

China's Foreign Policy Since the 18th National Congress of CPC

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The rise of China has attracted international attention and global academic interest. The once-a-decade political leadership transition in November 2012, occurred at a time when China had ascended to the world's number two economy, attracted 2,732 reporters — more than 2,300 participants of the Communist Party of China (CPC) 18th National Congress — to Beijing. Predictably, Xi Jinping took over the position of general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and the chairman of the Central Military Committee. With his replacing Hu Jintao as President of China at the National People's Congress in March 2013, Xi has become the *de jure* supreme leader of China, one of the most powerful leaders in the world.

The power transition coincided with turbulence in China's relations with its neighbors over maritime territorial disputes, as well as unprecedented debate over China's foreign policy both home and abroad. These phenomena have led people to wonder where the new Chinese government will lead the rising country and how a more powerful China will handle its relations with its neighbors. Words such as “aggressive,” “assertive” and “arrogant” have been used to describe China's foreign policy externally.¹ Domestically, China's foreign policy

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has been criticized as too soft and compromising. The Chinese foreign affairs authorities find themselves sandwiched between diametrically opposite criticisms and expectations.² How to handle the tug of war between these opposing forces has become a major problem for policymakers.

The new government has been in power now for almost a year. The central leadership has taken a number of diplomatic initiatives and has put forth some new policies regarding China's external affairs. It is now possible to identify the new features within Chinese foreign policy after the 18th Party Congress, to reflect on the reasons for these new features, and to consider possible trends for the near future. In order to do so, this paper starts with describing the main features of China's foreign policy since the 18th Party Congress, illustrating the continuities and changes. Then, it will explain and analyze the major variables that are currently shaping Chinese foreign policy. Finally, this paper will assess the implications of these new characteristics on future Chinese foreign policy under a new generation of leaders.

I. CONTINUITIES VS. CHANGES IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Unlike many Western countries, where newly-empowered administrations tend to emphasize differences from their predecessors, continuity is the main theme in Chinese politics.

Unlike many Western countries, where newly empowered administrations tend to emphasize differences from their predecessors, continuity is the main theme in Chinese politics. First, the speedy and smooth power transition indicates that there should be more continuity than change. As the new state councilor in charge of foreign affairs, Yang Jiechi wrote that China has maintained "the continuity and consistency of its major diplomatic policies" since the

18th National Congress of the Party.³ Many of the new features of Xi's foreign policy can only be discerned by carefully examining the new administration's foreign policy behaviors.

The most remarkable feature of Xi's foreign policy is its continuity. In other words, many of the new features of Xi's foreign policy are essentially the advancement of the trends that began since China's opening up to the outside world in the early 1980s and after the end of the Cold War. However, they have become more visible since Xi took over power. These trends, moreover, may shed some light on the changing direction of Chinese foreign policy in the future.

The first feature of Xi's foreign policy is that the domestic and foreign policy task of China remains unchanged. The political report to the 18th Party Congress says:

An examination of both the current international and domestic environments shows that China remains in an important period of strategic opportunities of its development, a period in which much can be achieved. We need to [...] seize all opportunities, respond with cool-headedness to challenges, and gain initiative and advantages to win the future and attain the goals of completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020.⁴

Xi further elaborated on these goals in more explicit terms after the Party Congress that China will march toward two great goals: one is to double both China's GDP and its GDP per capita for its urban and rural residents, realizing a well-off society that benefits a billion plus population by 2020; and the other is to succeed in building a modern socialist country which is rich, democratic, civilized, and harmonious by the 100th anniversary of the PRC.⁵ These were later referred to as the "two centenary goals" of economic construction.

Xi has branded the task of economic development with the new term, "Chinese dream," or the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*)."⁶ During his trips abroad and meetings with visiting foreign guests at home, Xi has expounded the Chinese dream as one of a "strong state, rejuvenation of the nation and the happy life of the people." He conveys that the Chinese dream is closely linked to the dreams of other peoples around the world.⁷ Chinese dream is considered "the continuation and development of the important thinking of China's peaceful development in the new era,"⁸ a new notion (*linian*) of diplomacy for new times.⁹

With domestic policy continuing to focus on economic development, Chinese leaders have sent out the clear message that the new collective central leadership is committed to reform and opening up, and that China will continue on the path of peaceful development. The initiation of the Shanghai special economic zone demonstrates their strong will and determination in this regard.

Since the focus has not changed domestically, the goal of foreign policy continues to be the creation of a peaceful international environment for China's domestic economic development. This makes maintaining domestic stability more imperative than ever. As the new Foreign Minister Wang Yi said:

The Chinese dream requires a peaceful and stable international and neighboring environment [...] When engaging in diplomacy, we must first and foremost stay focused on serving and promoting the central task of development. We must work more vigorously and effectively to create a sound external environment for completing the building of a moderately prosperous society. We must provide stronger safeguards for addressing problems in sustainable development in China, and for the extension of China's legitimate rights and interests in the world.¹⁰

To further serve China's domestic economic development, the role of economic diplomacy has become even more prominent in China's overall foreign policy. This is demonstrated by the Foreign Ministry's establishment of a new Department of International Economy.¹¹ External economic cooperation has been given special attention. A Silk Road Economic Belt in the west and a Maritime Silk Road in Southeast and South Asia were proposed to boost economic cooperation with China's neighbors.

The concept that foreign policy should serve domestic politics is by no means a new one. The very size of China and its history has proven that domestic consideration always prevails over external considerations, and as long as China remains stable no other country can disturb it.¹² What is new today is that major domestic concerns increasingly center on safeguarding domestic stability, which is considered essential for sustaining economic growth. Therefore, a more direct foreign policy task for China is to help maintain domestic stability.

Such a concern is also a continuation from the end of the Cold War, when Deng Xiaoping prioritized domestic stability. The first New Year's Day editorial of the *People's Daily* after the end of the Cold War explicitly referred to the reason behind this policy: "[I]t is vital to secure national stability and social stability in order to realize the goal in 1990s [...] without a stable environment, nothing is possible. Stability prevails over everything else."¹³ Domestic stability has been upgraded to one of the three "core national interests" since 2010¹⁴ and it is a more salient and immediate task in China's politics and foreign policy today. The money that is spent on domestic stability has surpassed China's military budget since 2010, and its continued increase over recent years has attracted global attention.¹⁵

There are two sources of domestic instability. One is social unrest; the other is domestic forces that are connected with external anti-China forces, such as terrorist groups. After the Legal Affairs Office of the State Council adopted "Measures on Freezing and Administration of Property Related to Terrorism Activities" in May 2013, the central government elevated China's Anti-terrorist Coordinating Group to Anti-terrorist Leading Group in September 2013.

Another example of the complementarity of continuity and change in China's foreign policy is that, while the overall foreign policy framework remains, the idea of building a new model of big power relations has been introduced. In the first 32 years of the PRC, China's foreign policy framework prioritized socialist countries, while during the years from 1982 to 2002, it emphasized relations with developing countries. Since the beginning of this century, a new pattern of Chinese foreign policy has emerged: relations with developed countries are considered the key, with neighbors as the priority, developing countries as the basis, and multilateral diplomacy as the new arena of China's overall foreign relations.

Since the new government took office in March 2013, President Xi, Premier Li Keqiang and other leaders have attended various major multilateral conferences, paid visits to two dozen countries, and hosted visits by several foreign leaders. These activities reveal the new pattern of Chinese foreign policy characterized by the

promotion of a new model of big power relations. In an article published in *Seeing Truth*, State Councilor Yang Jiechi expounded upon this “comprehensive and balanced” layout, explaining that it integrated China’s relations with the world’s major countries, its neighbors, other developing countries, and multilateral diplomacy.¹⁶

Relations with major powers are further prioritized in China’s foreign policy. Like his predecessors, Xi made his first foreign visit to Russia after he became the President of China. The frequent high-level meetings between the two leaders has deepened strategic trust and enhanced close coordination on major international and regional issues such as Syria, as well as in global economic governance. In his meeting with the U.S. President Barack Obama in June 2013, Xi proposed building a new type of major power relations between the two nations in order to avoid the traditional path of inevitable confrontation. This first face-to-face meeting between the leaders of China and the United States since Xi assumed the presidency in March and Obama won a second presidential term provides a roadmap for Sino-U.S. relations, a close and complex bilateral relationship. China and the European Union (EU) have also expanded areas of cooperation. Upon taking office, Premier Li Keqiang visited Switzerland and Germany to cement bilateral relations with the two countries. In addition, China and Europe have since successfully settled disputes over solar panel trade, thereby stabilizing China’s economic relations with its biggest trading partner.

The end of the Cold War brought increased levels of political trust and strengthened economic relations between China and its neighbors. China’s two-way trade with its neighbors is greater than its trade with the U.S. and the EU — China’s two largest trade partners — put together. Since taking office, President Xi and Premier Li have exchanged visits with leaders of nine out of ten ASEAN member states and four members of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO). After exchanges of high-level visits with neighbors, the CCP Central Committee held a high-level conference on the diplomatic work on neighboring countries in Beijing, capital of China, on October 25, 2013. The conference,

participated by all members of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee's Political Bureau, is the first of its kind in Chinese history and shows the strategic significance of China's relations with neighbors. Xi said in his speech that dealing with neighboring countries "should have a three-dimensional, multi-element perspective, beyond time and space." He emphasized that the basic tenet of diplomacy with neighbors is to treat them as friends and partners, to make them feel safe and to help them develop. More concrete policy is to make neighbors friendlier in politics, more closely economically, and have deeper security cooperation and closer people-to-people ties.¹⁷

Relations with developing countries have been considered the cornerstone of China's overall foreign relations since 1980s. The new government's foreign policy activities revealed that such policies have not changed. President Xi visited Tanzania, South Africa, and the Republic of Congo in his first trip abroad. During this first trip he stressed China's commitment to cooperation with Africa with sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith.¹⁸ Xi also expressed his desire to establish and develop a comprehensive and cooperative partnership with countries in the Caribbean during his visit to Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, and Mexico, where he held bilateral talks with leaders of eight Caribbean countries.

Multilateral diplomacy has been regarded as a new arena for China's foreign policy, with summit diplomacy as its most active aspect. Fresh progress has been made in China's relations with major international organizations. Wang Yi says that China will continue to maintain the present international order and the universally recognized international norms, while more actively participating in the reform and improvement of the international system. He has remarked that norms governing international relations such as "respect for sovereignty, safeguarding of peace, upholding dialogue, supporting equality and opposing interference, aggression, violence and power politics" are "never outdated and always vibrant, are long-term principles in China's diplomacy."¹⁹

Strong memories of forming alliances with one superpower against another during the Cold War have led to criticism of a foreign policy framework that lacks an archenemy. The "*taoguang*

yanghui (traditionally translated as keep a low profile and bide our time)” strategy that Deng put forward in the wake of the Cold War has been under debate since the late 1990s.²⁰ More recently, there are growing voices calling for the abandonment of China’s foreign

policy strategy of non-alignment.²¹ The non-alignment framework has been criticized as “lacking coherent and sensible domestic and international” goals.²² Such criticism of Chinese foreign policy, however, fails to grasp the essence of Chinese foreign policy, which has both changes and continuities in three major aspects, namely, a plan for new model of big power relations, unchanged policy over unsettled territorial disputes, and gradual and subtle changes in China’s policy toward North Korea.

Chinese foreign policy has both changes and continuities in three major aspects: big power relations, policy over unsettled territorial disputes, and policy toward North Korea.

The first aspect is China’s policy toward the world’s only superpower — the United States. History has witnessed major countries, especially emerging powers and established powers, engaging in competition and ending up in confrontation or even conflict. As China rose to become the world’s number two economy, concerns about a repetition of the vicious pattern grew. To deflate such concerns, the new Chinese leadership claims they do not subscribe to such a pattern and sincerely hope and are taking measures to reverse the negative trends of China-U.S. relations. During their meeting at the Annenberg Estate, Xi told President Obama that the “vast Pacific Ocean is broad enough to accommodate our two big countries.”²³ According to Chinese media, the two sides agreed to work together to build a new model of major-country relationship characterized by “non-conflict and non-confrontation,” “mutual respect,” and “win-win cooperation.”²⁴

To reduce America’s concern over China’s foreign policy, Wang Yi elaborated the new model of big power relations during his first visit to the U.S. He said: “We have never had the strategic intention to challenge or replace the United States’ position in the world.

We truly wish to work together with the United States and all other countries for peace and common development.” As for the competition in the Asian Pacific region, Wang remarked in ever-more explicit terms:

China respects the traditional influence and immediate interests of the United States in the Asia-Pacific. We have never thought about pushing the U.S. out of the region. Rather, we hope the United States will play a positive and constructive role in safeguarding peace, stability and development in the Asia-Pacific.²⁵

Such a proposal is plausible, not only because of China's sincerity, but because of the disastrous consequences of repeating the past, considering the depth of interdependence between the two powers.

China's interaction with the world can be seen in China's relations with its neighbors, which have both continuities and changes since the leadership took power. The former is seen in China's policy over maritime territorial disputes, a source of major criticism against China's foreign policy. The latter is seen in China's policy on North Korean nuclear issue, which seems to remain unchanged. The maritime territorial disputes between China and its neighbors are not new. An analysis of the root of the disputes is beyond the scope of this paper, but their implications on the new features of Chinese foreign policy will be explored. Unprecedentedly high levels of domestic involvement, including calls for tougher responses to maritime disputes, have been cited as evidence of China's assertiveness.²⁶ As a result, the official policy, which has not changed, has been overshadowed by the discordant voices and media rhetoric.

As maritime disputes became less heated, it became clear that China's policy on maritime disputes has in fact remained changed. Calls for tough measures are prevalent in Chinese media, and Yang Jiechi's article in *Seeking Truth* emphasizes territorial sovereignty ahead of peaceful settlement.²⁷ Later, at a CCP Politburo's special study session, Xi said that China must “plan as a whole the two overall situations of maintaining stability and safeguarding rights” (*yao tongchou weiwen he weiquan liangge daju*), giving equal

importance to maintaining regional stability and safeguarding China's "maritime rights and interests."²⁸ Foreign Minister Wang Yi reversed the order of sovereignty and peaceful settlement when he said in his Tsinghua University speech:

China maintains that proper solutions must be sought through dialogue and negotiation on the basis of fully respecting historical facts and international law. We are opposed to actions that might expand and complicate the disputes. Pending the settlement of disputes over maritime rights and interests, parties could shelve differences and engage in joint development.²⁹

In September, he reiterated this policy during his speech at the United Nations (UN): Those disputes that cannot be resolved now should be shelved for future resolution. This is our consistent position and practice. On the other hand, we will, under whatever circumstances, firmly safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and resolutely uphold China's legitimate and lawful rights and interests.³⁰ The major tune of Xi's speech at the conference on the diplomatic work on neighboring countries is on how to strive for a sound neighboring environment for China's development and how to seek common development with neighboring countries; he hardly talks about safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Contrary to the criticism or dramatization of China's assertiveness on these issues, China's policy on maritime territorial disputes has been consistent.

China's foreign policy on North Korean nuclear issue is undergoing quiet and subtle changes, despite the government policy pronouncement remaining the same. China has spearheaded and hosted the Six-Party talks since 2003. Unfortunately, the talks have been suspended due to the unbridgeable differences between the major parties over how to verify steps North Korea should take to end its nuclear program. China's new Ambassador to the U.S., Cui Tiankai, said upon his arrival in Washington D.C. that "our influence over the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) may not be as real as what is reported in the media."³¹ But evidence shows that the Chinese government has increased pressure on its northeast neighbor after North Koreans conducted rocket launches and the third nuclear test in February 2013.

For the first time, the Chinese Foreign Minister summoned the North Korean ambassador in Beijing. He explained that China was “strongly dissatisfied and resolutely opposed” to the test and urged North Korea to “stop any rhetoric or acts that could worsen situations and return to the right course of dialogue and consultation as soon as possible.”³² In the UN, Beijing joined other countries to support UN resolution 2094 condemning Pyongyang’s nuclear test and imposing further sanctions on North Korea. The Vice Chairman of the CCP Military Committee Fan Changlong told the visiting North Korean envoy, Choe Ryong Hae, that tensions surrounding the nuclear issue have “intensified strategic conflicts among involved parties and jeopardized the peace and stability of the peninsula.”³³ Related Chinese ministries have notified their agencies to “strictly abide by” the international obligations by earnestly carrying out the UN resolution.³⁴ Other evidence includes a report that China Construction Bank ceased its business operations with two North Korean banks. Furthermore, Chinese exports to North Korea decreased by 13.8 percent in the first quarter of 2013 to \$720 million. This evidence suggests that China’s policy is tilting toward international expectations in handling the troubling North Korean nuclear issue.

The most remarkable features of Chinese foreign policy since the 18th Party Congress are those of with Chinese new leader Xi Jinping. These new features include greater significance attached to national interest in foreign affairs; Xi’s active role as diplomat-in-chief and “first lady diplomacy”; and Xi’s emphasis on the holistic management of foreign affairs.

Since taking office, Xi has attached unprecedented significance to national interest though he continues talking about win-win reciprocity and convergence points for cooperation. National interest is considered the “bottom line” of Chinese foreign policy. He said that his idea of the Chinese dream “reflects

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the interest of Chinese nation and Chinese people as a whole.”³⁵ Soon after becoming CPC General Secretary, Xi explained in a high profile conference that, while China will stick to the path of peaceful development, it will never give up its legitimate rights, nor will it sacrifice its core national interests. No country should expect China to trade core interests or expect it to swallow the bitter fruit that jeopardizes our sovereignty, security and development interest.³⁶ “Resolutely upholding China’s core interests” is also emphasized as the bottom line in the implementation of Chinese foreign policy.³⁷

National interest is also emphasized as the cornerstone of China’s bilateral relations. For instance, Xi told President Obama that the two sides should respect each other’s core interests and major concerns to maintain the healthy development of the new phase of Sino-U.S. relations. As for relations with Russia, Xi emphasizes that the two sides should “increase mutual support on issues that concern each other’s core interests.” On relations with African countries, he emphasizes “common interest” between the two sides and has said that China always remembers the firm support and essential assistance that African countries extended to China on issues concerning China’s core national interests and concerns. On relations with other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) members, Xi discusses the common interests that China shares with them.³⁸ Thus, “mutual support for each other’s core interests, and mutual respect for each other’s core interests and major concerns” has become the new cornerstone of China’s foreign relations.

The second feature of Xi’s foreign policy is his position as diplomat-in-chief, which requires his extensive involvement in and close scrutiny of China’s foreign policymaking and implementation. Since his inauguration as president through October 2013, Xi has attended the fifth BRICS Leaders’ Meeting in Durban, South Africa; the G20 in St. Petersburg, Russia; the SCO Summit in Kyrgyzstan; as well as the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit in Indonesia. He has visited major powers like Russia and the U.S. as well as twelve developing countries. Premier Li Keqiang also participated in the East Asian Summit and visited seven countries

including India, Pakistan, Switzerland, Germany, Brunei, Thailand, and Vietnam. The frequency of his foreign visits surpasses all of his predecessors, bringing a new height of diplomat-in-chief or summit diplomacy to China.

The third feature of Xi's summit diplomacy as China's new foreign policy direction is China's "first lady diplomacy," which has witnessed a surge in popularity in China. Xi's wife, Peng Liyuan, accompanied Xi to Russia for his diplomatic debut and the BRICS summit, and has been Xi's companion on major diplomatic occasions ever since. Images of her descending arm-in-arm with Xi from their aircraft have left the world with a fresh impression of new Chinese leaders. A WHO (World Health Organization) ambassador for the fight against AIDS and a long-term advocate for poverty relief and other causes, the Chinese first lady meets with women and children and visits schools and kindergartens. Her actions send the world a positive image of China at a time when China is accused of being too assertive. Although first lady diplomacy has caused more domestic sensation by boosting self-respect and confidence than boosting China's soft power internationally, it cannot be denied that first lady diplomacy will be one of Xi's indelible marks on Chinese diplomatic history.

The fourth feature of Xi's new foreign policy is the greater importance attached to top-level planning, medium-level coordination, and low-level implementation. State Councilor Yang's work reveals that President Xi has repeatedly called for a "holistic management of foreign affairs" and "stronger top-level planning and medium- to long-term strategic planning for China's diplomatic work."³⁹ For instance, in order to enhance coordinated planning, the National Oceanic Committee was established as a high-level coordinating institution to make national maritime development strategy and overall coordination of important projects over oceanic issues.⁴⁰

The new government also emphasizes medium-level coordination in diplomatic work to ensure unified central leadership over the operations. Yang Jiechi, State Councilor, head of the Foreign Affairs Office, and Secretariat of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group, calls

for “balanced considerations, overall planning, unified command and coordinated implementation” in foreign affairs. Central and local governments, non-governmental organizations and all foreign policy-related agencies are required to work together to create synergy, with each performing their respective functions.⁴¹

The new administration continues institution-building efforts to streamline foreign affairs coordination. For instance, in light of the new demands on diplomatic work, new departments, such as the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, Department of Consular Affairs (Center for Consular Assistance and Protection) and Public Diplomacy Office (within the Information Department), have been set up under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since the 18th Party Congress, foreign affairs-related institution-building has been strengthened. For example, the Anti-terrorism Leading Group was founded, relevant systems and mechanisms have been introduced, and clear-cut regulations have been formulated.

Institution-building is not limited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In light of diverse voices over the troubling maritime territorial disputes, institution streamlining in this regard is another revealing case. Many maritime actors that have stakes in the South China Sea disputes have participated in the wrangling with China’s neighbors on their own accord. This has been referred to as nine dragons “stirring up the South China Sea.”⁴² While a Chinese source indicates that more than seventeen departments or agencies from the central government level are involved in oceanic administration.⁴³ To address such a messy situation, the Second Session of the 12th National People’s Congress in March 2013 passed a resolution to reorganize the State Oceanic Administration, an increasingly important agency established in 1964. The National Bureau of Oceanography and its China Maritime Surveillance, Coast Guard under the Ministry of Public Security, Fisheries Administration under the Ministry of Agriculture and Anti-smuggling Police under the Central Customs Administration were combined to form the new State Oceanic Administration in order to “coordinate law enforcement on the high sea and improve institution efficiency.” The new administration, which remains

under the auspices of the Ministry of Land and Resources, will be in charge of law enforcement on the sea in the name of China Coast Guard. At the same time, it will accept guidance from the Ministry of Public Security.⁴⁴

Since taking office as general secretary of the Communist Party, Xi has given special importance to policy implementation to ensure that central government policies are carried out accurately. At a conference of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection in January 2013, he warned that we should be on “guard against and overcome local protectionism and departmentalism. Countermeasures to central government’s policy or ignore orders and behavior against the bans are strictly prohibited.” “It is definitely forbidden to make choices, fall short of requirements, or seek changes in implementing the decision of the central government.”⁴⁵

Foreign policy is a special concern in this regard. As the leader of China’s chief foreign policy implementer, Yang has called on diplomats “to follow new trends in strategic planning, to make timely policy adjustments in light of shifting international developments and the changing external environment, and to properly address new issues and problems.” He also indicates that “efforts should be made to ensure the smooth exercise of leadership by the Party Central Committee in decision-making, management and specific handling of foreign policy-related affairs so as to realize its strategic intentions in diplomatic work.”⁴⁶

II. EXPLAINING CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE

Whether these trends are transitional phenomena or something that will continue in the future is more important than simply looking at the past? To answer this question, the factors that shape these features of China’s foreign policy need to be analyzed.

Extension of Historical Success

There are many factors that play a part in China’s foreign policy today. The continuation of economic development proves the success of China’s economic reform and opening launched by Deng

Xiaoping more than thirty years ago. There will be no divergences from this path. The Political Report to the 18th Party Congress expressed in clear terms:

Taking economic development as the central task is vital to national renewal, and development still holds the key to addressing all the problems we have in China. Only by promoting sustained and sound economic development can we lay a solid material foundation for enhancing the country's prosperity and strength, improving the people's well-being and ensuring social harmony and stability. We must unwaveringly adhere to the strategic thinking that only development counts.⁴⁷

The contribution of diplomacy to China's economic success cannot be denied, in spite of criticism of Chinese diplomacy today. For instance, China has not been involved in any war or major military conflict since its reform and opening up in 1979 and its relations with neighbors have improved significantly in the last thirty years, ensuring a peaceful peripheral environment for China's domestic development. During this period of time, China has made great progress in ensuring stable relations with major powers, who are not only China's most important export markets, but also its major sources of foreign investment and technology. They are indispensable to China's economic success. China's relationship with the international community has also improved. The ability to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation will definitely depend upon further success in China's diplomacy.

The Requirement of Globalization

To a considerable extent, the new foreign policy framework, which does not distinguish friends from foes, is a requirement of globalization. As Wang Jisi, the editor of this volume, once wrote: To have a clear grand strategy, one needs to be clear about the "nation's core interests," the "external forces that threaten them," and the "means to safeguard the interests."⁴⁸ The evolution of Chinese foreign policy strategy during the Cold War was centered on who was the major threat to China's security interest at the time — the U.S. and/or the Soviet Union — and was adjusted accordingly. The end of the Cold War resulted in a difficulty in

distinguishing friend from foe. In a globalized and interdependent world, “friends” in one issue area are often enemies or competitors in another. Lack of Cold War style grand strategy is a common phenomenon for most countries, not only for China. Chinese foreign policy has already been going through the process of changing from relationship-oriented areas to function-oriented foreign policy. The fact that the newly established departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are all function-oriented proves this trend. Xi’s emphasis on national interest is testimony to such thinking.

Xi’s foreign policy toward the U.S. and Russia epitomizes China’s new thinking in foreign affairs. The narrowing power gap between China and the U.S. has added to their mistrust resulting from differences in their political system, ideology, culture, and history.⁴⁹ In the eyes of most Chinese, the U.S. pivot to Asia targets and pressurizes China. Xi’s choice of Russia as the first leg of his first overseas visit as president was interpreted by some through similar geopolitical lenses. However, from a historical perspective, his predecessors from Mao to Jiang to Hu all made their first foreign visit to Russia. In the economic arena, Sino-Russian trade volume (USD80 billion in 2012) is only a small fraction of that between China and the U.S. (USD500 billion in 2012). Therefore, relations with the U.S. will definitely play a greater role in China’s realization of its dream of national rejuvenation. Moreover, the social interdependence between China and the U.S. is far stronger than those between China and Russia. The time and manner of Xi’s visit to the two countries reveals that their importance to China lies in different domains. They should not be compared or be connected to a Cold War mentality.

Reduced consensus on China’s foreign policy strategy is also a result of China’s changing and multiple identities. To define China’s “international position” has always been problematic, and China’s rise has made it even more difficult. From the

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perspective of strength to its geostrategic position to its system of government, China shows dual characteristics: a “strong developing country;” “a major Asian power” but “unable to play a leading role in Asia”; “a socialist power” but “without complete unification of its territory and still under the threat of national separation”; and “a beneficiary, participator and reformer of the existing international order.”⁵⁰ The Chinese leaders are quite clear about their “seeming paradoxical phenomenon,” because “uneven growth is still the basic reality in China and a big developing country is still what China is.”⁵¹ Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, “Even when China becomes stronger and more prosperous, it will remain a staunch member of the developing world because China and fellow developing countries have a similar past, common development task and ever-expanding shared strategic interests.”⁵² China’s “strong yet weak” international position makes it difficult to pursue a simple style of foreign policy strategy that can be characterized in easy terms.

Furthermore, China’s gradual and increased involvement in international affairs has complicated its relations with the outside world. China has participated in 24 UN peacekeeping operations and dispatched a total of more than 10,000 peacekeeping personnel, making it an important actor in the international system. China has also hosted the Six-Party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. At the same, China still clings to the principle of non-interference in international affairs and has been hesitant on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principles. Though China is cooperating with the West on many issues and has embraced many of the international norms based on Western diplomatic experience in practice, China has not changed its opposition to the Western-based norms in general. As China gradually integrates with the international community, its foreign policy becomes more subtle and sophisticated with different dimensions and areas; and inconsistency between Chinese foreign policy principles and practice has also increased. Such developments have led observers with different backgrounds to have diverse yet strong views of what China should do, although they might not understand what Chinese foreign policy entails. This is the very reason for foreign policy debate in China. This debate has a

negative influence on China's image externally and exerts pressure on Chinese foreign policymaking.

The Choice of New Leadership

Xi Jinping and the new CPC Politburo are the first generation of leaders born after the founding of the PRC in 1949. They do not have the historical burden that their predecessors had. They also do not have the same charisma of their predecessors. Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping were typical predominant leaders, who had the "ability to stifle all opposition and dissent as well as the power to make a decision alone if necessary."⁵³ Since the end of the Cold War, power transitions have had to go through a process of "collective inspection, collective decision, the collective handing over of power and the collective taking over of power (集体考察、集体选择、集体交班、集体接班)."⁵⁴ Once the power transition is complete, major decisions are made through what Jiang Zemin summarized as "collective leadership, democratic centralism, individual preparation, and decisions made at meetings (集体领导, 民主集中, 个别酝酿, 会议决定)." In such a system of collective leadership, collective decision and collective responsibility, each member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) oversees a different functional area, and holistic planning becomes especially important.⁵⁵ On the other hand since the new leadership lacks of historical burden, they are able to make changes with China's long lasting relations with North Korea.

Unlike Jiang, who was considered as the "core" (*hexin*, 核心) of the third generation leadership, Xi, like his predecessor Hu, is not a "core" of his generation but simply the General Secretary of the new CPC Central Committee. He does not have the political capital to make the compromise that Mao made on territorial disputes, and he is clear about the disastrous consequence of a war with neighbors. The new Chinese Government with Xi as General Secretary pursues a

The Chinese government led by Xi pursues a balanced foreign policy: to be tough in the face of provocative activities, while sincerely hoping to maintain a peaceful peripheral environment.

balanced policy: to be tough in the face of provocative activities (such as those by the Philippines and the Noda government's nationalization of the Diaoyu Islands), while sincerely hoping to maintain a peaceful peripheral environment. China has appeared assertive on the territorial disputes but the policy "sovereignty is ours, shelve disputes and pursue joint development" initiated by Deng Xiaoping has not changed. So long as those neighbors with whom China has maritime territorial disputes do not miscalculate and take more provocative actions against China, it is unlikely that the government would change the status quo.

The first- and second-generation leaders were the founders of the Party and the State, and worked in the center of the Party and the State from the very beginning. They made foreign policy decisions from strategic perspectives. Leaders of Jiang's generation who had experience in both the provincial level and central government were referred to as technocrats.⁵⁷ The majority of the 17th Politburo had experience at the local level, but most of them worked at the CPC Central Committee's Secretariat, which is responsible for running the work of the Central Committee, before being elevated to the Political Bureau Standing Committee (PBSC). Only two of the current PBSC members, Xi and Liu Yunshan — who is in charge of ideological affairs — have worked at the secretariat level, and all but Liu Yunshan have been governor or secretary of the Party of more than one province. None of them have experience in foreign affairs. Such backgrounds indicate that they may be short of strategic vision but they are surely more experienced in solving thorny domestic issues and their focus and interests will continue to be domestic. Upon taking office, Xi launched a "mass line" campaign in a bid to crack down on "formalism, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance" and to strengthen Party-people relations. This campaign is going on throughout the Chinese government, including the Chinese foreign affairs bureaucracies.

The downside of rich working experience at the local level is a lack of global vision, but the upside is that the officials are more pragmatic and their foreign policy is more down to the ground. Xi quoted Lao Zi — "Running a big country is like cooking a small fish" — to describe his governing style, and his preference for

action instead of talk was emphasized by his statement that “empty talks would lead the country astray, and hard work can rejuvenate the nation.”⁵⁸ He talks about football on international occasions and has praised the Chinese Malaysian singer Jasmine Leong. Almost immediately after Xi’s elevation, he announced a high-profile austerity campaign, attacking the culture of banquets, ceremony, and pomp. Xi’s style is more humanistic, and he affords a lot of attention to policy implementation.

The current leadership may not have as much strategic vision as their predecessors. They may be more inward-looking, but are definitely more open-minded with a more global perspective. For instance, Xi himself had the experience of living in Iowa for a two weeks and visited foreign countries when he worked his way up the central government as vice president. In an “age of summit diplomacy,”⁵⁹ Xi will not lag behind. As first lady diplomacy becomes a world fashion, China’s first lady should not fall behind the times. Summit diplomacy and first lady diplomacy are Xi’s own personal style, which manifests his desire to bring China’s diplomacy in line with international practice.

Results of Bureaucratic Change

The trends of “professionalization,” “cooperative pluralization,” “decentralization,” and “globalization” that David Lampton discussed a decade ago have further developed and are still exerting influence on Chinese foreign policymaking in different ways. Professionalization undermines the authority of top leaders because many issues in foreign affairs need more expertise than grand strategy to address. Leaders need to consult and persuade rather than simply issue orders for political policies to be implemented.

Cooperative pluralization and decentralization make foreign policy coordination and cooperation more important today. The leading roles played by the Ministry of Commerce, the State Reform and Development Commission and the Ministry of Finance in China’s economic and strategic dialogues with its major trading partners indicates that the power of the Foreign Ministry has been eroded by its peers. As reports issued by the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Commerce and others

show, departments of the ministries other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are enforcing the UN resolution on sanctioning North Korea. All ministries of the central government have their department of international cooperation, and have seen an increase of staff as their roles expand. They essentially become small departments of foreign affairs in their respective field. Tracking the Foreign Ministry's news briefings, one can easily notice that the spokesperson often says, "I do not have information on this issue" or "please ask relevant agencies responsible." The Foreign Ministry, expected internationally to be responsible for Chinese foreign affairs, is now becoming a mere coordinator.

Not only do they have to share power with their peers, the privileges of the Foreign Ministry are also taken away from the top and bottom. From the top, as the PRC President, State Council Premier, and other top leaders come to the forefront to engage in diplomacy, they are not only foreign policymakers but become foreign policy implementers as well. The Foreign Ministry, which used to enjoy exclusive power over foreign policy implementation, has become a facilitator for diplomacy at higher level instead. From the bottom, more challenges to the power of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs come from local governments, state and private companies, and even individuals. The scope and nature of these issues are simply too broad and complex for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to maintain close scrutiny. In fact, the Ministry has been mocked as a "fire extinguisher," as it is often unaware of an issue until it becomes an international focus.⁶⁰

Many of these new actors in foreign affairs have narrow perceptions of China's national interests and rival motives as a result of their varying domestic portfolios and international outreach activities. As the saying goes, where you stand depends on where you sit. Different participants see national interest differently and have different voices. This leads many observers of Chinese foreign policy astray. Some have accused Beijing of lacking "a clear and well-developed policy on many issues, from the disputed islands to North Korea to climate change. Strong rhetoric is often used to compensate for weak or incoherent policies."⁶¹ Others say that China has a well-coordinated foreign policy of "diplomatic threats,"

“economic sanctions,” and “massing coast guard forces” on the maritime territorial disputes.⁶²

The fact is that China's foreign policy is neither so well-coordinated that each and every step is an intentional act of the central government, nor is it completely haphazard without a purpose. As one recent paper on this topic aptly concludes, “A fundamental challenge for China's national security decision-making system lies in the conflict between the need for centralization and the

diffusion of power (collective leadership) at the top level.”⁶³ This is the very reason why new Chinese foreign policy authorities put so much emphasis on coordination and implementation.

A focus in this regard is on the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Some consider the PLA “a very important interest group” with “its own bureaucratic interests.”⁶⁴ Others see the PLA as “a conservative, highly nationalistic, [and] confident actor,” which “is the main, if not sole, force behind a range of more assertive and/or confrontational actions.”⁶⁵ Still others consider that the PLA no longer shies away from antagonizing its neighbors and the U.S. by displaying its power.⁶⁶ Such views confuse some relentless voices of hawkish military officials, who do not have any say in policymaking, with the Central Military Commission (CMC), which is under the strict leadership of the Party. As China's top military official, CMC Vice Chairman Fan Changlong, said:

We will firmly listen to the directives of the Party, unswervingly insist on the absolute leadership of the Party on the armed forces. Adhering to the directive of the Party and being absolutely loyal and reliable are the supreme political demand of the Party to the armed forces. It is the core of the great tradition, quintessence, and the most treasured thing of our armed forces.⁶⁷

To say the military dictates Chinese foreign policy reflects a failure to appreciate the reality in China.

China's foreign policy is neither so well-coordinated that each and every step is an intentional act of the central government, nor is it completely haphazard without a purpose.

On the other hand, these views of the Chinese military do reveal a new development in the role of the PLA in China's foreign affairs. In the past, when China was weaker, the military enjoyed autonomy over its own professional and operational details and its influence was mainly confined to the domestic sphere. The military, which had not been constantly involved in international affairs, did not consider international impact in its standard operating procedure (SOP). As the military's power and influence grew, their actions began to have greater international repercussions and now can be seen at times to complicate Chinese diplomacy.⁶⁸ This further explains the new administration's emphasis on foreign policy planning, coordination and implementation.

Facing these changing tendencies within China's foreign policy bureaucracy, some observers have raised the idea of establishing a coordinating body resembling the U.S. National Security Council. Such a body, however, will not solve these problems but further complicate Chinese foreign policy. The Chinese decision-making system is very much centered on the CPC Central Committee. The Party's construction is "the soul of diplomatic work"⁶⁹ and the "leadership of party is the soul of the military work."⁷⁰ The CPC Central Committee Politburo and its standing committee are both the highest decision-making bodies and the coordinating bodies for all national affairs, including diplomatic and military. A new kind of bureaucracy will find itself in an awkward position in its relations with the current Politburo. If it is not within the Politburo, it will not have any say on major foreign policy decisions; if it is within, it would have too much overlap with the Politburo and find itself redundant. A better way to address the problem with China's foreign policy today is to elevate the role of the Foreign Ministry, which used to be but is no longer represented at the highest echelons of power in Beijing, so that its voice can be heard and its views taken into account in China's foreign policy decision-making.

The Extension of Domestic Social Changes

Domestic politics and China's foreign policy are intimately related in two ways. One is that serving domestic economic construction and maintaining domestic stability is the central task

of the foreign policy. The other is that China's foreign policy is an extension of domestic politics, as it is decided by many domestic factors. From the state-owned companies to private entrepreneurs to individual travelers, various Chinese actors outside the government are involved individually or collectively in international affairs. From mass anti-foreign protests to debates on the government's foreign policy, the voices are becoming increasingly pluralized. For the sake of space, this paper will only explore two factors, nationalism and public opinion, which are intimately related to each other.

Nationalism is a popular phenomenon in a globalizing world and a lot of attention has been paid to its role in Chinese politics and foreign policy. Some believe that nationalism is a result of the Chinese government's patriotism campaign after the end of the Cold War. China considers this a misperception, as the Chinese government is strongly in opposition to narrow nationalism that results in irrational actions. What the government encourages is patriotism, the "core of Chinese national spirit." Xi said in his speech after being elected PRC President that the Chinese spirit, "which combines the spirit of the nation with patriotism at the core and the spirit of the time with reform and innovation at the core," is essential for realizing China's dream.⁷¹

The strongest manifestation of Chinese nationalism is the anti-foreign protests on sensitive issues concerning China's national interests. The Chinese government is blamed for instigating and encouraging nationalism and for organizing or approving nationalistic behavior. But the Chinese government categorically denies such allegations, blaming other countries, such as Japan's nationalization of the Chinese Diaoyu Island in 2012, for the root cause of the protests.⁷² Whenever anti-foreign protests develop into chaos that destabilizes social order or causes property damage, the government takes measures to curb these protests. In each of the two anti-Japan protests in 2005 and 2012, dozens of people who resorted to extreme actions during the protest were indicted or detained.

Nationalism sometimes proves to be a foreign policy asset that the government can rely on to send a strong signal of a tough policy, and has the potential to strengthen Beijing's diplomatic bargaining

power, as the anti-Japan protests in 2005 and 2012 demonstration. At the same time, anti-foreign protests also constrain foreign affairs authorities and deprive them of the opportunities to negotiate and make meaningful and necessary compromises. Moreover, when the protests develop to their extremes, like the chaos following the Japanese government's nationalization of the Chinese territory of the Diaoyu Islands, the Chinese government had to go out of its way to restore domestic stability before putting the bilateral relations back on track. Nationalism is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it can be useful to the Chinese government, but at the same time it can prove detrimental to China's foreign policy and domestic politics.

Another active and tangible form of nationalism can be seen in books, news interviews, articles in the press, and intellectual-participated talk shows. These media sources are intended for the attentive domestic public. Some of the views expressed in these broadcast and online media inflame nationalistic sentiment among the public and overstep the government's policy lines, which are consistently more moderate and prudent. Consequently, the central leadership needs to be more active in informing the population of its own views.

The problem of these nationalistic ideas and actions is that their influence goes beyond the domestic sphere, causing negative perceptions of China abroad and having negative effects on its relations with certain countries. The most provocative actions always attract the most public attention. Different forms of nationalism, such as confident nationalism inflated by China's economic success and geopolitical nationalism, are mirrored by alternative manifestations of the "China threat" theory internationally. This, in turn, further fuels Chinese nationalism. Such a vicious circle hinders China's relations with major countries. The biggest danger lies in the possibility that China's relations with some major countries could fall victim to the confrontation fueled by narrow and irresponsible nationalism in China and their counterparts in other countries, such as the right-wing groups in Japan and ultra-conservatives among the U.S. Government leaders, who understand the significance of stable bilateral ties, try to develop sound relations with other countries, while irrational

nationalist voices continue to exaggerate the threat from other countries to their own nation and call for confrontational policies in order to increase their domestic credibility and popularity. There are similar manifestations of extreme nationalism in other countries, which in turn respond to Chinese nationalism. Thus, on the one hand, irrational nationalists in different countries demonstrate hate for each other; but on the other hand, they depend on each other to sustain their own popularity and legitimacy. In this sense, nationalism is not only a foreign policy challenge for Chinese leaders but for leaders in other countries as well, thus have a great impact on China's relations with other countries.

A related domestic factor is public opinion, which is becoming increasingly diverse as the value system in China changes. Though public opinion is neither as systematically measured nor valued as in some other countries, its role is undoubtedly on the rise. Some argue that "China's policymakers pay close attention to the media and believe [they] affect what the Chinese public thinks."⁷³ Others say that "public opinion does not shape foreign policy but is shaped by it," and "on foreign policy issues, the Chinese public relies overwhelmingly on the official media for daily information."⁷⁴ These views are both correct to a certain extent, but are not absolute. As Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in his speech at the Brookings Institute, "In today's world, public opinion has increasingly become a significant factor in shaping or even defining bilateral relationships." But he added that "we also need to lead public opinion in respective countries so that the voices advocating China-U.S. friendship and cooperation will become the mainstream and public support for our relations will grow stronger."⁷⁵ The relationship between public opinion and government policy is not a one-way traffic; the two are interactive.

The attentive public is now more engaged in China's foreign policy debates. Foreign policy issues are hot topics for the majority of about 600 million Chinese netizens who express their views and attempt to influence China's politics through online chat rooms, micro-blogs and commercialized media. Public opinion may not change policies on vital political issues, but they establish a boundary of the permissible and public opposition to certain

proposals can shape policy. Several construction projects have stalled because opposition from netizens. More than 170 Party officials have been prosecuted as a result of being exposed online. Researches on the role of public opinion in China's Japan policy have found that public opinions have an "effect on the decision-making and language of China's foreign policy." Once the public sentiment is mobilized, the terms and tactics, time and directions of Beijing's negotiation all reflect the impact of the general public.⁷⁶

The government is clear about the force and role of the general public. Xi has warned that "winning or losing public is an issue that concern the CPC's survival or extinction."⁷⁷ On October 15, the General Office of the State Council issued a notice calling for further information openness to increase governmental credibility by responding to social concern.⁷⁸ Government agencies try to understand public opinions on an unprecedented scale. Every government department has units devoted to public opinion research. Opinion monitoring centers have sprung up in new state-run organizations to delve into and interpret the sea of chatter on the Internet. To shape online narrative, China's various government departments have about 60,000 Weibo (micro-blogs) accounts.⁷⁹ As foreign policy is one of the most popular topics, the Chinese Foreign Ministry is a front runner in this regard, and now spends a good deal of time and energy managing domestic public opinion on foreign policy issues. The Public Diplomacy Center of the Foreign Ministry was established to communicate directly with the Chinese public to explain China's foreign policy in order to win understanding and support.

Domestic factors have proved to play two roles in Chinese foreign policy: "a double edged-sword" and an "agenda-setting" role.

One recent study on this topic revealed that domestic factors have proved to play two roles in China's foreign policy: "a double edged-sword" and an "agenda-setting" role. The Chinese government either plays two level-games or has to go out of its way to coordinate and address the domestic aspects of foreign affairs.⁸⁰ The new leadership's emphasis on coordination

of both domestic and international situations in foreign affairs is a testimony of the increasing role of domestic politics on China's foreign policy.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The foreign policy of the fifth generation of China's leadership in their first year of office has the following implications for future Chinese foreign policy. There will be more continuities than changes. These continuities include but are not limited to the following aspects: 1) Economic construction will remain the central task of the new administration, reform and opening up will continue; 2) The major task of China's foreign policy will remain the same, i.e., serving domestic economic construction and stability; 3) The framework of China's overall foreign relations that covers diplomacy of both developed and developing countries, diplomacy of neighboring countries and multilateral diplomacy, will not change. China will not change its non-aligned independent foreign policy by entering alliance with any country or group of countries; 4) Foreign policy will be less relationship-oriented and more function-driven. National interest will be a cornerstone and core national interests will be the bottom line in China's foreign policy; and 5) Diplomat-in-chief, first lady diplomacy and other high-level diplomacy will become prominent, and the role of the Foreign Ministry will continue to decline.

Challenges and uncertainties remain and are on the rise both in terms of the scope of the issues and their complexity. With a collective leadership and the involvement of more actors with different stakes and interests, there will be more voices discussing where China's foreign policy should go, how specific issues should be addressed, and which countries should be relied on. Coordination will become increasingly important and the new leaders need to strike a balance between concern and expectation, challenges and pressures.

The first balance to strike is between opening up and reform on the one hand and maintaining stability on the other. This will have a vital impact on China's foreign policy, which serves its domestic

task. It is clear that reform and opening up will continue, but as China's economic reform comes to a critical moment, accumulated problems bring mounting pressure for further reform, including political reform. After taking office, Xi has made inspection tours to both Xibaipo, the revolutionary base, and Shenzhen, the window of China's opening-up drive. He said that the next thirty years of reform and opening up cannot be used to negate the first thirty years; similarly, the first thirty years cannot be used to negate [the changes of] the next thirty years.⁸¹ What Xi did and said, after he became the General Secretary of the Party, indicates that he will continue to adhere to the strategy of "make progress while ensuring stability (*wenzhongqiujin*, 稳中求进)," thereby striking a balance between stability and reform despite increasing difficulties on both fronts.⁸²

Regarding the foreign affairs, the new administration shall also try to strike a balance between domestic pressures and international demands. Since they are so diametrically opposed, China finds itself trapped in a dilemma. Satisfying one side will anger the other. The short-term test will be the settlement of maritime territorial disputes. The policies of "acting firmly to uphold our territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests while working hard to appropriately handle and resolve disputes with neighboring countries through dialogue and negotiation" or simultaneously maintaining stability and safeguarding rights, seem increasingly difficult if not impossible to implement.⁸³ This is the urgent foreign policy challenge for the current generation of leadership.

As China's foreign policy emphasizes national interest in international affairs, coordinating and balancing the different interests and demands of different actors, agencies and areas within China — such as the military and civilians; economic, political and security interests; upholding justice while pursuing other interests; and demand for tough foreign policy principles and demand for diplomatic flexibility — will become routine. Coordination is easier to emphasize in theory than to implement in practice.

China's influence on the world and the world's influence on China are both unprecedented phenomena. While I have focused on how domestic changes affect China's foreign policy, one should

not overlook the fact that the responses from other countries to a rising China, their appreciation of China's national interests and the formulation of their China policy are equally if not more important factors than domestic politics in a globalizing world.

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