

The Significance, Content and Ways of Strengthening College Students' National Security Education in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: Security constitutes a fundamental imperative for the existence and development of a nation and its people. Since the advent of the new era, guided by the Holistic National Security Outlook, China's national security framework has undergone systematic enhancement, yielding substantial achievements in safeguarding sovereign interests. As the future of the nation and the hope of its people, university students require reinforced national security education—an initiative that not only elevates their security consciousness but also contributes to enduring national stability and fosters their holistic development. colleges and universities must innovate within three critical dimensions: constructing a comprehensive pedagogical system for national security education, developing dedicated educational platforms, and strengthening institutional support mechanisms. These efforts, anchored in the Holistic National Security Outlook and prioritizing political, economic, cyber, overseas interests, and emerging domain security, shall enhance the efficacy of national security education for students, thereby consolidating the foundations of state security.

Keywords: Colleges and Universities; College Student; National Security Education; Ways

1. Introduction

"Preparing for unforeseen contingencies is a perpetual principle of governance." Security constitutes the fundamental prerequisite for the existence and development of a nation and its people. A state devoid of security lacks stable

foundations, while a nation without security cannot endure. National security serves as the bedrock of state stability and the cornerstone of national rejuvenation. As the emerging standard-bearers of this era, university students must transcend an "exclusive devotion to academic pursuits," instead maintaining constant vigilance toward national security, attentively assessing risks and challenges confronting national development, making sound judgments on security matters, and continuously enhancing their capabilities to resolutely safeguard national interests. Strengthening national security education for students represents both a critical mechanism for elevating their security awareness and competencies, and an essential pathway to ensuring national security. Such education denotes a comprehensive paradigm guided by the Holistic National Security Outlook, encompassing formal education across primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions alongside societal initiatives, all directed toward elevating citizens' security literacy and preserving national security.

2. The Significance of Implementing National Security Education in Colleges and Universities

The prosperity of a nation hinges upon the vitality of its youth, and the strength of a country is rooted in the vigor of its younger generation. As the new era's torchbearers, college students must grow and advance alongside their motherland, remaining ever vigilant about its development and security. Strengthening national security education in higher institutions not only enhances students' awareness of national security but also contributes to the nation's long-term stability

and the holistic development of the students themselves.

2.1 Conducive to Enhancing College Students' Awareness of National Security

When it comes to national security, some college students may envision scenes of the People's Liberation Army employing various weapons and equipment to combat enemies or thrilling scenarios of intelligence operatives working on covert fronts. While these mental images are indeed related to national security, they represent only a fragmented and one-sided understanding of the concept. Other students may feel unfamiliar with the term "national security," believing that they live in peaceful times and are inherently safe—even if war breaks out, the People's Liberation Army would fight courageously to protect everyone. However, national security encompasses far more than these limited scenarios. Many college students lack awareness of cultural security and ideological security. They may be well-versed in popular cultural phenomena such as Harry Potter, Marvel, and anime, yet remain ignorant of their own country's outstanding traditional culture. Some students are entirely unaware of emerging security domains such as deep-sea and space exploration. According to statistics from national security agencies, there are five high-risk groups susceptible to recruitment by espionage organizations, among which "university faculty and students" rank second. If college students lack understanding and awareness of national security, they may easily stray onto misguided paths. Strengthening national security education in universities can help students deeply recognize that national security is not limited to military defense but also includes security in cultural, cyber, overseas interests, and emerging domains such as polar regions and space. Such education can inspire students' patriotic sentiments and national security awareness, motivating them to consciously assume the responsibility and mission of safeguarding national security [1].

2.2 Conducive to Enduring National Stability and Security

National security constitutes the cornerstone of national rejuvenation, while social stability serves as the prerequisite for a nation's prosperity. For university students, national

security provides the fundamental precondition for their academic pursuits and daily life, as well as the foundation for their holistic development. Amid China's peaceful rise, certain nations have intensified their suppression across economic, military, and technological domains in attempts to curb China's development, while simultaneously accelerating ideological and cultural infiltration by disseminating erroneous Western ideologies and promoting "peaceful evolution" and "color revolution" – all posing grave threats to China's national security. As the hope of the nation, university students have become prime targets for Western subversive elements seeking to lure them into ideological traps. The intellectual maturity and ideological convictions of university students ultimately determine the nation's future. By strengthening national security education in higher institutions and cultivating students' awareness of ideological struggle, universities can effectively prevent and mitigate major political security risks and ideological security threats, thereby enhancing students' immunity and resistance against Western ideological infiltration and "color revolution" [2], ultimately achieving enduring national stability. Through systematic national security education, students' security awareness becomes increasingly acute, enabling them to identify subtle threats and proactively report to national security authorities, thus fulfilling their civic duty to safeguard national security to the best of their abilities.

2.3 Conducive to the Holistic Development of University Students

University students, characterized by their active thinking and strong desire for independent thinking, exhibit an intense curiosity to understand the complex world around them. However, due to their limited social experience and particularly weak awareness of counter-espionage, they are highly vulnerable to deception by foreign intelligence organizations and operatives through sophisticated rhetoric, potentially leading them astray. Many students seek part-time employment, motivated both by the desire to earn supplemental income and reduce family financial burdens, as well as to gain social experience in preparation for their future careers. A case reported by Dahe Network illustrates this vulnerability: a student named

Xiao Li, while searching for part-time work, was targeted by foreign intelligence agents who exploited his desire for quick earnings. Through careful manipulation, they recruited him to collect sensitive information related to China's military-civil fusion strategy and other military domains, offering substantial financial compensation. This situation was ultimately intercepted by Zhengzhou National Security Bureau through timely intervention. In another instance, a journalism student from Hebei province developed reactionary ideologies through exposure to anti-China foreign media programs. This individual established social media accounts to interact with anti-China forces, created websites to spread political rumors and malicious attacks against China, and even traveled abroad to collaborate with hostile organizations before facing legal consequences. Strengthening national security education in universities, particularly through comprehensive instruction on the Holistic National Security Outlook, serves the dual purpose of protecting students from hostile Western influences while fostering their healthy development as responsible citizens.

3. Content of National Security Education

The Holistic National Security Outlook encompasses profound connotations and extensive content, serving as the guiding framework for national security education that has evolved from traditional domains of confidentiality and counter-espionage to a comprehensive educational paradigm encompassing broader aspects of holistic national security. The content of national security education can be systematically categorized into three primary dimensions: traditional security domains, non-traditional security domains, and emerging security domains, each addressing distinct yet interconnected aspects of national security.

3.1 Traditional Security Domains

The traditional security domain comprises three fundamental components: political security, territorial security, and military security, each playing a critical role in safeguarding national stability. Political security serves as the cornerstone of national security, without which a nation risks descending into chaotic or war-torn conditions; it specifically refers to the protection of state power, political systems, and

ideological frameworks from threats or endangerment. Territorial security, the foundation for economic, cultural, and ecological security, encompasses the integrity of a nation's land, unification, maritime rights, and border stability [3]. Military security, as the core element of traditional national security, ensures a nation's defense against military threats and invasions. In colleges and universities, political security education aims to elevate students' awareness, empowering them to uphold China's security, adhere to Marxism's guiding principles, and combat divisive or subversive activities. Territorial security education exposes students to pressing challenges, including unresolved land and maritime disputes, separatist movements, and foreign operations such as unmanned underwater espionage devices conducting military mapping and oceanographic data collection in Chinese waters, thereby fostering their ability to identify and counteract threats. Military security education highlights contemporary risks, such as provocations by certain nations through border clashes, illegal incursions across actual control lines, and deliberate attacks on Chinese border personnel. Consequently, universities must guide students to support national defense, enlist in military service, and actively defend national security.

3.2 Non-Traditional Security Domains

Non-traditional security domains encompass multiple critical areas including economic security, cultural security, social security, science and technology security, cybersecurity, ecological security, resource security, nuclear security, and the security of overseas interests, among which cultural security, social security, and cybersecurity are particularly relevant to university students. Cultural security, serving as both the safeguard of national security and the spiritual foundation of a nation, refers to a state in which a country's culture remains free from danger and internal or external threats. Social security, constituting the basis for social harmony and stability, denotes a condition where society maintains reasonable order, with guaranteed personal safety and property security for its citizens. In the internet era, cybersecurity has become an urgent necessity for nations and individuals alike, referring to the protection of a country's critical information infrastructure from attacks, intrusions,

interference, and destruction. Through cultural security education, universities can enhance students' understanding of the significance of culture and cultural security, as well as the threats China faces in this domain, such as certain countries' attempts to impose "cultural hegemony" and conduct ideological infiltration via the internet to undermine the authority and scientific validity of Marxism. Domestically, hostile forces spread rumors and distort history to disrupt students' ideological convictions, while some public intellectuals disseminate erroneous non-Marxist and anti-Marxist theories online. Furthermore, the profit-driven nature of the market economy has flooded the internet with vulgar and alienated cultural products that severely endanger cultural security. The implementation of cultural security education in colleges and universities enables the cultivation of a robust defense mechanism among new-era university students against Western cultural infiltration, while simultaneously providing spiritual impetus for fostering cultural confidence and self-strengthening [4]. Furthermore, it guides students to steadfastly uphold cultural confidence and consciously resist behaviors, erroneous ideologies, and alienated cultural products that jeopardize cultural security. Through social security education, students can comprehend the significance of social security in safeguarding national reform and development, as well as its role in reflecting the populace's sense of happiness and security, while also recognizing pertinent challenges such as frequent violent terrorist activities, increasing telecom fraud, deepening trust crises, and the proliferation of new forms of cybercrime including the theft of citizens' personal information. By conducting social security education, universities can enhance students' awareness of social security, improve their ability to identify and prevent fraud, and encourage timely reporting of activities that endanger social security to relevant authorities. Cybersecurity education equips students with essential knowledge regarding network security and enhances their understanding of the challenges encountered during China's cyber development process. China currently faces multifaceted cybersecurity risks, manifested through persistent challenges including proliferating cybercrimes such as hacking incidents, personal data breaches, and online

financial fraud that resist eradication despite regulatory efforts, alongside the pervasive dissemination of harmful online content encompassing rumors, pornographic material, collectively contributing to the pollution of cyberspace. Through systematic cybersecurity education, colleges and universities guide university students to establish sovereignty awareness in cyberspace and enhance their cybersecurity consciousness, while simultaneously elevating their cybersecurity literacy [5] and strengthening their capacity to mitigate cyber risks, thereby making substantive contributions to the cultivation of a wholesome and orderly cyberspace environment.

In the context of national security education, colleges and universities should tailor their pedagogical approaches to address economic, technological, ecological, resource, nuclear, and overseas interests security according to students' academic disciplines, with particular emphasis on integrating these themes into ideological and political education curricula to enhance instructional relevance. For students specializing in economics, instructors should elucidate the multifaceted risks posed by economic globalization to China's economic sovereignty and development, including: (1) the complex domestic and international financial landscape that jeopardizes financial security through both internal vulnerabilities and external pressures; and (2) the adverse impacts of geopolitical conflicts on food security, particularly regarding supply chain resilience, price volatility, and outward investment [6]. This discipline-specific approach ensures students develop both theoretical understanding and practical awareness of contemporary security challenges within their professional domains. For students in science and engineering disciplines, while highlighting China's technological achievements, instructors should simultaneously elucidate critical security threats in the scientific domain, particularly our technological dependencies in lithography machines, operating systems, and high-end semiconductor manufacturing, coupled with certain nations' imposition of "technological hegemony" and "technical barriers" that systematically constrain the development of China's high-tech institutions and enterprises. Agricultural and plant protection majors require instruction that couples ecological security and

civilization education with analysis of pressing challenges, including ecosystem degradation from unbalanced economic development, biodiversity loss, and severe invasive species infiltration (e.g., water hyacinth and alligator gar). Resource and mining engineering students need specialized content addressing security vulnerabilities in natural resource utilization - notably low efficiency and wasteful practices in land, coal, water, and mineral resource management, alongside excessive external dependence on crude oil and coal imports. Nuclear engineering education must adopt a dual perspective: demonstrating nuclear energy's civilian benefits while emphasizing its destructive potential, thereby cultivating students' commitment to peaceful utilization principles through case-based learning on non-proliferation regimes and safety protocols. For students specializing in international law and teaching Chinese as a foreign language, instructors must adopt a dual-focus pedagogical approach that systematically presents both China's diplomatic accomplishments and the multifaceted risks inherent in its opening-up policy. This curriculum should particularly examine how certain nations employ multilateral export controls, technology investment restrictions, and personnel participation bans in sensitive projects to enforce technological containment against China through mechanisms including entity listings [7]. Through comprehensive non-traditional security education, colleges and universities achieve three critical objectives: (1) enhancing students' awareness of China's achievements in safeguarding non-traditional security domains; (2) developing their analytical capacity to assess emerging security challenges; and (3) cultivating practical competencies to contribute to national security within their professional spheres. This pedagogical framework ultimately equips students with the conceptual tools and professional ethics necessary to identify, evaluate, and respond to non-traditional security threats while advancing China's interests in an increasingly complex global landscape.

3.3 Emerging Security Domains

Emerging security domains constitute a dynamically evolving field where the classification of specific security areas undergoes continuous transformation. As

temporal progression and practical experience accumulate, domains initially categorized as emerging security concerns may transition into traditional or non-traditional security classifications, while new areas previously unconsidered gradually become incorporated into the emerging security paradigm. A representative example includes cybersecurity, which originally belonged to emerging security domains but was subsequently reclassified as a non-traditional security concern following the widespread adoption of internet technologies and the deepening understanding of network applications. Conversely, biosafety has progressively emerged as a critical component of emerging security domains due to increasing societal attention. Currently, the primary constituents of emerging security domains encompass space security, deep-sea security, polar security, and biosafety. Through systematic education on emerging security domains, colleges and universities cultivate students' capacity to adopt developmental and dynamic perspectives when analyzing the Holistic National Security Outlook, while simultaneously fostering awareness of emerging security challenges and competencies to safeguard these critical domains.

4. Ways to Strengthen National Security Education for College Students

National security education serves as a powerful mechanism for safeguarding national security and a crucial guarantee for achieving enduring national stability. The Holistic National Security Outlook provides fundamental guidance for conducting effective national security education among university students.

4.1 Constructing a National Security Education Teaching System

In order to implement the Holistic National Security Outlook and fulfill the requirement of "incorporating national security education into the national education system," the Ministry of Education has issued a series of policy documents, including the Implementation Opinions on Strengthening National Security Education in Primary, Secondary, and colleges and universities and the Guidance Outline for National Security Education in Primary, Secondary, and colleges and universities. These documents not only establish specific

requirements for conducting national security education among university students but also provide comprehensive guidelines for constructing and refining the national security education teaching system. In response, colleges and universities have developed tailored educational frameworks to enhance national security education in accordance with the Ministry's directives while considering their own institutional contexts and practical circumstances.

4.1.1 Integrating national security education into curricular instruction

In strengthening national security education for university students, colleges and universities incorporate relevant content across diverse courses. For instance, in ideological and political courses such as "Current Affairs and Policy," instructors employ multimedia approaches to embed national security education throughout lectures and presentations. Taking food security as an example, educators may develop instructional videos addressing topics like export restrictions during global crises and international grain market fluctuations, thereby reinforcing students' understanding of food security and their conviction that "Chinese people's food supply must remain firmly in their own hands"[8]. Similarly, in comprehensive literacy courses like national defense education, instructors interweave national security concepts while teaching military and defense knowledge, guiding students to engage with defense issues and enhancing their awareness of military security.

4.1.2 Implementing thematic education on national security

Colleges and universities conscientiously fulfill the requirements outlined in documents such as the Guidance Outline for National Security Education in Primary, Secondary, and colleges and universities. While incorporating national security education into regular curricula, they also organize targeted activities during key dates including National Day, National Security Education Day, National Defense Education Day, and Cybersecurity Awareness Week. These initiatives involve screening educational shorts such as National Security Law and Anzai Explains National Security, disseminating security knowledge through "dual-micro and one-client" (Weibo, WeChat, and news apps) multimedia platforms, and conducting thematic

lectures and seminars on national security, cybersecurity, and defense education. During significant commemorative periods, educational administrations and universities invite subject matter experts to deliver open courses on national security. Notably, for the 10th National Security Education Day, the Ministry of Education partnered with China University Students Online to launch "Ten Million Teachers and Students Attending the Same National Security Lecture," featuring scholars from Shandong University and China National Institute for South China Sea Studies. These experts analyzed territorial and cybersecurity issues through authentic case studies tailored to campus contexts and student perspectives, enhancing participants' security awareness while equipping them with practical knowledge and competencies.

4.1.3 Developing dedicated national security education teaching materials

The compilation of educational resources must prioritize rigorous political review. Under the guidance of the Holistic National Security Outlook, educational authorities and colleges and universities have organized experts to compile and publish textbooks such as National Security Education for University Students in the New Era and Educational Reader on the Holistic National Security Outlook for instructional use in universities. To thoroughly implement the Holistic National Security Outlook and promote its integration into teaching materials, classroom instruction, and student consciousness, the Ministry of Education has compiled the College Student Reader on National Security Education, providing an authoritative resource for national security education in colleges and universities. Several universities, including Shaanxi Normal University and Northeast Agricultural University, have already incorporated national security education courses into their curricula with demonstrably positive outcomes.

4.2 Building a National Security Education Platform

While classroom instruction serves as the principal platform for delivering national security education to university students, its effectiveness necessitates complementary extracurricular educational initiatives. colleges and universities should strategically utilize existing national security education platforms

established through government-enterprise-social organization collaborations, while simultaneously expanding educational fronts with governmental support. This requires an integrated pedagogical paradigm that emphasizes: (1) theory-practice synthesis through applied case studies and simulations; (2) curricular-extracurricular synergy via workshops and field studies; (3) campus-community partnerships for diversified learning opportunities; and (4) online-offline convergence through blended digital-physical learning modules. Through this multidimensional approach, universities can systematically develop and refine national security education platforms that address evolving security challenges while cultivating comprehensive student competencies.

4.2.1 Constructing and enhancing digital platforms

The advent of the omnimedia era has significantly amplified the pivotal role of internet and emerging media technologies in pedagogical contexts, necessitating colleges and universities to strategically harness these digital channels for national security education. This paradigm shift requires leveraging existing educational resources to establish dominance in cyberspace through the systematic development of networked learning platforms that transcend traditional temporal and spatial constraints in security education. The integration of cutting-edge technologies - including web-based systems, panoramic navigation, virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) - has catalyzed the emergence of innovative digital platforms such as the "Hainan National Security Education Virtual Exhibition Hall," "Taihang National Security Education VR Pavilion," and "Foshan National Security Education Cloud Exhibition." Progressive institutions have pioneered AI-enhanced pedagogical approaches, utilizing immersive VR and augmented reality (AR) simulations to recreate authentic threat scenarios encompassing cyber warfare, counterterrorism operations, climate change impacts, orbital debris management, and nuclear emergency response protocols. These virtual training environments facilitate immersive experiential learning, substantially enhancing students' operational competencies in addressing contemporary security challenges [9].

4.2.2 Establishing and enhancing on-campus

physical platforms

While utilizing and developing online platforms for national security education, colleges and universities should also explore and leverage on-campus resources to establish comprehensive offline educational platforms. Given that each university offers dozens or even hundreds of academic disciplines, the knowledge covered in each specialty contains elements that can be systematically categorized within the framework of the Holistic National Security Outlook. Institutions should guide faculty and students to thoroughly explore these elements, thereby continuously enriching and integrating campus resources to develop and refine national security education platforms. Notable examples include Beihang University's Security Education Experience Center and East China Normal University's pioneering Research and Practice Center for National Security Education. These facilities provide both digital and print materials on national security education while conducting practical programs such as counter-terrorism emergency response training, offering students immersive and efficient experiential learning opportunities that significantly enhance their engagement.

4.2.3 Optimizing off-campus physical platforms

Numerous provinces and municipalities have established comprehensive educational facilities, including national defense education bases, national security education centers, and patriotic education sites, to strengthen public awareness of national security. Notable examples include Shanxi Province's "Taihang National Security Education Museum," Suifenhe City's "National National Security Education Base," as well as Shandong Province's "Zaozhuang Tai'erzhuang National Security Education Museum" and "Weihai Holistic National Security Outlook Liugong Island Training Base." Heilongjiang Province has developed specialized facilities such as the "National Security and Confidentiality Warning Education Base," alongside patriotic and national defense education sites like the "Evidence Exhibition Hall of Unit 731's Biological Warfare Crimes" and the "Northeast Anti-Japanese United Forces Experiential National Defense Education Base." These multifunctional venues integrate national security education with patriotic indoctrination, law education, and scientific literacy promotion,

enabling systematic ideological-political and national security education for university students. colleges and universities actively utilize these bases, theme parks, and related facilities to conduct specialized security education in counter-espionage, data protection, biosecurity, and other critical domains, thereby creating synergistic educational effects that significantly expand both the scope and depth of national security education.

4.3 Strengthening Support Systems for National Security Education

National security education for university students represents a protracted and challenging endeavor that demands sustained and consistent implementation. To ensure its effectiveness, robust support mechanisms must be established and operationalized. Just as safeguarding national security requires comprehensive reinforcement across material resources, technological capabilities, equipment, human capital, legal frameworks, and institutional mechanisms, the successful execution of university-level national security education similarly necessitates systematic guarantees in organizational leadership, faculty development, legal and regulatory systems, and financial support. These multidimensional safeguards are essential to maintain the orderly progression of national security education initiatives within colleges and universities, ensuring both immediate pedagogical effectiveness and long-term strategic impact.

4.3.1 Strengthening organizational leadership

The implementation of national security education for university students requires coordinated efforts across macro-, meso-, and micro-level dimensions. At the macro level, the Ministry of Education must collaborate with relevant government agencies to establish comprehensive top-level designs for national security education. The meso level demands provincial (including municipalities, autonomous regions, and special administrative regions) education authorities to jointly develop concrete implementation plans with associated departments. At the micro level, colleges and universities must ensure operational execution by strengthening institutional leadership through establishing dedicated leading groups or offices for national security education, coordinating with relevant administrative departments and secondary colleges to

formulate regulatory frameworks, securing necessary human, material, and financial resources, while simultaneously developing and overseeing the implementation of institutional-level national security education master plans.

4.3.2 Enhancing faculty development

The principle of "strengthening education by first strengthening teachers" underscores that instructors' proficiency in national security education directly determines its overall educational effectiveness [10]. colleges and universities must develop a high-quality teaching workforce combining full-time and part-time faculty, where full-time instructors may be drawn from university armed forces departments and national security schools, or recruited from disciplines such as national security studies, military science, and domestic security protection. Part-time faculty can be selected from Marxism schools and student counselors based on established criteria. Comprehensive training programs must be implemented to enhance the faculty's ideological grounding, professional competence, theoretical knowledge, and pedagogical skills, thereby systematically improving the outcomes of national security education.

4.3.3 Improving legal frameworks

Although China's National Security Law stipulates the incorporation of national security education into the national education system, this provision remains overly general without detailed specifications regarding implementation methodologies or operational guidelines. In contrast, certain Western countries have established specialized legal frameworks for national security education, exemplified by the United States' enactment of the National Security Education Act of 1991, which introduced comprehensive measures including the establishment of a National Security Education Board to implement systematic educational programs aimed at enhancing citizens' security awareness. China could beneficially adopt such international precedents by formulating and promulgating a dedicated National Security Education Law that delineates specific implementation requirements and operational standards, thereby providing both concrete guidance for colleges and universities and robust legal safeguards for educational practices.

4.3.4 Ensuring financial support

In accordance with the requirements of the

National Security Education Act of 1991, the U.S. government established the National Security Education Trust Fund and enacted regulations such as the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1993 to address funding challenges for national security education [11]. Drawing from this precedent, China could implement similar measures by allocating dedicated fiscal support through central and local government appropriations designated specifically for national security education, ensuring funding for public awareness campaigns, disciplinary development, faculty instruction, and student learning activities. colleges and universities should also proactively and lawfully leverage multiple funding channels, including seeking support from relevant government departments and social organizations, to secure necessary resources through diversified approaches. This multi-source funding model must guarantee transparent allocation and exclusive use of funds for intended purposes, thereby ensuring the high-quality and effective delivery of national security education for university students.

5. Conclusion

National security education serves as the ideological foundation for ensuring enduring national stability and plays a pivotal role in safeguarding and shaping national security. colleges and universities must, under the guidance of the Holistic National Security Outlook, construct a comprehensive national security education teaching system, develop and refine educational platforms, and establish robust support mechanisms. These efforts aim to continuously enhance the effectiveness of national security education, strengthen university students' awareness of national security, and fortify their capacity to uphold and shape national security, thereby contributing to the realization of Chinese modernization.

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