of national security cognition and policymaking. Non-traditional risks, in contrast, encompass a much wider and disparate web of challenges, including climate change, pandemics, cultural security, and mass migration. This second set of challenges is equally likely to emanate from *within* China as they are from without. This widening risk aperture is driven, some argue, by changes in the international system, ripple effects from societal modernization, and the deepening of economic, financial, and technological globalization.⁹ One analysis of "non-traditional security" by two scholars at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) sees rising challenges to China's conception of non-traditional security stemming from "not only... objective factors such as social development, changes in [social currents], and scientific and technological progress, but also the reckless promotion of so-called great power competition and intensified geopolitical contention among major countries."¹⁰

The maximalist and expansionist way the CCP conceptualizes risks leads, intentionally, to a blurring of demarcation lines, such that Beijing no longer sees meaningful distinctions between external and internal risks nor distinctions between traditional and non-traditional security. Analytical interpretations of the ONSO stress and complement its "overall" or "comprehensive" nature, arguing that it builds a 360-degree institutionalized and adaptive system that can address emergent and legacy challenges as well as these new non-traditional threats. What begins as a localized virus outbreak, for example, may soon become a domestic governance challenge and, as recent history shows, a source of friction between the great powers. Former dean of Peking University's School of International Studies Jia Qingguo argues in a lengthy analysis of the ONSO, "The so-called 'overall' [of the ONSO] means that all levels and all fields of national security should be addressed when thinking about national security issues."¹¹

Indeed, whereas the post-Tiananmen Square period, which includes the collapse of the Soviet Union, led to a primary focus on addressing chiefly internal risks, the ONSO indicates that balance has shifted to a focus on addressing external risks. As a recent commentary in the *People's Daily* states: "General Secretary Xi Jinping repeatedly stresses that while we must prevent and control all kinds of risks, the focus should be on preventing and controlling those

⁹ http://www.cssn.cn/mkszy/sxzzjy/201606/t20160607_3060939.shtml

¹⁰ 傅小强, 韩立群, "非传统安全对国家安全的影响趋势研究," 国家安全研究, no. 2 (2022): 88–103.

¹¹ <https://www.aisixiang.com/data/131218.html>

global risks that may delay or interrupt the process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”¹²

The core of the ONSO: Political and ideological security

According to the 2015 National Security Law, “National security is the relative absence of danger and freedom from internal and external threats to state power, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the well-being of the people, sustainable economic and social development and other vital interests of the country as well as the ability to guarantee a state of continuous security.”¹³

This definition, however, obscures the concentric circles that comprise the ONSO and Beijing’s evolving conceptualization of national security and national security risks. What becomes evident from discourse surrounding the ONSO is that the most critical aspect of “national security” is, in fact, “political security,” which can more accurately be described as “CCP security.” Writing in *People’s Daily*, Cao Shiquan, president of People’s Public Security University of China, argues that faithfully adhering to the ONSO necessitates “ensuring political security as the primary task.”¹⁴ An article posted on a website run by the Central Organization Department puts this more poetically: “In the body of national security, political security is the heart. If the heart stops beating, even the strongest body will lose its vitality.”¹⁵ The article continues, “the most fundamental thing to maintain political security is to safeguard the leadership and ruling position of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.”¹⁶ National security is at its core political security, and political security should prioritize the safeguarding of the CCP. In one sense, this conclusion makes sense, given the singular and unassailable role the CCP has assigned for itself in China’s political hierarchy, but in another sense, this is a striking statement, for it places, functionally speaking, the party *as an organization* above the well-being and security of the Chinese people.

Closely related to political security in the ONSO discourse is “ideological security.” The driver of this motivation is the fear that if the ideological correctness and fortitude of both Communist Party members and society at large lose their vitality, the entire political system will soon collapse. Xi has put the matter bluntly: “The disintegration of a regime often begins in the realm of ideology... when the defensive line on the plane of ideology is breached, other lines of defense are hard to hold.”¹⁷ In a lengthy analysis of the importance of ideological security, Tang Aijun, a scholar of Marxism at the Central Party School, argues that the CCP’s ability to offensively promote and instill its own ideological narrative within Chinese society and defensively protect Chinese society from infiltration by foreign, hostile ideologies is critical for China’s overall

¹² <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0418/c64387-32401430.html>

¹³ <http://hubei.chinatax.gov.cn/hbsw/xxgk/zfxxgk/zdgkjbm/zcfg/zcwj/1154065.htm>

¹⁴ http://www.qstheory.cn/qshyjx/2022-08/05/c_1128892862.htm

¹⁵ <https://www.12371.cn/2021/09/14/ARTI1631573506241929.shtml>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <http://cpc.people.com.cn/pinglun/n/2013/0901/c78779-22764230.html>

security. “The importance of ideology to political security lies in its ability to bestow political legitimacy, which provides an effective defense of political regimes and systems,” Tang writes in a 2019 issue of *Socialism Studies* (社会主义研究). He concludes, “Once mainstream ideology loses its ability to defend its legitimacy, political security will face serious threats, especially if a state is penetrated by the ideology of a hostile state.”¹⁸ Writing in *Campus Party Building and Ideological Education* (学校党建与思想教育), another Marxism researcher writes that, “The fundamental purpose of China's ideological security is to maintain the leadership of the CCP and the fundamental socialist system, to prevent and resolve ideological infiltration by Western capitalist countries that conspire to undermine and subvert the socialist system, and to maximize the general public’s recognition and acceptance by giving full play to the advantages of the party's leadership and the socialist system.”¹⁹

The ONSO discourse on ideological security brings forth an interesting tension – between a conviction that so-called “socialist values” are ineluctably superior to Western alternatives, and what’s more, they are uniquely suited for China’s unique characteristics. But they are also under a sustained and often successful attack by “hostile foreign forces” attempting to poison the minds of Chinese citizens and party members alike. Reading between the lines, it is as if party theorists understand the tenuous hold that the orthodox ideology has in a rapidly modernizing and cosmopolitan society, thus explaining the extreme defensiveness about any attack, both real or imagined.

Top-level design of a new national security system

Responding to previous failures in national security policymaking, the ONSO seeks to eradicate bureaucratic stove-piping, organizational demarcations between traditional/non-traditional security threats as well as between external/internal threats. Instead, the ONSO is organized around a conception of a threat ecosystem, or “realm of threat” (威胁场域). As Tang Aijun writes, “National security is integral and systemic. That is, national security in various fields constitutes an interconnected whole, and security situations in different fields interact with each other.”²⁰ Yet there was a consensus that China’s national security system (国家安全体系) had glaring gaps and bureaucratic inefficiencies that frustrated Beijing’s ability to effectively perceive, respond, and prevent risks across the entire “realm of threat.” As one senior Party researcher summarizes:

Compared with the requirements of the situation and tasks, the coordination mechanism for maintaining national security is unsound; the management system and working mechanisms for national security mobilization, response

¹⁸ <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/ideological-security-in-the-framework-of-the-overall-national-security-outlook>

¹⁹ 俞婷, "总体国家安全观视域下的意识形态安全探析," 学校党建与思想教育, no. 4 (2022): 22–25.

²⁰ <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/ideological-security-in-the-framework-of-the-overall-national-security-outlook>

to extreme situations, and the handling of major emergencies need to be improved; there are weak links in the formulation of rules in new security areas such as cross-border data flows, personal information security protection, and cyberspace management; and there are few means and methods to proactively lead and actively shape the external security environment.²¹

One of the critical steps Xi took to address these institutional gaps was to create the Central National Security Commission (中央国家安全委员会) in late 2013. The idea was not new, having first been discussed in the wake of the 1995–96 Taiwan Straits Crisis and eventually resulting in the establishment of a National Security Work Leading Small Group (中央国家安全工作领导小组) in 2000, which later, in about 2008, was referenced under the slightly adjusted name “National Security Leading Small Group” (中央国家安全领导小组). It was clear to many senior national security officials that Beijing needed a more coordinated approach to manage national security crises, and while the National Security Leading Small Group did reportedly play a role in managing several crises, including the 2000 collision between a US EP-3 signals intelligence aircraft and a PLAN J-8II interceptor fighter jet, by the time Xi assumed office in late 2012, it was understood that China lacked an entity with sufficient political credibility and bureaucratic reach to bridge the various gaps in China’s overall security picture.

The Central National Security Commission (CNSC) was first announced at the 3rd Plenum of the 18th Party Congress in November 2013, with the meeting’s read-out stating simply that the new Commission would “improve the national security system and national security strategy to ensure national security” (完善国家安全体制和国家安全战略, 确保国家安全). The CNSC did not formally convene until the following spring, when, at its first meeting on April 15, 2014, the ONSO was announced. During this inaugural meeting, Xi Jinping stressed that the body was part of a larger project to “promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity” as well as to “better adapt to the new situation and new tasks facing our national security.”²²

From top to bottom, the new CNSC was a purely party institution, thus marking yet another shift in policymaking and implementation authority away from the government apparatus (i.e., the State Council) and toward the CCP, a trend that has been one of the defining features of the Xi era. Some scholars, however, initially called for the CNSC to fall under State Council control, arguing that if structured as a purely CCP institution, “the party will directly deal with national security affairs, and this “party replacing government” power model (“以党代政”的权力模式) has proven to have many drawbacks in the past decades.”²³

For years after its initial promulgation, however, the CNSC appeared dormant. This led prominent US security analysts to declare in 2016 that the Commission “has gone dark,” an

²¹ 田培炎, “着力推进国家安全体系和能力建设,” 党建研究, no. 1 (2022): 42–46.

²² http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-04/15/c_1110253910.htm

²³ See 马岭, “国家安全委员会的法律地位之探讨,” 上海政法学院学报, no. 6 (2014): 1–8. Thanks to Chris Buckley for flagging this argument.

assessment that was widely shared.²⁴ It was not until 2018 that the CNSC appeared to come alive, at least publicly. At an April 17, 2018 meeting of the Commission, only the second known convening of the Commission since its inception, Xi's tone had darkened, perhaps reflecting China's increasingly volatile relationship with the United States. In his speech to the Commission, Xi noted that even if the future appears bright, the party must "enhance its sense of worry and prepare for danger."²⁵

This second meeting seemed to roughly coincide with the expansion of sub-national NSCs, from the provincial to the county levels, that were subordinate to higher-level NSCs, and all ultimately reporting to the CNSC that was commanded by Xi himself. Helpfully, these sub-national NSCs offer significantly more information about their purpose, finances, and personnel make-up than does the CNSC. What is notable, on paper at least, is just how much work the NSCs are responsible for, up to and including doing research on local-level conditions that impact national security and stability, taking the lead in implementing the National Security Law and other relevant security legislation, coordinating with other security-related actors to ensure national security and social stability, implementing the "national security risk monitoring and early warning system" (国家安全风险监测预警制度), formulating local-level plans to "maintain national security and social stability," working with other local security organs to "investigate and rectify hidden dangers," and leading local-level propaganda and educational campaigns on national security, among other responsibilities.²⁶

In addition to the system of National Security Commissions, Xi ushered through a raft of new legislation under the rubric of building a more complete national security system. Major initiatives include the National Security Law (2015), Counter-Terrorism Law (2015), National Defense Transportation Law (2016), National Intelligence Law (2017), Foreign NGO Law (2017), Cyber Security Law (2017), Foreign Investment Law (2020), and the recent Data Security Law (2021).²⁷

Finally, Xi has also moved to encapsulate national security work within a larger strategic structure, and after approving a "National Security Strategy Outline" (国家安全战略纲要) in 2015, the Politburo passed a larger "National Security Strategy 2021–2025" (国家安全战略) in November 2021, a first in PRC history. Both documents remain internal, and little is known outside of what is communicated through short summaries. One such summary, which accompanied announcement of the National Security Strategy, stresses the importance of

²⁴ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/30/chinas-much-heralded-national-security-council-has-disappeared-nsc-xi-jinping/>

²⁵ http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/17/content_5283445.htm

²⁶ https://web.archive.org/web/20220816211316/http://www.qusong.gov.cn/zwgk/zdlyxxgk/yjsgk/202106/t20210603_82746.html

²⁷ An assessment of the impact of this legislation, either independently or collectively, is beyond the scope of this analysis.

“[improving] a centralized, unified, efficient, and authoritative national security work leadership system.”²⁸

From the ONSO to the GSI

The ONSO has always been deeply embedded within a global conception of risk, and, as discussed above, national security intellectuals in China have repeatedly stressed the artificiality of demarcations between internal and external national security risks. This consensus has been strengthened with the growing Sino-US rivalry and Russia’s war in Ukraine.²⁹ Writing in a recent issue of *National Security Studies* (国家安全研究), security scholars Huang Tianzhong and Ji Riyue conclude, “The Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022 is a major event that has profoundly affected the international landscape and the direction of the world since the end of the Cold War ... [which has] once again confirmed the correctness and necessity of China's adherence to the overall national security concept and its unswerving pursuit of the national security path with Chinese characteristics.”³⁰

But in one of the more interesting recent developments in China’s discourse on national security, in April 2022 Xi Jinping unveiled the Global Security Initiative (全球安全倡议) (GSI) during a virtual speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference.³¹ While in his initial speech, Xi largely outlined a framework that stayed close to Beijing’s established talking points on “common security,” senior security analysts at thinktanks such as CICIR and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) make a clear connection between the GSI and the ONSO. Feng Weijiang, a senior researcher at CASS, argues that the ONSO provides an “important theoretical foundation” for the GSI.³² Scholars at CICIR’s Research Center for the Overall National Security Outlook write in a lengthy analysis that the GSI provides a “‘World Chapter’ (世界篇) of the overall national security outlook, making the theoretical system of the overall national security outlook more three-dimensional and systematic.”

Although the GSI remains in its infancy, it is telling that analysts in China see a straight-line from what the ONSO has done to shape both the conceptualization of national security and the policymaking and governance architecture that supports it to this new GSI. While previous attempts to shape global security governance have largely fallen flat, most notably the New Security Concept of the late 1990s,³³ Beijing’s ability to shape discourse and global governance

²⁸ http://www.news.cn/2021-11/18/c_1128077610.htm

²⁹ It should be noted that Chinese scholars continue to refer to Putin’s invasion as a “special military operation” (特别军事行动).

³⁰ 黄天忠, 季日月, “总体国家安全观视域下的俄乌冲突及战略思考,” 国家安全研究, no. 2 (2022): 5–19..

³¹ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202204/t20220421_10671083.html

³² <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/the-theoretical-foundation-of-the-global-security-initiative-the-holistic-view-of-national-security/>

³³ <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cegv/eng/cjkk/cjiblc/cjlc/t85397.htm>

outcomes today is significantly improved, and so it may take some time before conclusions can be reached about the GSI's potency.

Concluding remarks

This analytical assessment has looked at some of the major moving pieces encompassed in Xi Jinping's Overall National Security Outlook, but it is already clear the ONSO is leading to some important, and in many ways worrying, trends in China that will impact not only the tone and tenor of its domestic governance but also its external behavior.

The first and most obvious impact of the ONSO is its rationalization and institutionalization of the CCP's long-standing fear (and paranoia) about threats to its hold on power. Indeed, it represents a fully-sanctioned call for CCP cadres to embrace this security-first approach to governance. As State Security Minister Chen Wenqing writes in an April issue of *Qiushi*, "It is a distinctive trait of the Chinese Communists to always think far ahead and be prepared for danger in times of peace (居安思危)." ³⁴ This may be the case, but unless kept in check, this "distinctive trait" will incentivize paranoia over pragmatism and, what's more, crowd-out time and space for cadres to be accurately calibrating and thus prioritizing truly impactful risks.

It is notable that in contradistinction to dominant narratives in much of the outside world that see the CCP's form of ideological governance on the ascendance, internal narratives position China under a constant barrage of Western-led plots to "infiltrate" and sabotage China's political system. The attacks are described as multipronged, incorporating US-led efforts to utilize its cultural and economic hegemony, its influence in global governance, and its setting of "discourse traps" (话语陷阱) to undermine faith in China's political system and the ideological scaffolding that supports it. In a long analysis of the "national security system," Tian Peiyan, deputy director of the CCP's Central Policy Research Office (中央政研室), argues that "The struggle in the ideological field is fierce, and hostile forces have not ceased in their attempts to Westernize and divide China (西化分化), intensifying their political smear campaigns, public opinion siege, and attacks on China's political system."³⁵

This acute pathological fear of subversion can already be seen in local-level governance, where Beijing's efforts to forge a coterie of "national security cadres" (国家安全干部) are leading to an inflation of national security risks. As a security committee in southwest China warned local cadres, "Don't simplistically equate 'nothing has gone wrong' with 'nothing will go wrong,'" adding, "At every moment always act as if we're walking on thin ice, as if on the edge of an abyss."³⁶ To take another example, in a recent "Program for Resolutely Waging the Tough Battle to Prevent and Defuse Major Risks," the Communist Party Committee of Niangziguan (娘子

³⁴ <https://www.breakinglatest.news/news/firmly-establish-and-practice-the-overall-national-security-concept-and-write-a-new-chapter-of-national-security-in-the-new-era-qiushi-com/>

³⁵ 田培炎, "着力推进国家安全体系和能力建设," 党建研究, no. 1 (2022): 42–46.

³⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-security.html>

关), a town roughly 224 miles southwest of Beijing with a total population of 11,446, outlines the following tasks for the town thusly:

Prevent and crack down on “color revolutions.” Keep a close eye on major activities, sensitive points, and hotspots, closely monitor new developments in disruption and destruction by hostile forces. ... Actively shoulder the mission of being the anti-terrorist “moat” around the capital and resolutely guard against the prospect of becoming a terrorist hideout, fundraising site, or transit point, or even a place where jihadi activities are carried out. ... Prevent and crack down on infiltration activities by overseas Catholic forces. Strengthen construction of Catholic patriotism.³⁷

Although crime statistics for Niangziguan are unavailable, it is highly unlikely that any of the above threats have any remote prospect of materializing. The stress on rooting out (imaginary) threats, while comical from a distance, also signals a growing (or more accurately, a returning) siege mentality spreading throughout the political system that will alter the incentive structure facing cadres away from openness and risk-taking and toward more risk-aversion, intolerance, and illiberalism.

The logical – and terrifying – extreme of this trajectory is the “high-tech penal colony”³⁸ that is the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which has become, in the words of its current party secretary Ma Xinrui, “an important security barrier for Northwest China.”³⁹ While tragic, it should not be surprising that the ONSO mindset, when brought to bear on a non-Han, Muslim-predominant region that is seen in party discourse as an area to be pacified and rectified, results in gross violations of human rights and dignity.

At a more practical level, this maximalist view of national security also has a potentially debilitating effect on the real work of protecting China’s *actual* national security (as distinct from a narrower focus on protecting the CCP). Speaking at a conference on the ONSO held on April 13, 2022, Peking University professor Wang Yizhou warned of the downsides of an overly expansive definition of national security, and, according to a summary of the event, he stated that “as the list of national security [concerns] grows longer...” this may lead to a situation where the country is overwhelmed with limited time and resources, ministries are overwhelmed, and national decisions are misguided, which may have significant negative consequences for the development of the state, the nation, and society.”⁴⁰

³⁷ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-ccp-governs-view-chinese-town>

³⁸ <https://globalreports.columbia.edu/books/in-the-camps/>

³⁹ <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/adhere-to-the-overall-national-security-outlook-provide-a-strong-guarantee-for-the-realization-of-social-stability-and-long-term-stability-in-xinjiang/>

⁴⁰ “守正创新，筑牢国家安全底线，推动国家安全学学科发展，” 国际政治研究, no. 2 (2022) : 156–160.

As this trenchant critique lays bare, the irony of an extremist view of national security is that in the name of rooting out any and all possible threats to the regime, no matter how small and how remote, it undermines the very foundation of *true* national security.

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