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ABSTRACT

Xi Jinping's political authority was not preeminent among cadres of the Communist Party of China when he assumed the General Secretary of the Central Committee in November 2012. After his inauguration, Xi advocated a slogan of "Chinese Dream" for realizing the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and pursued the policies for expanding the "core interests," which appealed to growing nationalism among the party and the society, resulting in enhancing their support to Xi. China's assertive behavior to claim territorial sovereignty and maritime interests in the East and South China Seas caused tension with the regional countries, but Xi took advantage of the conflictive relations with neighbors to strengthen his leadership in the Chinese politics. Xi administration achieved the integration of four maritime law enforcement agencies into the China Coast Guard and the establishment of the Central National Security Commission, which needed to overcome persistent opposition within the party. Xi also launched "Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics" as a new direction of Chinese foreign policies, seeking for greater leadership of China as a major power in the international community, which helped Xi to consolidate political authority. Xi cleverly employed assertive diplomacy to raise his authority in the Chinese politics.

KEYWORDS

Xi Jinping; political authority; China Coast Guard; Central National Security Commission; Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics

1. Introduction

The leader in the Chinese politics is the top of the Communist Party of China (CPC) which maintains a one-party authoritarian regime. Xi Jinping, the current Chinese political leader, assumed the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPC at the 18th National Congress of the party held in November 2012. Xi simultaneously took the post as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and inaugurated as the President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the 12th National People's Congress held in March 2013. Xi succeeded to the position of the leader in the Chinese politics from Hu Jintao through taking over the highest posts of the party, military, and state. Even though Xi institutionally inherited the status of the leader, his political authority was generally regarded as weak. Alice Miller finds that the composition of the 18th Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) indicates the continuation of the "collective leadership" principle which aims at inhibiting the General Secretary from exercising predominant power over the other members of the PSC.¹ Joseph Fewsmith argues that Xi

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had no political base in the Politburo; therefore, “it was widely believed that he was a relatively weak, conciliatory figure, surrounded by the cautious protégés of Jiang [Zemin] and Hu.”² Korogi Ichiro contends that Xi cannot avoid accepting the position as a puppet facing with strong political influence by the camps of Jiang and Hu.³

Contrary to this widely shared view, in reality Xi consolidated his political power in just several years. The 6th Plenum of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC held in October 2016 issued a communique requiring the party members “to closely unite with the Party’s Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core.” Xi achieved the superior political position as a “core leader” which was also designated to Jiang but not to Hu. The 19th National Congress of the CPC held in October 2017 amended the party’s constitution to add the “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” as one of the party’s “guides to action” including “Mao Zedong Thought,” “the Theory of Three Represents,” and “the Scientific Outlook on Development.”⁴ At the National People’s Congress (NPC) held in March 2018, Xi paved the way for possible reelection as the President at the 14th NPC in 2022 by revising the Constitution for eliminating the two consecutive terms limitation to the Presidency. It is now widely recognized that Xi has established overwhelming political authority within the party.

While steadily consolidating his political power, Xi Jinping introduced and vigorously pursued foreign policies putting much emphasis on national interests and pride. Xi initiated uncompromising external postures to safeguard and expand so-called “core interests”⁵ especially in the maritime domain. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and China’s maritime law enforcement agencies accelerated their advancement into the East and South China Seas and took assertive actions against its rival claimants over territories, sovereignty, and maritime rights and interests, causing tension with its neighboring countries. Xi also developed foreign policies seeking for China’s greater influence in the international arena. Xi for himself proposed the “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)” in 2013, pledged to support the peacekeeping operations under the United Nations in 2015, and advocated to promote globalism amidst growing protectionism among the United States and European countries in 2017. Pursuing expansion of the “core interests” in its peripheral seas and striving to play a significant role in crafting regional and international orders represents new features of the Xi’s diplomacy.

Since Xi Jinping assumed the leader in the Chinese politics, two important trends are observed: the rapid rise of Xi’s political authority; and changes in Chinese diplomacy. Do some relations exist between the two trends? If so, how do the two relate each other? These are the author’s questions in this paper. There are different perspectives about the national leader’s influence on foreign policies. Some argue that not a national leader but an international environment formed by the balance of powers is the decisive factor in making foreign policies, but some put importance on the influence of a top leader’s personality over the nation’s diplomacy.⁶ The growing tension in China’s external

¹Miller, “The New Party Politburo Leadership,” 10.

²Fewsmith, “The 19th Party Congress,” 8.

³Korogi, “Shu Kimpei Taisei,” 5.

⁴“Constitution of the CPC,” *Xinhua*, November 3, 2017.

⁵Chinese government defines the “core interests” to include “state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China’s political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development.” See, State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Peaceful Development,” September 2011.

relations with some major powers which have a concern with the rise of Chinese power is surely related to the change of the Chinese foreign policies. But still, there exists a relatively larger room for Xi, as a top leader of the CPC, to exercise his influence in the process of making foreign policies for the sake of his political interest. From the author's point of view, Xi seems to enhance his political authority by promoting distinctive foreign policies and displaying their achievement. This paper, based on this hypothesis, will examine how Xi's distinctive diplomacy is related to the rise of his political authority.

2. Propagation of the “Chinese Dream”

Xi Jinping declared the achievement of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” as a general policy principle of his administration just after his inauguration as the General Secretary of the CPC at the 1st Plenum of the 18th Central Committee on 15 November. At the press conference with Chinese and foreign correspondents, Xi argued that the Chinese people had made a monumental contribution to the progress of human civilization for 5000 years, and asserted that the Chinese people are great. He stated that although the Chinese nation encountered serious challenges and the period of crisis in modern history, the CPC exercised strong leadership to transform poor and backward China into a new country with prosperity and strength. Xi, then, stressed that his administration takes a responsibility “to pursue the goal of the [great] rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, so that China can stand firmer and stronger among the world's nations.”⁷

The phrase “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is not a creation of Xi Jinping by himself. His predecessor Hu Jintao also occasionally referred to this term. For instance, Hu stated, “the CPC has bravely dedicated itself to the historical mission of leading the Chinese people in striving for a happy life and for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” at the 17th National Congress of the CPC in 2007.⁸ Xi, on the other hand, set the term as an objective of his administration by placing it as a part of the “Chinese Dream,” his distinctive political slogan. Xi, along with all the other members of the PSC, visited the exhibition titled “The Road to Rejuvenation” at the National Museum on November 29 2012. He made remarks at the museum, stating that the Chinese people have never given in foreign invasions and started the great process of building the nation, which displayed the “great national spirit with patriotism as the core.” Xi proceeded to say, “I believe the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the nation since modern times.”⁹ Since then, Xi frequently referred to the “Chinese Dream” as his administration's ambitious slogan and took behavior appealing to nationalistic sentiments among the Chinese society.

With promoting the “Chinese Dream” as a goal of his administration, Xi Jinping modified the existing general principle of Chinese foreign policies. At the 3rd Politburo

⁶Byman and Pollack examine the impacts on foreign policies given by political leaders such as Otto von Bismarck, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Adolf Hitler and proposed hypotheses on the roles of individual leaders in international relations. See, Byman and Pollack, “Let Us Now Praise the Green Man,” 107–146.

⁷Xi, “The People's Wish for a Good Life Is Our Goal,” *The Governance of China I*, 3–4.

⁸Hu, “Report to the 17th National Congress.”

⁹“Xi Highlights National Goal of Rejuvenation (2),” english.people.cn, November 30, 2012. <http://en.people.cn/102774/8040832.html>

group study session, discussing Chinese diplomacy in January 2013, Xi told that the party should strive for achieving the goal of the “Chinese Dream,” which necessitates China to maintain a peaceful international environment through following a path of “Peaceful Development.” This “Peaceful Development” was formalized as China’s basic foreign policies by Hu Jintao in 2005. On the road to peaceful development, China pledged to strive for a peaceful international environment to develop itself, and promoting world peace through its own development.¹⁰ However, Xi urged not only to follow the peaceful development but also to emphasize the importance for protecting national “core interests” as a part of Chinese diplomatic principles. At the group study session, Xi said, “While pursuing peaceful development, we will never sacrifice our legitimate rights or China’s core interests.” He further stated, “No foreign country should expect China to trade off its core interests or swallow bitter fruit that undermines China’s sovereignty, security or development interests.”¹¹ In short, Xi declared to follow the peaceful development under the condition that the China’s “core interests” are fully protected.

Xi Jinping started to apply this diplomatic posture with an emphasis on the “core interests” to China’s policies regarding the maritime domain. The Politburo group study session for discussing a roadmap to becoming a maritime power was held in late July 2013. In his speech at the session, Xi argued that the direction for building China into a maritime power, proposed at the 18th National Congress of the CPC, has important and profound significance in protecting China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests, and pursuing the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” He also told that China will never give up its legitimate interests nor sacrifice the nation’s core interests while adhering to peaceful development. He further contended China should transform its means for protecting maritime rights and interests into more unified and comprehensive ones, and vowed “to protect the country’s maritime interests and be fully prepared for the complex issues in the region.”¹² Xi made it clear that he regards the maritime rights and interests as an integral part of the “core interests,” and set protecting them as an important mission in order to realize the “Chinese Dream” of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”

Meanwhile, Xi Jinping underlined the importance of enhancing military power so as to achieve the “Chinese Dream.” Xi paid an inspection visit to the Guangzhou Military Region with the South China Sea as its area of operations in December 2012. He made a speech to high-ranking officers and stated,

Achieving the great renewal of the Chinese nation has become the dream of the Chinese people in modern times. This great dream we have is to make our country strong. To the military, the dream is to make our forces strong. To achieve these aims we must strive both enrich the country and build a strong national defense and powerful military.¹³

In other words, Xi asserted that the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” means making China a strong country, and that building a powerful military force is necessary to make China strong. It is worth to note that Xi got aboard the PLA Navy’s latest model

¹⁰State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “White Paper on Peaceful Development Road.”

¹¹Xi, “Strengthen the Foundation for Pursuing Peaceful Development,” *The Governance of China I*, 273.

¹²“President Vows to Protect Maritime Interests,” english.people.cn, August 1, 2013. <http://en.people.cn/90785/8348261.html> and “Jin Yibu Guanxin Haiyang Renshi Haiyang Jinglue Haiyang” [Further Care About, Recognize and Control Oceans], *Renmin Ribao*, August 1, 2013.

¹³Xi, “Build Strong National Defense and Powerful Military Forces,” *The Governance of China I*, 241.

of destroyer *Haikou* and studiously inspected the ship with an experimental navigation. Amidst rising tension between China and the concerning countries over the maritime interests in the South China Sea, Xi's inspection of the *Haikou* was a symbolic action to show his posture to put emphasis on the role of the navy to safeguard the "core interests" in the sea.

Prior to the establishment of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) in 2015 and the Central Foreign Affairs Commission in 2018, the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG), also named as the National Security LSG with the same membership, was believed to make the most critical foreign policies in China.¹⁴ Xi Jinping might assume the deputy director of the both LSGs after the 17th National Congress of the CPC held in 2007,¹⁵ which gave him the experience to deal with foreign and security policies. Furthermore, Xi succeeded to the chairman of the CMC from Hu Jintao at the 18th National Congress of the CPC in November 2012. These circumstances seemed to make it possible for Xi to propose a new direction in foreign and security policies at the beginning of his administration.

3. Maritime advancement for achievements

China has pursued assertive maritime advancement, frequently referred to as "attempts to change the status quo by coercion,"¹⁶ in accordance with the new direction of diplomacy established by Xi Jinping. China's military and maritime law enforcement forces belligerently put pressure on the rival claimants in the East and South China Seas over territories, sovereignty, and maritime interests.

China started to claim its sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, which constitutes an integral part of the Japanese territory, in December 1972. Two government ships belonging to the China Marine Surveillance (CMS) for the first time entered in the Japanese territorial water around the islands in December 2008. When the Japanese government purchased the islands and transferred the ownership of the islands from a private citizen to itself in July 2012, China intensified its actions for asserting a territorial claim over the islands, including repeated violation of the Japanese territorial water around the islands by China's government ships.¹⁷ Since the inauguration of Xi as the General Secretary of the CPC, the Chinese government ships became more active in intruding into the Japanese water around the Senkaku Islands. The number of the Chinese government ships violating the Japanese territorial sea of the islands reached 21 for December 2012, surpassing 20 as monthly numbers for the first time. In August 2013, just after Xi instructed to safeguard the maritime rights and interests at the Politburo group study session, a total of 28 government ships trespassed on the Japanese waters, making a new record of numbers in monthly counting. On September 10 in 2013, the first anniversary of the Japanese government to acquire the ownership of the islands, eight Chinese government ships, a record high in daily counting, violated the Japanese sea, and faced vessels of the Japan Coast Guard (JCG). The annual number of the Chinese government ships entering the Japanese water around the

¹⁴Jakobson and Knox, "New Foreign Policy Actors in China," 5.

¹⁵Miller, "The CCP Central Committee's Leading Small Groups," 5, 10.

¹⁶Prime Minister's Office of Japan, "National Security Strategy," 12.

¹⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Position Paper."

Senkaku Islands in 2013 reached 188, significantly larger than the number of other years.¹⁸ It is obvious that China with Xi as a new leader drastically accelerated to challenge the Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands and changed the status quo around the islands by increasing the presence of the government ships there.

The Xi Jinping administration increased pressure on Japan with not only the maritime law enforcement agencies but also the military forces with the aim of expanding its maritime rights and interests. In January 2013, a vessel of the PLA Navy (PLAN) directed fire-control radar at a Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyer and supposedly did so at a helicopter of JMSDF in the East China Sea.¹⁹ Because the function of fire-control radar is targeting guns and missiles against adversary's platforms, directing fire-control radar at foreign vessels is a highly assertive action with a significant risk of causing military confrontation. On November 23 the same year, the Chinese government declared to establish the "East China Sea Air Identification Zone (ADIZ)" including the Japanese airspace over the Senkaku Islands. The Chinese Ministry of National Defense announced that every aircraft flying in the East China Sea ADIZ is required to abide by the Chinese rules including providing flight plans to the Chinese government, and stated, "China's armed forces will adopt defensive emergency measures to respond to aircraft that do not cooperate in the identification or refuse to follow the instructions."²⁰ The East China Sea ADIZ claims China's sovereignty rights over the airspace beyond China's territories, infringing the freedom of overflight over the high seas, which is a general principle in accordance with the international law.²¹ However, an editorial staff of the *PLA Daily* insists the legitimacy of establishing the East China Sea ADIZ as an important measure which is decided by the Central Committee of the CPC, State Council and the CMC in order to enhance the nation's capabilities to control its space for defense and territorial airspace and waters. The author also urges that the establishment of the East China Sea ADIZ shows China's strong resolve to safeguard the nation's "core interests" by noting, "No foreign country should expect China to trade off its core interests."²² After that, China intensified the operations of military aircraft in the East China Sea. In May and June 2014, two Chinese Su-27 fighters flew abnormally close to the aircraft of JMSDF and Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) that were conducting routine monitoring and surveillance missions in the East China Sea.²³

China, under the Xi Jinping leadership, strongly pursued the policies for changing the status quo by coercion in the South China Sea as well. The Xi administration kept government ships regularly operating in the water around the Scarborough Shoal of which China took control from the Philippines by using the government ships to expel

¹⁸According to the data provided by the Japan Coast Guard, annual number of the Chinese government ships intruding into the Japanese territorial water surround the Senkaku Islands from 2012 to 2017 are as follows: 72 in 2012; 188 in 2013; 88 in 2014; 95 in 2015; 121 in 2016; and 108 in 2017. See, Japan Coast Guard website, <https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/mission/senkaku/senkaku.html>.

¹⁹Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2013*, 39.

²⁰"Announcement of the Aircraft Identification Rules for the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone of the People's Republic of China," *China Daily*, November 23, 2013. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-11/23/content_17126618.htm

²¹Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, 42.

²²Benbao Pinglun Yuan [Editorial Staff], "Jianjue Weihu Guojia Lingtu Lingkong Zhuquan he Anquan" [Firmly Safeguard National Territory, Territorial Airspace and Security], *Jiefangjun Bao*, November 24, 2013.

²³Japan Ministry of Defense, *Ibid.*, 43.

the Philippines' ships from the shoal.²⁴ In May 2013, Chinese government ships started patrolling around the Second Thomas Shoal which is under the control of the Philippines through stationing some soldiers. In 2014, Chinese government ships repeatedly harassed the logistical operations by the Philippines armed forces to supply goods for the soldiers on the Second Thomas Shoal, resulting in increased tension in the South China Sea.²⁵ Moreover, China caused confrontation with Vietnam over the maritime rights and interests around the Paracel Islands. In May 2014, a Chinese oil drilling rig *Hai Yang Shi You 981* (HYSY 981), operated by China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), unilaterally started exploring drilling in the waters south of the Paracel Islands where Vietnam claims as its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). To protest against the actions of China, the Vietnamese government ships and fishing boats sailed toward the HYSY 981 but encountered obstruction by a large number of Chinese government ships. The Chinese ships without hesitation rammed and watered the Vietnamese ships, causing serious damage to ships and crews of the Vietnamese side.²⁶

The PLA too enhanced its activities in the South China Sea. The Chinese military, centered on the PLAN, conducted massive live-firing exercises and amphibious landing exercises in the South China Sea, coercing the rival claimant countries over sovereignty and the maritime rights and interests. In addition, the PLA strengthened its actions to harass some military operations by the United States in the South China Sea. In December 2013, a flotilla with *Liaoning*, China's first aircraft carrier, conducted exercise off the coast of the Hainan Island in the South China Sea. A tank-landing vessel of the PLAN tried to stop the U.S. guided missile cruiser *Cowpens* which was conducting surveillance of the *Liaoning* in international waters.²⁷ In August 2014, a Chinese fighter J-11 conducted a dangerous intercept of a U.S. Navy P-8A patrol aircraft in the international airspace east of Hainan Island. The U.S. Department of Defense pointed out that the J-11 made several passes and crossed under the aircraft with one pass having only 50–100 feet of separation, and criticized the Chinese intercept as unsafe and unprofessional.²⁸ Furthermore, China started to build military bases in the Spratly Islands for enhancing the presence of the PLA in the South China Sea. In 2014, China began massive reclamation of seven rocks and reefs in the Spratly Islands for creating artificial islands. After completion of the land reclamation, the PLA started to construct military bases on the islands, three of them are equipped with long airstrips and large port facilities.²⁹ China steadily achieved a change of the status quo by coercion in the South China Sea as well.

During over the two years since Xi Jinping became the Chinese leader, China vigorously advanced into the East and South China Seas with changing the status quo by coercion. Consequently, China heightened tension in its peripheral waters and caused growing concern on the Chinese behavior not only from Japan and the Southeast Asian countries but also the United States. Nonetheless in China, the maritime advancement

²⁴NIDS, *NIDS China Security Report 2012*, 18–20.

²⁵Green et al., "Counter-Coercion Series."

²⁶"Vietnam: Chinese Ships Ram Vessels Near Oil Rig," *Associated Press*, May 7, 2014.

²⁷"U.S. Navy-China Showdown: Chinese Try to Halt U.S. Cruiser in International Waters," *Washington Times*, December 13, 2013.

²⁸"DoD Registers Concern to China for Dangerous Intercept," DOD News, August 22 2014. <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/603111/dod-registers-concern-to-china-for-dangerous-intercept/>

²⁹Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 2017, 12.

pursued by the Xi administration was propagated as a great achievement for safeguarding the “core interests” and promoting the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” For example, an article distributed by Xinhua on September 11, 2013, one year anniversary for China to dispatch government ships to the Senkaku Islands on a regular basis, asserts that China made a “historical breakthrough” in enhancing capabilities to control the areas of the Diaoyu Islands (Chinese name of the Senkaku Islands) through the regular patrols by the Chinese government ships and flights by the government aircraft for claiming its sovereignty over the islands.³⁰ An article issued in the People’s Daily insists that the Chinese government ships conduct regular patrols and law enforcement activities around the Diaoyu Islands so that the Chinese government shows its sovereignty and safeguards the maritime rights and interests by exercising Chinese jurisdiction. This article further argues that the activities of the CMS ships, such as giving the JCG ships warning and collecting evidences of Japanese illegal acts, put significant pressure of diplomacy and law enforcement on the Japanese boats, and prevent Japan from taking extreme and dangerous behavior around the islands.³¹ So as to the East China Sea ADIZ, Yang Yujun, spokesperson of the ministry of national defense reiterated that the establishment of the ADIZ is a defensive measure indispensable for protecting China’s sovereignty. He also insisted that China has the unswerving resolve to protect its sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands, and that Japan has no right to make any comments on the ADIZ.³²

The State Oceanic Administration (SOA), playing an important role in expanding China’s maritime rights and interests, also proactively disseminated its achievement to the domestic audience. At the national maritime work conference held in January 2014, Liu Cigui, director of the SOA, insisted that effective and regularized patrols for the rights protection are continued in the area of the Diaoyu Islands; that Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal) is effectively controlled; and that Ren’ai Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal) and Meiji Shoal (Mischief Shoal) are effectively protected by China. He then insisted that China should furthermore cement the achievement of the rights protection and law enforcement in the areas of these islands and shoals by strengthening their maritime presence.³³ Liu also emphasized the leadership of Xi Jinping as a major factor of the achievement in expanding the maritime rights and interests in his commentary published in the People’s Daily. He pointed that since the 18th National Congress of the CPC Xi has comprehensively and closely discussed the development of our maritime enterprise, and clarified the direction for China to advance from a “big maritime nation” to a “strong maritime nation.” He concluded to urge to rally closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as General Secretary and to firmly protect China’s maritime rights and interests.³⁴

³⁰“Zhongguo Fanzhi ‘Gou Dao’ Qude Lishixing Tupo” [China’s Counter against “Islands Purchase” Makes a Historical Breakthrough], Xinhua Wang, September 11, 2013.

³¹“Wo Yinian 59 ci Xunhang de Diaoyudao” [We Patrol the Diaoyu Islands 59 Times A Year], *Renmin Ribao*, September 11, 2013.

³²“Ri Mei Wuquan dui Zhongguo Huashe Donghai Fangkong Shibiequ Shuosandaosi” [Japan and U.S. Have No Right to Make Any Comments on Chinese Establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone], *Jiefan Jun Bao*, November 26, 2013.

³³“Qunian Woguo Haiyang Weiquan Douzheng Chengguo Chixu Gonggu” [Achievement of Our Struggle in Protecting Maritime Rights Continues to Firm Last Year], *Jiefan Jun Bao*, January 17, 2014.

³⁴Liu, “Nuli Tuidong Haiyang Qiangguo.”

4. Rise of Xi's leadership in foreign and security policies

While Xi Jinping held up the “Chinese Dream” of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” indicated new foreign policies putting much importance on safeguarding the “core interests,” and made tangible achievements in expanding the maritime rights and interests, some phenomena presenting the rise of Xi's leadership in foreign and security policies were observed until 2014. The establishment of the China Coast Guard (CCG) in July 2013 is one of the cases.

The CCG was formed by integrating four existing maritime law enforcement agencies, namely: the CMS under the SOA; China Maritime Police under the Border Control Department of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS); the China Fishery Law Enforcement Command (FLEC) of the Ministry of Agriculture; and the Maritime Anti-Smuggling Bureau of the General Administration of Custom. As major organizations of the CCG, the Headquarter, the Logistics Department, and the Political Department, in addition to the North Sea Branch, the East Sea Branch, and the South Sea Branch were installed.³⁵ There existed a total of 11 Divisions under the three Branches, which received unified command of the CCG Command Center established in the Headquarter. The CCG claimed the name of the SOA in dealing with its external affairs. However, the CCG was required to receive operational guidance from the MPS in enforcing maritime law, and Meng Hongwei, vice minister of the MPS, assumed the director of the CCG, suggesting the MPS actually supervises operations of the CCG.

Multiple agencies for maritime law enforcement had existed in China for a long time, which was dubbed “Five Dragons rule the seas” or even “Nine Dragons rule the seas.” This situation attracted heavy criticism of weak capability in protecting China's maritime rights and interests due to interagency rivalry, overlapping areas of authority, insufficient funding, and so on.³⁶ Nonetheless, the four maritime law enforcement agencies were finally integrated to establish the CCG while the Xi Jinping administration accelerated the moves to expand China's maritime interests, which was highly appreciated in China. Zhang Junshe, a researcher at the PLA Naval Military Academic Research Institute, pointed out that the foundation of the CCG paves the way for standardization of equipment of the different agencies so that the CCG can enhance maritime surveillance capabilities and speed up the command and control, resulting in higher capacity to safeguard the maritime rights and interests. Accordingly, he praised the establishment of the CCG as an important decision based on the long-term strategic goal of achieving the “maritime power.”³⁷ Shen Haixiong, deputy chief of editor in Xinhua, maintained that the newly established CCG can conduct unified and effective maritime law enforcement activities. He also argued that China should carry through the instructions by General Secretary Xi Jinping to firmly safeguard the Chinese maritime rights and interests by enhancing the capabilities, and should transform the “multiple dragons” into “a gigantic dragon” so as to resolutely protect China's maritime interests, emphasizing the significance of Xi's instructions on the establishment of the CCG.³⁸

³⁵NIDS, *NIDS China Security Report 2013*, 12–14.

³⁶Jakobson, *China's Unpredictable Maritime Security Actors*, 16.

³⁷Zhang, “Xikan ‘Jiu Long’ Guiyi.”

³⁸Shen, “Jinlue Haiyang.”

The establishment of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) indicates the growing political authority of Xi Jinping in Chinese politics as well. The 3rd Plenum of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC held in November 2013 announced to establish the National Security Commission (NSC). The communique of the 3rd Plenum declared to establish the NSC for “improving the national security system and strategies to guarantee the country’s national security.”³⁹ Xi explained the 3rd Plenum the background of establishing the NSC as follows:

Currently we are challenged by pressure from two sources: internationally we must safeguard state sovereignty, national security and our development interests, and domestically we need to maintain political and social stability. All kinds of foreseeable and unforeseeable risks are increasing significantly, but our security system is not good enough to meet the demands of ensuring our national security work. For this purpose, establishing the National Security Commission to strengthen unified leadership of national security at the central level has become an urgent matter.⁴⁰

Later in January 2014, the Politburo meeting decided to formalize the CNSC with Xi Jinping as a director, and Premier Li Keqiang and NPC Chairman Zhang Dejiang as Xi’s deputies.⁴¹ The new security group, originally mentioned as the NSC in the 3rd Plenum, was finally named the CNSC which would report to the Politburo and its Standing Committee.⁴²

Xi Jinping presided the first meeting of the CNSC in April 2014 and made a speech, stating that the establishment of the CNSC is an important guarantee of “building a moderately prosperous society in all respects” and achieving “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” He also emphasized that the objectives of the CNSC is to enhance the Party’s control over the national security works through building a centralized, unified, effective, and authoritative system of the national security.⁴³ Some Chinese reformists had advocated the creation of a mechanism, like the U.S. National Security Council, which would improve the interagency coordination over the national security affairs with the aim of enhancing China’s capabilities to respond to domestic and international crises for decades.⁴⁴ The idea of building the institution similar to the NSC originated in the era of the President Jiang Zemin when he visited Washington D.C., and the debate on this idea was inherited to the era of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao,⁴⁵ never resulting in realization. Takagi Seiichiro contends that the newly established CNSC doesn’t necessarily satisfy Xi’s original expectation due to the rooted opposition to the centralization of power to him in the CPC.⁴⁶ Even though such opposition force existed within the Party, Xi realized the establishment of the CNSC, which exercises the

³⁹“Zhong Gong Shiba ju San Zhong Quanhui zai Jing Juxing” [3rd Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPC was Held in Beijing], *Renmin Ribao*, November 13, 2013.

⁴⁰Xi, “Explanatory Notes to the ‘Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Continuing the Reform,’” *The Governance of China I*, 94–95.

⁴¹“Zhong Gong Zhongyang Zhengzhijiu Zhaokai Huiyi Yanjiu Jueding Zhongyang Guojia Anquan Weiyuanhui Shezhi” [Politburo Held a Meeting to Study and Decide the Establishment of the Central National Security Committee], *Renmin Ribao*, January 25, 2014.

⁴²Miller, “How Strong Is Xi Jinping?” 8.

⁴³“Xi Jinping Zhaokai Zhongyang Guojia Anquan Weiyuanhui di Yi ci Huiyi” [Xi Jinping Presided the First Meeting of the Central National Security Committee], *Renmin Ribao*, April 16, 2014.

⁴⁴Wuthnow, “China’s New ‘Black Box,’” 887.

⁴⁵Lampton, “Xi Jinping and the National Security Commission,” 767–768.

⁴⁶Takagi, “‘Chuo Kokka Anzen linkai’ ni Tsuite,” 17.

“centralized and unified control” of the security affairs, and assumed the director of it, indicating that the leadership and authority of Xi steadily increased in the process of forming the foreign and security policies.

5. Formulation of a new theory of diplomacy

As discussed before, Xi Jinping promoted the new foreign policies striving for safeguarding China’s “core interests” and made achievement in expanding its maritime rights and interests through coercion. While strengthening his authority in foreign and security affairs leveraged by the accomplishments in the maritime advancement, Xi initiated a new foreign policy, that is, a “Major Country Diplomacy” aspiring to exercise China’s leadership in its peripheral regions and the international arena commensurate with China’s status as a major power.

When he visited Kazakhstan and delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University in September 2013, Xi Jinping proposed to build a Silk Road Economic Belt in cooperation with the Eurasian nations including the Central Asian countries. In his speech, Xi reaffirmed that rendering each other firm support on the major issues concerning the core interests such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and stability underlies China’s strategic partnership with the Central Asian countries, and advocated deepening the regional cooperation in Eurasia participated by China and the Central Asian nations. As a concrete plan to promote the regional cooperation, Xi proposed to build the Silk Road Economic Belt including such measures as: improving transportation routes connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Baltic Sea; removing trade barriers; reducing trade and investment costs; and trading in local currencies.⁴⁷ A month later, Xi Jinping paid a visit to Indonesia and proposed to build a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in his address given at the People’s Representative Council of Indonesia. Xi declared China’s plan to improve the traffic network including shipping with the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries and upgrade the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, and expressed his desire to build a China-ASEAN community of shared future. He also proposed to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to support the ASEAN countries and other developing countries for strengthening links in infrastructural development.⁴⁸

In late October 2013, just after Xi Jinping declared his proposal of building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, thereafter named as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Seminar on the Work for Neighborhood Diplomacy was held in Beijing. At the seminar, aiming at discussing the strategies and direction of China’s foreign policies toward the neighboring countries for the coming five to ten years, Xi emphasized the need to create a stable regional environment through enhancing relations with the neighboring countries. He told that good diplomacy with neighboring countries is a requirement for realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and said, “We need to work harder to promote our diplomacy with neighboring countries, [and] strive for a sound regional environment for our

⁴⁷Xi, “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt,” *The Governance of China I*, 315–319.

⁴⁸Xi, “Work Together to Build a 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road,” *The Governance of China I*, 320–324.

development.”⁴⁹ While referring to the need for safeguarding China’s state sovereignty, national security, and development interests, Xi emphasized the need to maintain a stable environment by building more amicable political relationships and closer economic ties with the neighboring countries. As part of this effort, he urged the promotion of the BRI and the AIIB. At this seminar, Xi indicated a direction of China’s foreign policies which puts emphasis on the regional cooperation for creating peripheral areas in favor of China, in addition to the existing diplomatic direction with an emphasis on safeguarding the “core interests.”

The new direction of the foreign policies striving for exercising China’s leadership in its neighboring regions was applied in the security realm as well. In May 2014, China hosted the summit meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai. Xi Jinping, as a chairman of the summit, made a keynote speech, in which he criticized the existing security architecture and proposed to establish a new one. He said,

One cannot live in the 21st century with the outdated thinking of the era of the Cold War and zero-sum game. We believe that it is necessary to advocate common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia. We need to innovate our security concept, establish a new regional security cooperation architecture, and jointly build a road towards security in Asia that is shared by and of benefit to all.⁵⁰

He implicitly criticized the U.S. alliance system in Asia by saying, “To buttress and entrench a military alliance targeted at a third party is not conducive to common security,” and advocated the need for Asian countries to create a new regional security framework by stating, “let the People of Asia run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia.”⁵¹ And Xi declared that China will play a leading role in creating new security order in Asia by noting, “As a strong champion of the Asian security concept, China also works to put such a security concept into practice.”⁵²

The direction of the foreign policies, which strives for exercising regional and international leadership of China with requiring the “core interests” safeguarded firmly, evolved to be the Xi Jinping’s theory of foreign policies as a “Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics.” The Central Committee of the CPC held the Central Conference on Foreign Affairs in November 2014. At this conference Xi reiterated that China will never relinquish the legitimate rights and interests, or allow its core interests to be impaired while pursuing the peaceful development. At the same time Xi pointed out that China’s relations with the international community gets closer and much interdependent, therefore China should pursue a “new model of international relations” based on win-win cooperation. He continued to argue that China should promote the neighborhood diplomacy for establishing a community of shared future with the neighbors, build a sound and stable framework of major country relations, and strengthen unity and cooperation with the developing countries. Moreover, Xi said, “We should promote reform of the international system and global governance, so that developing countries, China included, will have greater representation and bigger

⁴⁹Xi, “Diplomacy with Neighboring Countries Characterized by Friendship, Sincerity, Reciprocity and Inclusiveness,” *The Governance of China I*, 325.

⁵⁰Xi, “New Approach for Asian Security Cooperation,” *The Governance of China I*, 390.

⁵¹Xi, *Ibid.*, 392.

⁵²Xi, *Ibid.*, 395.

say,”⁵³ and showed a new direction of diplomacy seeking for taking the initiative in the reform of the international order through deeper cooperation with the developing countries. In this conference, Xi argued that China must develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major country and China should conduct diplomacy with Chinese features and a Chinese vision.⁵⁴ Hereafter, the “Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics” was promulgated as the Xi Jinping’s theory of diplomacy.

For example, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in his paper published by the People’s Daily, emphasized Xi Jinping’s contribution to the theorization of the Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics and the practice of the theory.⁵⁵ Wang pointed out that since the 18th Party Congress Comrade Xi Jinping has put emphasis on diplomatic work, significantly promoted the innovation of diplomatic theory and practice, and developed a new phase of the Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics. He also argued that Comrade Xi Jinping for himself planned foreign policies and designed diplomatic strategies with a broad perspective of a statesman and a strategist, considerably supporting the realization of the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Wang moreover stated that Comrade Xi Jinping led the country to play roles and make voices of a major country, and praised that Xi showed the dignity of a major country’s leader in interactions with foreign countries and gathered respects from foreign leaders, strengthening China’s capacity for extending influence, affinity, and sympathy.

Prior to the 19th National Congress of the CPC, Xi Jinping accelerated efforts in increasing his reputation as a leader in the international community by proactively pursuing the “Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics” with emphasis on China’s leadership in the world affairs. Amidst the growing movement of the anti-globalism and the protectionism in the United States and the European countries, Xi participated in the World Economic Forum held in Davos in January 2017. He made a speech at the opening ceremony and insisted on the necessity of promoting the economic globalization with the system of free trade maintained. He pointed out some serious problems in the global economy such as a widening gap of income and growing unemployment. He, however, insisted that many of the problems are not caused by the economic globalization but inadequate global economic governance. Xi accused the existing global economic governance of lacking necessary representation of the emerging economy and the developing countries, and urged that “a model of fair and equitable governance” should be established.⁵⁶ In the next day, Xi delivered a speech at the United Nations Office at Geneva and expressed China’s intention to take a lead in reforming the international order. He reiterated the need to establish “a fair and equitable international order” and to enhance the representation of the developing countries. “We should advance democracy in international relations and reject dominance by just one or a few countries,” Xi said.⁵⁷ He finally expressed China’s resolve to reform the existing international order in accordance with its idea, a community of shared future for mankind, by saying, “China is ready to work with all the other UN member states as

⁵³Xi, “China’s Diplomacy Must Befit Its Major-Power Status,” *The Governance of China II*, 483.

⁵⁴Xi, *Ibid.*, 481.

⁵⁵Wang Yi, “Zhidao Xin Xingshi xia Zhongguo Waijiao.”

⁵⁶Xi, “Shoulder the Responsibilities of Our Time and Promote Global Growth Together,” *The Governance of China II*, 525.

⁵⁷Xi, “Towards a Community of Shared Future for Mankind,” *The Governance of China II*, 591.

well as international organizations and agencies to advance the great cause [sic, course] of building a community of shared future for mankind.”⁵⁸

Regarding the BRI, an important measure for China to increase regional and international influence,⁵⁹ Xi Jinping showed off the progress of the initiative by hosting the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in May 2017. At the opening ceremony of the forum in which 29 heads of state participated, Xi emphasized achievements of the BRI made in four years since 2013 such as the progress of major infrastructure projects, an increase of trade and investment, and the establishment of the AIIB. He also asserted China will pursue the reform of the existing international order by way of promoting the BRI, saying that

We will foster a new model of international relations featuring mutually beneficial cooperation, and forge partnerships through dialogue instead of confrontation and friendship rather than alliance. All countries should respect each other's sovereignty, dignity, territorial integrity, development path, social systems, and core interests, and accommodate each other's major concerns.⁶⁰

At a press conference just after the closing of the forum, Xi asserted that the forum sends a positive signal for building a community of shared future for mankind in cooperation among the states and emphasized significant achievement of the forum.⁶¹

6. Conclusion

As discussed before, Xi Jinping set the “Chinese Dream” of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” as a goal of his administration and promoted foreign policies aiming at safeguarding and expanding the “core interests” including the maritime rights and interests. Tangible achievements in safeguarding the “core interests” in the East and South China Seas and the growing tension with the neighboring countries might help Xi to increase his political authority in foreign and defense policies, which was observed in the integration of the four maritime law enforcement agencies into the CCG and the establishment of the CNSC. Based on his enhanced authority in foreign and military affairs, Xi proactively promoted the “Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics” as his distinctive theory of diplomacy. This theory of diplomacy is one of the critical factors for realizing the rise of Xi’s political authority at the 19th National Congress of the CPC. The report delivered to the Congress by the Central Committee emphasized the diplomatic achievements which the Xi Jinping administration made in its first five-year term. The report noted, “We have made all-round efforts in the pursuit of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, thus ... creating a favorable external environment for China’s development.” The report also described that China champions the development of a community with a shared future for mankind, and has encouraged the evolution of the global governance system. It further argued, “With this we have seen a further rise in China’s international influence, ability to inspire, and

⁵⁸Xi, *Ibid.*, 600.

⁵⁹Iida, “China’s Foreign Strategy,” 16.

⁶⁰Xi, “Work Together to Build the Belt and Road,” *The Governance of China II*, 559.

⁶¹“Yidai Yilu’ Guoji Hezuo Gaofeng Luntan Juxing Yuanzhuo Fenghui” [Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation Held Roundtable Summit], *Renmin Ribao*, May 16, 2017.

power to shape; and China has made great new contributions to global peace and development.”⁶²

Indeed, there existed other significant factors for the rise of Xi Jinping’s political authority, especially the anticorruption campaign led by Xi and the Central Discipline Inspection Commission effectively eliminates not only corruption but also many political opponents to Xi.⁶³ However, Xi extended support in the party and the society by appealing to nationalistic sentiment by trumpeting the “Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and pursuing the foreign policies for expanding the “core interests.” Xi also played up China’s international leadership by promoting the “Major Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics.” These proactive foreign and security policies led by Xi Jinping clearly prepared a political environment conducive to the rise of his authority.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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⁶²Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” October 18, 2017, 6.

⁶³Fewsmith, “The 19th Party Congress,” 18.

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