

CPC Statements and Decisions on National Security

Liu Yuejin*

Abstract: Since 1982, the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has gradually deepened and extended its understanding of national security issues, and expanded this from the more traditional fields into a range of non-traditional fields as well. This can be seen in important documents such as the reports of the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th National Congress of the CPC and the *Decisions* of the 4th and 6th Plenary Sessions of the 16th CPC Central Committee and the 3rd Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee. The CPC Central Committee has also decided that “with the understanding that the causes of traditional and non-traditional security threats are interrelated, we will strive to improve awareness of and strategies for national security, ‘accelerating’ and ‘enhancing’ the creation of a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanisms for safeguarding national security. We will also strive to incorporate the influential *Decisions* on national security into our specific areas of work, including ‘the Party’s governance capacity’, ‘building a harmonious society’ and ‘rural reform and development’ and so on.”

Traditional Security Concepts

National security was first mentioned in the report of the 14th National Congress of the CPC in 1992, along with various mentions of security as a whole.

The report, entitled “Speeding up the pace of opening up and modernization and striving for more success in building socialism with

* Liu Yuejin is professor at the University of International Relations, Beijing.

Chinese characteristics” contains extensive discussion of security and national security as the tenth of the “Major Tasks in Reform and Construction in the 1990s” mentioned in the section “Strengthening Army Building”:

“We must persevere unswervingly in the Party’s absolute leadership over the army. In strict accordance with Deng Xiaoping’s thinking on army-building in the new era, we must employ the tactic of fewer but better-quality troops with Chinese characteristics. We must make the People’s Liberation Army a more revolutionary, more modernized and more standardized army, and we must increasingly enhance our national defense’s capabilities in order to provide a powerful security guarantee for our policies of reform and opening up, and economic construction. Reduced in number by one million, our armed forces should endeavor to adapt to modern warfare’s needs, while focusing on improving in quality and comprehensive combat effectiveness, in order to better undertake the sacred missions of defending our country’s sovereignty over its national territory, airspace, and territorial waters, as well as maritime rights, and the safeguarding of national security and unity. At the same time, the army should subordinate itself to the overall interests of national economic development, and actively support and participate in reform and opening up and modernization in order to contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country. The army should strive to carry out various forms of construction and reform. It should ensure that it attaches strategic importance to education and training effectively, and that it continues to improve its overall quality in order that it meets the general requirements of being both politically qualified and competent militarily, having an effective working style, strict discipline, and adequate logistical support. We must put more effort into researching defense-related science and technology, and gradually upgrade our weapons and other equipment. All people, including organizations of the Party and governments at all levels, not to mention the masses themselves, should be concerned about building our national defense, and supporting the army to fulfill all of its tasks. We will intensify education on defense. The army must continue to support the government and cherish the people, and the government and the people

must continue to support the army and to give preferential treatment to the families of army staff and military heroes in order to consolidate the unity between the army and the government and between the army and the people. We should also consolidate the work of the militia and the reserves, and continuously strengthen the national defense reserve forces. Moreover, the Chinese People's Armed Police is an important force in safeguarding the construction of socialist modernization. We should continue to reinforce the Chinese People's Armed Police and the public and state security departments as a means of safeguarding national security and social stability.”

In this paragraph the word security appears four times, of which one reference is to national security. This is also the total number of mentions of the words security and national security in the report as a whole. From then on, even though the CPC Central Committee does begin to discuss national security in the report—an issue previously long regarded as secret high politics—it continues to regard the military and politics as the major forces behind national security, even going so far as to effectively equate national security with military and political security issues. In modern terms, this reflects a highly traditional concept of security.

However, shortly afterwards, the CPC Central Committee not only openly discusses national security in greater detail, but begins to address some non-traditional security issues in its vision of security, as compared with the previous state-of-affairs in which “national security” was merely referred to in terms of army buildings, international situations and foreign relations.

The Non-Traditional Security Issues

In contrast to the 14th National Congress report, in which security and national security were mentioned merely in those parts relevant to army building, the report “Holding Aloft the Great Banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory for the All-round Advancement of the Cause of Building Socialism With Chinese Characteristics into the 21st Century” by Jiang Zemin from the 15th National Congress of the CPC, held between

September 12th and 18th 1997, mentions the term security six times (including three mentions of national security) but these securities are scattered throughout different parts of the report. Some of them involve non-traditional security issues.

The first place in which the term national security appears in the report is in the second part, “The Work of the Past Five Years” in which the achievements of army-building are discussed: “The People’s Army have made major contributions to defending national security, safeguarding the unification of the motherland, participating in national economic development, and carrying out tasks such as dealing with emergencies and disasters and providing relief.” Subsequently, national security appears twice in the paragraph succeeding the seven parts of “Cultural Construction”. The two places in which national security appears in the report are as follows: “Having discussed economic, political and cultural tasks, I should now like to make a special point about national defense and army-building. Strengthening our national defense and army-building are the basic guarantees for our national security and modernization drive... We should continue to strengthen the Chinese People’s Armed Police and the public and state security departments.” It is noteworthy that the state security department was mentioned for the second time in the report of the CPC National Congress after the 14th National Congress. In contrast to the general reference to the security department in the report of the 14th National Congress of the CPC, the report of the 15th National Congress contains the exact term state security department. The three places in which the term national security appears are, firstly, in the fifth part, entitled “Economic Restructuring and Economic Development Strategy”, in which the seventh task states the need to “strive to do better in opening up to the outside world”. Specifically, it is stated that “we must correctly handle the relationship of opening up versus independence and self-reliance, and make sure to safeguard the economic security of the country”. The second mention is in the sixth part, entitled “Reforming the Political Structure and Strengthening Democracy and the Legal System”, in which the fifth task states the need to “maintain stability and unity”. Specifically, it is stated that “sound public security is of prime importance for the safety

of people's lives and property as well as for reform, development and stability". The final mention is in the ninth part, entitled "The International Situation and Our Foreign Policy", in which it is stated that "expanding military blocs and strengthening military alliances will not be conducive to safeguarding peace and security".

It can be seen from this that even though the issues of security and national security were discussed conventionally in the "Military" part of the report of the 15th National Congress, they had already entered the economic and social fields, extending beyond those of the military and politics. That which had been mentioned in the report as "the economic security of the country", "the safety of people's lives and property", international and security may all be considered to be non-traditional security aspects. As such, this indicates that global changes in the concept of security after the Cold War have exerted their impact on the CPC, which has begun to update its concept of security and to pay attention to non-traditional security issues such as economic security and civilian security accordingly.

In fact, the report of the 15th National Congress not only contains such terms as "the economic security of the country" and "the safety of people's lives and property", but also sets out the relative viewpoints and strategies related to those non-traditional security issues. On the one hand, the report asks to "make better use of both Chinese and foreign markets and resources", while on the other it requests that "we shall improve and enforce laws and statutes governing China's trade and economic relations with foreign countries" and that "we must correctly handle the relationship of opening up versus independence and self-reliance, and safeguard the economic security of the country". It is clear that by this time the CPC had already begun to realize that in line with economic globalization, economic opening would inevitably be accompanied by certain risks that would affect not only a handful of enterprises but potentially the economic system as a whole, as well as the economic security of the entire country. In the face of such a prospect, and in the name of overall national security, resolving economic risks became a significant and non-traditional security strategy and undertaking. This has been addressed through the improvement

of existing legislation. However, this sense of non-traditional security was not clarified or systematized in the report, and may be considered to have been a preamble to more significant discussions.

To be clear, Chinese society as a whole, including those in academic circles, did not formulate a very distinct or systematized non-traditional concept or theory of security at that time. It was early in 1996 that the Chinese government started exploring a “new security concept”, but without a systematized theory. Nevertheless, in March 1999, when President Jiang Zemin stated clearly that “the crux of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation” for the first time at the Conference of Disarmament held in Geneva, and in particular when he replaced the word cooperation with the term coordination, and proposed that “the international community should establish a new concept of security with mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation at its core” in his address at the 80th anniversary of the CPC on July 1, 2001, that the CPC began to identify a new concept of security of its own accord. Subsequently, the Proposition Document of China’s New Security Concept delivered by the Chinese Delegate at the Foreign Ministers Conference of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Bandar Seri Begawan on July 31, 2002, fully expounded China’s security concept and policy under the new circumstances, and this symbolized the official establishment of the Chinese government’s new systematized security concept. It was this new concept of security that appeared in the report of the 16th National Congress of the CPC in November, 2002.

The New Security Concept

In the report of the 16th National Congress of the CPC, entitled “Building a Well-off Society in Diversified Ways and Creating a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” the term national security is mentioned three times, and the term security a total of eleven times. Furthermore, this report marks the first time that the new security concept with “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equity and coordination” at its core was openly discussed in the National Congress. In

discussion of the composition of security, excluding that of the military and national defenses, the report repeatedly refers to and emphasizes the issue of the economic security of the country. As to a security threat, the report refers not only to traditional security threats, but also to non-traditional security threats, and stresses the importance of linking traditional and non-traditional security threats.

To be specific, in the summary, “Work of the Past Five Years and Basic Experiences of the last Thirteen Years”, the report proposes: “We have responded confidently to a series of unexpected international events bearing on China’s sovereignty and security... Our state sovereignty and security should always be accorded paramount importance”. In discussion of “Economic Development and Restructuring”, the report emphasizes that “the Central Government should represent the state in performing the function of investor in the large, state-owned enterprises, infrastructure and important natural resources that have a vital bearing on the lifeline of the national economy and of state security”, stating that in particular, “In opening up more widely to the outside world, we must pay special attention to safeguarding our national economic security”. As to “Political Development and Restructuring”, the report states that “We must strengthen state security, keeping vigilance against infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by hostile forces both at home and abroad”. In the section on “National Defense and Army-Building”, the report points out that “Strengthening our national defense is a strategic task in our modernization drive, and an important guarantee for safeguarding our national security and unity and as well as building a well-off society in diversified ways”. Even more importantly, in the discussion of “The International Situation and Our External Work”, the report states that “Uncertainties affecting peace and development are on the rise... The elements central to both traditional and non-traditional security threats are linked, and the scourge of terrorism is more acutely felt”. Further, the report stresses that “In the area of security, countries should trust one another and work together to maintain security, to foster a new concept of security characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and to settle their disputes through dialogue and cooperation,

without resorting to the use or threat of force”.

If we make are to make a theoretical generalization of all of these statements, we can say that the report of the 16th National Congress overtly abandons the traditional concept of security, which confines security issues to the military and to politics, in favor of a comprehensive concept of security as well as a new international concept of security. While the concepts of security include not only traditional military and political security, but non-traditional economic security and terrorism threats as well, the new international security concept stresses “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination”.

The Concentrated Discussion of National Security

In analyzing the CPC’s national security position and national security concept, the 4th Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee, between the 16th National Congress and the 17th National Congress, is worth mentioning because one *Decision* was approved at this Session that makes for an unprecedented discussion of the national security issue. This *Decision* was “*The CPC Central Committee’s Decision to Enhance the Party’s Governance Capability*” (in this article, abbreviated to “*The Decision on Capability*”).

In the “The CPC Central Committee’s Decision to Enhance the Party’s Governance Capability” unveiled in September 2004, security is mentioned sixteen times, and national security four times. The *Decision* features terms such as “public security”, “the safety of people’s lives and property”, “new security concept”, “traditional security threats”, “non-traditional security threats”, “awareness of national security”, “strategy for national security”, “national security”, “work mechanism”, “political security”, “economic security” and “national defense security” etc., of which the terms “public security”, “awareness of national security”, “strategy for national security”, “national security”, “work mechanism”, “cultural security” and “information security” had never previously featured in previous reports of the National Congress.

There are many points in “*The Decision on Capability*” that are

worthy of note, but special attention should be paid to the unprecedented and concentrated explanation of national security in part 8: “Adhere to the independent foreign policy of peace, and constantly improve on the ability to react to international situations and to handle international affairs”. The articulation of national security is as follows: “We should always give national sovereignty and security first priority, and unswervingly defend our national security. Under the new situation in which traditional and non-traditional threats are linked, we should enhance the awareness of national security and our strategy for national security, and step up the pace in building a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanism to defend our national security. We should resolutely prevent and combat infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by various hostile forces, effectively prevent and handle the diversified risks in the international economic field, and safeguard the political, economic, cultural and information security of the country. ”

This detailed explanation of national security had not only been absent from all previous CPC’s documents, but it also marks the first time that such a comprehensive and precise explanation is given. It reveals the problems that China is confronted with in the modern age at three different levels: that of security threat, security content and security guarantee. It also lists the strategic measures to be taken.

First of all, the statements “ traditional and non-traditional threats are linked”, and “We should resolutely prevent and combat infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by various hostile forces, effectively prevent and handle the diversified risks in the international economic field” indicate that contemporary security threats include both traditional and non-traditional factors.

Secondly, the statement “safeguard the political, economic, cultural and information security of the country” indicates that the contemporary security content includes both traditional elements such as political security and economic security (as well as national defense security, as mentioned later on in *The Decision on Capability*) and non-traditional elements as cultural security and information security.

Finally, the statements “We should enhance the awareness of national

security and our strategy for national security, and step up the pace in building a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanism to defend our national security” and “We should resolutely prevent and combat infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by various hostile forces, and effectively prevent and handle the diversified risks in the international economic field” in another part of *The Decision on Capability* specify the work that our country should be conducting in respect of ensuring a security guarantee. This guarantee consists of three strategic measures, as follows: “enhancing awareness of national security”, “improving the mechanism for national security” and “stepping up the pace in building a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanism to defend our national security” and two concrete courses of action, namely “resolutely preventing and combating infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by various hostile forces”, and “effectively preventing and handling the diversified risks in the international economic field”.

The Decision on Harmony

The above-mentioned reference to national security in *The Decision on Capability* delivered in September 2004 appears also in *The CPC Central Committee's Decision on Several Major Issues Related To Constructing a Harmonious Society* (in this article, abbreviated to *The Decision on Harmony*).

The concentrated and systematic explanation in *The Decision on Harmony* is as follows: We should strengthen our national security and the construction of our national defense so as to safeguard the stability and security of the country. We should enhance awareness of national security, improve strategies for national security, and improve the scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanisms necessary for an efficient response to the various traditional and non-traditional threats to security. We should resolutely combat infiltrating, subversive and separatist activities by various hostile forces both at home and abroad in order to safeguard the political, economic, cultural and information security of the country. We must pursue the Party's absolute leadership over the army, adhere to the

coordinated development of national defense and economic construction, push forward the building of a more revolutionary, modernized and regularized army as well as military reform with Chinese characteristics, implement the military strategic principle of active defense, and prepare ourselves better for military struggle. We must enhance our crisis-handling capabilities, defend peace, deter war and win war. We must strive to provide an important guarantee for the consolidation of the Party's status as the party in power, to provide a solid security protection for the strategic opportunities for the country's development in this important period, and to provide a powerful strategic support to defend our national interest. We must also play an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting joint development, and we must always defend our national security, unity and territorial integrity.

Despite the fact that there is no apparent difference in the overall philosophy of national security presented in *The Decision on Harmony* and *The Decision on Capability*, the slight changes in wording deserve close attention. For example, "stepping up the pace in building a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanism", as stated in *The Decision on Capability*, has become "improving the scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanisms" in *The Decision on Harmony*. This change in wording indicates that the existing national security mechanism that had previously required some bolstering had now moved a stage further, and was at the point at which it needed merely to be improved. This reflects the need for perfection of the relevant statements from *The Decision on Capability*.

In terms of the frequency of word usage, we can see that the word security appears for 24 times (including five mentions of the term national security) in *The Decision on Harmony* as compared with 16 times (including four mentions of the term national security) in *The Decision on Capability*. Excepting the four mentions of national security which appear in the paragraph quoted above, the one other mention of national security can be found in the statement referring to "infiltrating and subversive activities by hostile forces that harm national security and social stability".

There are numerous explanations of national security in the *Decision*

to build a harmonious society. This indicates that the CPC Central Committee had by this time possessed a deeper understanding of the relevance of harmonious society and national security, and that a non-traditional security concept and thinking around security had gradually lodged itself deep in the minds of CPC members.

The detailed references to national security in *The Decision on Capability* of 2004 and *The Decision on Harmony* of 2006 respectively are explained in different parts in the report of the 17th National Congress, in October, 2007. In this report “Holding Aloft the Great Banner of Socialism With Chinese Characteristics and Striving for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects”, the term national security appears five times, as compared with just three times in the reports of the 15th and 16th National Congress respectively, and four times in *The Decision on Capability*. This frequency equals that of *The Decision on Harmony*. Similarly, the word security appears on 23 occasions, as compared with a mere six in the report of the 15th National Congress, 14 in the report of the 16th National Congress, and 16 in *The Decision on Capability*. The word appears just one time less than the 24 times it appears in *The Decision on Harmony*.

One of the obvious distinctions between the report of the 17th National Congress and previous reports lies in the overall presentation of national security in the report. It appears neither in the section on army-building and national defense, nor in the section related to international relations and foreign policy, but in the sixth task, “Improving social management and safeguarding social stability and unity” in the eighth part of “Accelerating Social Development with the Focus on Improving People's Livelihood”. The key detail is: “We will improve the strategy and mechanism for national security, and keep high vigilance against and resolutely forestall separatist, infiltrating and subversive activities in their various forms in order to safeguard our national security.” This alteration indicates that the CPC Central Committee had begun to realize that in today's China the focus of national security is based on various domestic social problems and their solutions and not on external affairs or military issues.

Further, the ninth part of “Opening up New Prospects for Modernization of the National Defense and the Armed Forces” also contains a discussion of national security. Note the following statements: “We must take both economic development and national defense into consideration, and make our country prosperous and our armed forces powerful, while building a moderately prosperous society in all respects”; and “We will strengthen the People’s Armed Police so that it can better fulfill its duties of safeguarding national security and social stability and ensuring that the people live and work in peace”. At the same time, whilst continuously emphasizing that “the elements of traditional and non-traditional threats to security are linked”, the report includes extensive discussions of “food security for the nation”, “agricultural production capacity for ensuring food security”, “food and drug safety” and “the safety of people’s lives and property”, along with other security issues relevant to economy, finance, production, development, etc. This reflects the fact that the CPC Central Committee had by this stage already recognized that military issues were not the only important element of contemporary national security, but that various non-traditional security issues also held a prominent position. Furthermore, it indicates that the CPC Central Committee had already determined to solve all of these problems through specific measures taken at various different levels, in order to safeguard overall national security.

The Decision on Rural Areas

In discussion of “The CPC Central Committee’s decisions about national security”, the *The CPC Central Committee’s Decision About Several Major Issues Related to Promoting Reform and Development in Rural Areas* of 2008 (in this article, abbreviated to *The Decision on Rural Areas*) merits special attention alongside *The Decision on Capability* of 2004 and *The Decision on Harmony* of 2006.

The *Decision* on reform in rural areas, approved by the 3rd Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee, is in fact a *Decision* on “food security”. The discussion on “food security for the nation” in *The Decision*

on Rural Areas, in particular the linking of food security to national security, is highly complimentary to Chinese academic research and other discussions relating to food security in terms of non-traditional security that have taken place over the past few years.

In the past, the CPC Central Committee's various decisions and resolutions about issues related to agriculture, the rural areas and farmers were seldom connected with national security, not to mention security. However, in *The Decision on Rural Areas*, the term security appears for 19 times, including seven references to food security, five references to food security for the nation and one reference to national security.

The discussion of national security in *The Decision on Rural Areas* has already been noted in terms of how it relates to agricultural development, the food issue in particular. The key statement is as follows: "We must strengthen the position of agriculture as the foundation of the economy, giving top priority to solving the issue of feeding over a billion people. We should adhere to the principle of realizing self-sufficiency in food supply by relying on domestic resources, increase the country's support and protection of agriculture, fully implement the strategy of rejuvenating agriculture through the application of science and technology, speed up the creation of modern agriculture, and achieve comprehensive and stable development in agriculture as a means towards establishing a solid foundation that boosts economic development, promotes social harmony and safeguards national security."

Following an analysis of the serious challenges facing the country's food security in another two sections of the report, *The Decision on Rural Areas* sets forth a set of solutions for guaranteeing food security, stating that "in safeguarding the country's food security, we must make sustained efforts to maintain food security, without allowing for lapse. We should step up the construction of a food security guarantee system featuring stable supplies, sufficient reserves, a powerful administration and high efficiency. We should prioritize the development of food production in the process of building a modern agriculture. We should stabilize the acreage sown to grain, improve the structure of the grain varieties grown, and increase the per unit area yield of grain, as well as expand overall grain

production capacity. All regions should set and pursue clear goals for food development, strengthen supporting policies, implement the reserve task and share the responsibility of food security for the entire country...”

At the same time, *The Decision on Rural Areas* also contains discussion on issues such as rural financial security, production security, medical security, drinking water security, and agricultural products quality security, as well as a security review mechanism for foreign capital merging with domestic agriculture-focused enterprises. As such, it is safe to say that this *Decision* can be regarded as reflecting the CPC Central Committee’s decisions on “issues concerning agriculture, the rural areas and farmers” and non-traditional security.

In summary, since the 14th National Congress, the CPC Central Committee has gradually deepened and extended its understanding of national security, and expanded this from traditional fields into a range of non-traditional fields. The CPC Central Committee has also concluded that “With the understanding that the causes of traditional and non-traditional security threats are interrelated, we will strive to improve awareness of and strategies for national security, ‘accelerating’ and ‘enhancing’ the creation of a scientific, coordinated and efficient mechanisms for safeguarding national security. We will also strive to incorporate the influential *Decisions* on national security into our specific areas of work, including ‘the Party’s governance capacity, ‘building a harmonious society’ and ‘rural reform and development’ and so on.” The above-mentioned understanding of and decisions on national security are of vital strategic importance, and provide guidance for the effective safeguarding of our national security in an increasingly complicated and diversified security situation in the era of globalization.

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