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# IMPLICATIONS OF XI JINPING'S "TRUE MARITIME POWER"

## Its Context, Significance, and Impact on the Region

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**X**i Jinping's declaration that China should strive to become a "true maritime power" (海洋強國) has been much discussed in the context of China's "peaceful rise" (和平崛起) and the pursuit of the "Chinese dream" (中國夢).<sup>1</sup> Although there is, at face value, nothing quite new about Xi's exhortation to the Chinese leadership, his remarks need to be understood against a rather complex background of situations, policies, and aspirations if their full significance is to be appreciated.

Xi's policy is not just about geographic dispositions but needs to be seen in terms of U.S. Navy captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea-power theory—the "neo-Mahanian standard," as scholars of the U.S. Naval War College have termed it.<sup>2</sup> This issue bridges the China of the past and modern China; as a central pillar of Xi's grand national strategy, China's maritime power is a matter of extraordinary

importance for its future.

We need to examine a number of questions if we are really to grasp what it means for China to become a true maritime power. What is the history of Chinese maritime power? Why has Xi Jinping suddenly given such emphasis to China's emergence as a "true maritime power"? How does he understand this term—that is, what is the character of "true maritime power"? What forces are driving the accomplishment of maritime-power status? How are the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its navy (the PLAN) and the newly established China

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Coast Guard (CCG) involved in implementing China's maritime aspirations? What are the implications for, and the likely impacts on, the Asia-Pacific region?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A BALANCED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHINA

China's national strategy is undergoing a significant transformation. At both the eighteenth Communist Party Congress in November 2012 and the first plenary session of the twelfth National People's Congress in March 2013, great importance was placed on China's becoming a true maritime power. Similar remarks had been made earlier; for instance, Hu Jintao (Xi Jinping's predecessor) proposed building up the power of the PLAN to adapt its historical mission to the new century.<sup>3</sup> This mission has now been expanded to include everyone in China—the concept of true maritime power is being used to embolden China's political, ideological, and economic philosophy and, in conjunction with other military, economic, and national-security goals, to project a vision of future national greatness.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout Chinese history, whenever undue emphasis has been given to land power—as exemplified by China's "Great Wall"—this lack of strategic balance has always undermined the nation's development and prosperity.<sup>5</sup> During the hectic Mao Zedong period, Chinese strategists regarded the maritime domain as an imperialist and colonialist sphere, and anyone proposing alternative strategies to the PLA's continental approach was identified as an ideological enemy. Although China has not itself often explicitly defined a national strategy that is definitively "continental" or "maritime," it has usually been characterized—owing to its vast geographic extent and the fact that its predominant cultural interactions have been by land (via the Silk Road) rather than by sea—as a continental power, and this is the current reality.<sup>6</sup>

It would be untrue, however, to suggest that China was ever a "pseudo-maritime power" (海洋貧國), such stereotypical descriptions of its land-oriented national strategy entirely eclipsing its maritime interests.<sup>7</sup> China has never ignored its maritime domain, and there are many historical examples of the Song, Ming, and Yuan Dynasties pursuing maritime expansion rather enthusiastically, going back to what has been called (see below) a "Maritime Silk Road."

Actually, China's national strategies have been mostly neutral in this regard, and its emphasis has shifted between land and sea, as required to preserve peace and stability. Indeed, throughout China's general history the reconciliation of disparities between coastal and inland regions has been a key strategic problem for the Chinese leadership. For example, coastal cities have generally been more crucial to the Chinese economy than those inland, even the various historical capital cities, Chang'an (Xi'an), Luoyang, and Peking (Beijing). The wealthy

coastal cities of today, such as Qingdao, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Dalian, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong, have played significant parts in China's prosperity since precolonial times, even though China never previously declared a grand national strategy with so clear a maritime orientation as now.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, China's maritime capabilities have always depended on its flourishing eastern cities, which have generally offered a much better life than have the inland cities. In recent years, moreover, China has confronted a new strategic environment that requires a national shift toward the maritime domain.

Thus, both the historical evidence and current strategic challenges indicate that China needs to maintain a balanced linkage (均衡連結) between its geographic strengths and the needs of its economy. Its sea routes have been the principal medium through which China has interacted with the world at large: via the Yellow Sea, the South China Sea (SCS), and the East China Sea (ECS). Whatever the national strategy, the seas around the eastern coastal cities have remained the normal avenues through which China's political, military, economic, and cultural power has been projected to influence weaker neighbors, chiefly Vietnam, Japan, and Korea, though sometimes it has been extended to Middle Eastern and African countries.

During the chaotic Qing period, there were internecine feuds and wars, with the unfortunate result that China failed to implement its comprehensive national strategy (綜合國家大戰略). This meant that China's maritime capacity was inadequate to protect its national security, and thus the Western countries, with their superior maritime forces, dominated the region in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese leadership is still chewing on the bitter memories of this imperial era, and now that it has become economically feasible to do so, it is determined to overcome the consequences of earlier neglect of the seas. China's leaders are therefore now promulgating a grand national strategy intended clearly to deter any further interference by Western "barbarians" and to project boldly China's power and influence abroad.

### CHINA AND NEO-MAHANIAN STRATEGIC THEORIES

What evidence is there that China's maritime strategy is indeed neo-Mahanian? Xi Jinping's concept of "true maritime power" as a means to future national prestige does in fact find some correspondence to traditional Mahanian theory, despite views arguing for the end of sea power.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese strategists, including Xi, have highlighted the role of China's international trade, of its merchant fleet, and of its naval task forces—especially China's first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, deployed in 2012.<sup>11</sup> China's economy relies on a steady flow of seaborne cargo: oil and natural gas, soybeans and grains, and raw materials from the Middle East, South America, and Africa. The Chinese merchant fleet is essential for these

imports and for exporting Chinese goods to foreign markets; the vulnerability of such transport links, the “Malacca Dilemma,” is a fundamental consideration driving China’s quest for true maritime power and for the naval strength that it requires.<sup>12</sup>

In some ways, China is trying to straddle the neo- and post-Mahanian worlds, and the complexity of this stance makes it increasingly likely that China will get involved in armed conflicts at sea. Xi’s exhortation to the Chinese leadership, although not entirely new, should be understood against a rather complicated historical, political, and sociocultural background. For example, his “true maritime power” message in the report of the twelfth National People’s Congress in 2013 focused on defense and military modernization (国防与军队现代化), whereas Hu Jintao’s conception of China’s maritime power in the eighteenth Communist Party Congress report, in 2012, was relegated to the section on “ecological civilization construction” (生态文明建设).<sup>13</sup> Xi Jinping has proposed for true maritime power a theoretical framework that appears to transcribe Mahanian theory directly into PLAN strengths, apparently envisioning epic sea battles much like those fought in Mahan’s time by Western sea powers and also Japan.

There are many interpretations of the ongoing changes in Chinese national strategy, but all agree that Xi Jinping’s recent declaration about true maritime power is highly significant. China clearly wants to be seen as a great power, at least regionally, but should this aim be understood as a restoration of the traditional Middle Kingdom order or in Mahanian terms? To that point, Xi Jinping’s recent acknowledgment that China’s maritime power is founded on three strands (production, merchant and naval shipping, and overseas markets and bases) is entirely consistent with Mahan’s most influential book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*.<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, Xi’s approach is more concerned with confronting the strategic challenges of the U.S. “pivot to Asia” than with pounding away at enemy fleets. Yet he is beguiled by the Mahanian concept that national greatness derives from maritime power, so he is calling on Chinese citizens to raise their collective consciousness of the seas as an essential aspect of a great revitalization of the nation—the “Chinese dream.”

Many Western analysts of maritime security affairs have drawn stark comparisons between growing Chinese and declining American maritime power, some suggesting that Europeans hold a “postmodern,” “post-Mahanian” perspective, whereas Asia is entering a “modern,” “neo-Mahanian” world.<sup>15</sup> This situation is seen as an opportunity for China to explore the application of Mahan’s maritime-power theory. For Chinese analysts, however, Xi Jinping’s concept of true maritime power presents China as chief custodian of the regional (in practice, global) sea lines of communication, as the upholder of freedom of navigation and good order at sea.<sup>16</sup>

The actual sources of Xi Jinping's strategic vision of true maritime power appear to be briefings from his advisers, together with such writings as Liu Ming-fu's *Chinese Dream* (中國夢), published in 2010, and Henry Kissinger's *On China*, published in 2012.<sup>17</sup> For Xi, then, the Chinese Dream depends on trade and commerce, mercantile and naval power, and geographic expansion—by which is meant command of the sea (制海權) rather than any sort of colonial imposition. But China is the leading international trade power, and the PLAN sees the United States as an overbearing naval power to be vehemently resisted; so, given China's naval buildup, command of the sea seems likely to be ultimately determined by armed encounter rather than by economic, cultural, or environmental issues.<sup>18</sup> Chinese strategists speak of pursuing maritime power “with Chinese characteristics,” a formulation of Mahanian theory that Western strategists may find difficult to recognize. Following Mahan, the Chinese see naval preparedness as the sharp edge of maritime strategy, but aside from fulfillment of the PLAN's historical mission, they also see maritime power as a path to national prosperity and greatness.

#### THE CONTEXT OF XI'S PLAN TO TRANSFORM CHINA INTO A TRUE MARITIME POWER

The Chinese apply a long perspective; the consequences of the failure in recent centuries to maintain a balanced national strategy have surely influenced Xi Jinping in formulating his current national strategy. Xi took over responsibility for diplomatic affairs in late 2012, and he has since declared four national objectives: safeguarding China's core national interests, continuing to pursue a “new type of great-power relationship” (新型大國關係), boosting China's maritime power (海洋強國), and identifying a new foundation for military strength.<sup>19</sup> Thus the undertaking to enhance Chinese maritime power is central to Xi's foreign policy, and we can list, bearing in mind the strategic challenges faced by his predecessors, several likely reasons why Xi Jinping wants true maritime power, linking and balancing the land and the sea, for China.

First, Xi sees the projection of national power beyond the Chinese continental territory as essential. The term “G2” (i.e., the “Group of Two,” the United States and China) is widely used in East Asia to imply a kind of parity between China and the United States, but Xi understands that if China is truly to stand tall beside the United States, much more is required. China feels strongly that within the defense perimeters known as the first and second “island chains” (島連) it should be China that calls the shots.<sup>20</sup> Hence, the desire to establish a new type of great-power relationship with the United States, despite claims to support a harmonious relationship as partners (伙伴) with smaller and weaker neighbors: until China becomes a true maritime power, it will remain entangled in territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the surrounding seas. Once China has the capacity to

project the necessary maritime power, it will be possible to set aside the humiliating insults of the European empires—most notably those of the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, and Germany, which crushed the Qing Dynasty during the late nineteenth century—and the more recent domination by the United States. A confident China could then reconstitute its “natural” maritime regional preeminence. The Chinese fondly recall a time when the peaceful expeditionary voyages of Zheng He (鄭和) explored the Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa (and, by some speculative accounts, even North America and Europe).<sup>21</sup> Naturally, this attitude troubles China’s neighbors. Vietnam has objected to China’s recent infiltration of oil rigs into the Vietnamese exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the Philippines is currently objecting to China’s building of airstrips on Johnson South Reef (now Island) in the SCS, and several countries were upset by China’s unilateral declaration of an air-defense identification zone in the ECS in 2013.

Second, for Xi Jinping, “China’s seas” represent, just as much as does the continental territory within the Great Wall, a fundamental interest of the Chinese people. China’s vast population and ever-growing economy depend on correspondingly huge quantities of raw materials, energy, and foodstuffs, much of which is imported; without securing its lines of supply, China cannot make progress with the many urgent challenges it faces at home and abroad. Since the mid-1990s China has been a net importer of energy, and more than 40 percent of its domestic demand now passes through strategic choke points, such as the SCS and the Strait of Malacca, the latter of which Beijing regards as being subject to U.S. influence and essentially under U.S. control.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, China will continue to need these imports despite projects intended to diversify its sources of supply, among the most ambitious of which is the “Myanmar Corridor” connecting Kolkata in India via Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar) to Kunming and thence to the major cities of China. China’s vulnerability to disruption of its essential supply chains surely underlies its determination to be seen as a strong adversary in its maritime disputes with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan in the East and South China Seas (ESCS).

These same seas also play vital roles in feeding the Chinese people; for example, China is now becoming a major importer of wheat.<sup>23</sup> Some of the demand arises from the ability of newly wealthy Chinese to afford a better diet, but also there are a hundred million or more unregistered workers in central China who need to be fed.<sup>24</sup> China imports more than four-fifths of its soybeans, or about 60 percent of world production.<sup>25</sup> Besides the issue of import security, China sees its surrounding seas as a vast potential food-producing resource, where fish-farming and similar technologies could provide protein to replace the pigs, sheep, chickens, and geese that are collectively a major cause of desertification—

a recent destructive sandstorm extended as far as South Korea and parts of Japan. Since the turn of the century food imports have been increasing steadily, because yields of rice and corn have stagnated or diminished in most parts of China.<sup>26</sup> Thus China grows ever more dependent on the ESCS to feed its population, and hence the underlying significance of the slogan "A Strong China and the Chinese Dream."

Third, this fifth generation of leaders of the People's Republic of China, if they are facing internal dissent, may be adopting an ambitious maritime strategy in an attempt to legitimize the continuing rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since 1989 there has been a worrisome trend of increasing opaqueness in the CCP, and Xi Jinping may be inclined to use the concept of maritime power to boost popular support for the regime. Certainly, there are signs of manipulation to that end. An example is the emphatic campaign of the Chinese media in support of China's claim to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the ECS; here it is clear that China's pledge to build maritime power is exploiting nationalistic fervor to buttress the popularity of the CCP.<sup>27</sup>

Xi Jinping's declaration of a new type of great-power relationship with the United States should be seen in a similar light. Rather surprisingly, the concept of reshaping China as a maritime power has been put forward not only by the Chinese government but by the CCP as well. In November 2012, at the eighteenth Communist Party Congress, Xi was eager to send a strong message, under the rubric of the Chinese Dream, on the issue of disputed waters, about which the CCP has grown increasingly outspoken. Becoming a true maritime power, as noted above, is closely linked with overcoming the humiliations inflicted on China by the West, and the associated surge in Chinese pride facilitates the declaration of a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine. It can be plausibly argued that the party's slogans of "Strong China" and "Chinese Dream" are ultimately directed at squeezing the U.S. Navy out of East Asian seas.<sup>28</sup>

Fourth, since the reforms and 1978 "open door" policy of Deng Xiaoping ("paramount leader" 1978–92), China has learned some useful lessons from the West, especially from the United States. From the perspective of the Chinese leadership, the "hundreds of humiliations" suffered by the Qing Dynasty resulted from the "salami tactics" of Western imperialism.<sup>29</sup> China is now turning the tables, intending to slice off parts of the East Asian seas, bit by bit, until its neighbors have entirely accepted its naval power and influence. Still, Xi seems to be wondering whether China's antiaccess and area-denial tactics are adequate to the task; the salami strategy will now be implemented through the application of a modern national maritime-security policy "one island chain at a time."<sup>30</sup> In fact, after all that China has learned from the United States, it is hardly surprising

that Xi should declare the intention of developing maritime capacity to become a “true” maritime power commensurate with China’s geostrategic understanding and experience.

### THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF XI’S TRUE MARITIME POWER

What Xi Jinping understands as “true maritime power” is intertwined with several complex issues, both internal factors about the legitimacy of Xi’s regime and external factors like territorial disputes in the ESCS that impact the sovereignty of the state.<sup>31</sup>

First, Xi Jinping wants China to be recognized as a responsible maritime stakeholder. To Western analysts Chinese maritime policy has long seemed disingenuous, intended primarily to disrupt the status quo in the East Asian seas, and during recent years Beijing’s assertive steps to pursue its historical maritime claims have generated alarm throughout Asia. Xi would very much like to change these perceptions of China, and since taking political and diplomatic charge in 2012 he has repeatedly suggested to President Barack Obama that a new type of great-power relationship should be established between their nations. The United States, he urges, should be more relaxed about the expression of Chinese sea power, at least in East Asia, and accept China as a true maritime power, perhaps as an emerging great power.<sup>32</sup>

During the last couple of decades, China has criticized U.S. forward deployment as reminiscent of the Cold War and designed to maintain American maritime hegemony through absolute sea control. Beijing perceives Washington’s policy as intended to contain China as a continental power and to prevent it from expanding its political and military influence to neighboring littoral countries. Such sentiments have apparently generated strong political support for the PLAN’s intention to build more aircraft carriers; *Liaoning*, a refurbished ex-Soviet vessel, has attracted some criticism for its limited functionality. But the fact that Chinese-built aircraft carriers are now an imminent reality reinforces Xi Jinping’s declaration that China should become a true maritime power and, at least in Chinese eyes, heralds the restoration of a traditional regional order that should be consolidated through a new type of great-power relationship with the United States.

In 2008 the PLAN dispatched its first-ever naval task force—comprising a Luyang II-class destroyer, Jiangkai II frigates, and a Fuji-class auxiliary—to the Indian Ocean to conduct antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. This, as well as other contributions that China is starting to make to more general maritime cooperation, should be understood as demonstrating nonconfrontational intentions and as part of a quest to acquire status as a responsible maritime power. A

third of the world's trade passes through the Indian Ocean, and Chinese naval task units have twice conducted bilateral antipiracy naval operations with U.S. naval units in the Indian Ocean, in 2008 and 2013.<sup>33</sup> More significantly, the PLAN has overcome its long-standing reluctance to be involved in American-led multilateral naval exercises, sending four vessels to participate in the RIMPAC 2014 naval exercises, not to mention a spy vessel (which was allowed to operate unmolested in Hawaii's EEZ).<sup>34</sup>

Second, Xi Jinping wants to protect China's maritime security interests by all means available, and he is ready to apply whatever notions or frameworks suit his purpose, whatever their origin (for example, from Western imperial states) and whatever their international legal status. From Xi's perspective, China's maritime core national interests can be secured through exercising true maritime power in support of state sovereignty. China has categorically laid claim to several small islands in the East Asian seas that other countries—such as Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam—have also claimed. It has provocatively cited its maritime territorial claims as “core national interests” and as an issue of territorial integrity comparable to its irredentist claims to Taiwan and Tibet.<sup>35</sup> Tension continues to increase in the ongoing maritime disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei over territories in the SCS that Beijing referred to as of “core national interest” in March 2010. China is also confronting Japan (and potentially the United States) over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the ECS, which China officially declared as representing a “core national interest” in April 2013. The external threats being risked may be much smaller in scale than China faced during the Korean War and the 1979 Vietnam war, or even the Sino-Soviet border conflicts, but they have supplied a useful justification for developing an integrated defense capability.<sup>36</sup>

Third, Xi Jinping is trying to exploit constructive ambiguity to bolster China's historically based claims in disputed waters. Admiral Zheng He's fleet more than six centuries ago was the most magnificent the world had ever witnessed, but the current Chinese leadership would have us take two distinct messages from that story. The first and foremost of these messages is that the Middle Kingdom sea boundaries established during the Ming Dynasty should be seen as relevant for delineating modern-day boundaries. But it would also have us appreciate that Zheng He's voyages were economic and cultural, that he refrained from colonizing any of the weaker nations he visited, instead benignly establishing “harmonious seas” under the enlightened guidance of the Yongle emperor, Zhu Di. That is, China intends this historical narrative to remind its neighbors of China's overwhelming strength and historical presence throughout the regional seas, to assert China's rights to all the East Asian seas, and to propose an essentially new rule of law based on historical precedence—all considerably beyond what modern

international law and legal principles prescribe. This attitude is currently being energetically displayed in China's dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. But the same historical narrative is also adduced as evidence of Chinese restraint and implicit goodwill toward smaller, weaker nations that are content to go along with China's (supposedly benevolent) restoration of the Middle Kingdom maritime order.

In 1984, Deng Xiaoping suggested that all parties "set aside matters of sovereignty, implement joint development for mutual maritime interests, and leave other issues for subsequent generations." Xi Jinping is now doing his best to advance China's unilateral maritime claims while simultaneously preserving enough ambiguity to allow China's neighbors and other disputants to accept Deng's suggestion.<sup>37</sup> Each of these countries should carefully consider the implications of the China Coast Guard's present-day maritime law-enforcement operations, which are intended to establish a new methodology for defining sea boundaries before the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has been implemented in the region.

Fourth, Xi Jinping is taking more care than his predecessors to avoid any expression of China's true maritime power that might be interpreted as a preemptive military strike and give rise to serious regional military escalation. He is anxious to avoid any direct U.S. involvement, as happened in the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis. In line with Xi's desire that China be seen as an honest and responsible maritime power, Chinese forces seem to be adhering to several self-imposed principles—that is, rules of engagement—that appear in turn to be based on a "reactively assertive" maritime posture. Thus, China's historical maritime territorial claims are being protected by civilian maritime-security agencies rather than by military forces, which helps in keeping matters below the threshold of military confrontation.

So far, Xi Jinping has been careful in his management of regional maritime standoffs; in times of open tension, CCG vessels hold the first line of defense, with PLAN vessels staying in the background, and while the CCG may target adversary vessels in an asymmetric manner, it has done so in ways proportionate to the circumstances. Additionally, China also has other effective tools with which it can confront rival claimants to disputed maritime territories, including economic pressure and diplomatic leverage. Overall, Xi is playing a shrewdly judged game, hoping to avoid either, as noted, direct U.S. intervention or collective ASEAN opposition. At the strategic level, China denies any intention to use its naval forces to expel rival claimants, and its stance has been essentially defensive, without offensive or provocatively assertive measures.<sup>38</sup> In fact, China's insistence on becoming a true maritime power can be seen as a form of crisis management; the possibility of armed conflict in the ESCS cannot be discounted,

and the Chinese assessment of Asian maritime security recognizes the continuing instabilities. Nevertheless, if any of China's rivals were to act unilaterally in ways that proactively disrupted the status quo, especially were the United States to become involved as a consequence of its security alliances, China would likely retaliate in a disproportionately assertive manner.<sup>39</sup>

## IMPLEMENTING XI'S VISION OF CHINA AS A TRUE MARITIME POWER

The implementation of Xi Jinping's vision is very much a work in progress, but there seem to be four main thrusts: establishing new high-profile organizations dealing with maritime policy and strategy; upgrading naval capabilities to counter the U.S. pivot to Asia; enhancing maritime law-enforcement instruments to reframe the issues in East Asian seas away, as noted, from prevailing international law and toward China's view of rights as derived from historical precedent; and ostensibly demonstrating China's goodwill through participation in various regional forums, seminars, and exercises.

First, Xi Jinping appears to have obtained the general support from the party, the military, and the state necessary to consolidate his diplomatic and security authority. Diplomatically, his responsibility is to bring to fruition the existing policy of "peaceful rise," which means maintaining good relations with neighbors, including Japan, and the United States. In this context, China wants to be an active and competent stakeholder, and Xi has variously set up or taken charge of several authorities to deal with China's maritime issues. These include a small central policy body overseeing maritime interests, which has operated since 2012 but has not been formally activated. There is also the State Security Committee (國家安全委員會), which in 2013 became China's paramount national command authority, comprising civil servants and officers from the State Council (國務院) and the National Oceanic Council (國家海洋委員會), which in turn was established by the first plenary session of the twelfth National Party Congress in March 2013. The State Security Committee is particularly significant in that it is made up of China's highest military and civilian leaders, including senior generals and admirals, and councillors from the State Council, all of them party members. It seems to be the highest body dealing with maritime security issues that has ever reported directly to the Politburo Standing Committee, and it has taken over the function of the PLA-based Central Military Commission (中央軍事委員會) in dealing with theater crises and conflicts.<sup>40</sup> In July 2013 Xi also presided over a "Third Group Study" (集體) for the Political Bureau of the CCP, discussing the implementation of China's maritime power (就海洋強國研究). Also, in October 2013, he convened a high-level working conference on "peripheral diplomacy" (週邊外交工作座談會), to promote "good neighborliness

and friendship” to create a peaceful and stable regional environment. All of these bodies appear to be firmly under Xi’s control, but for some reason the National Oceanic Council has not yet been activated formally.<sup>41</sup>

Second, Xi is seeking much more than just the buttressing of Chinese power and influence around the Yellow Sea and the ESCS; he wants China’s naval capabilities to match or exceed those of its rivals in the region, the U.S. Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. During the Cold War, Beijing often worried that American naval forces would intervene militarily in Chinese affairs, as Western forces had during the late nineteenth century and as, for example, powerful aircraft-carrier battle groups from the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet did in the Taiwan crises of the 1950s and 1990s. This fear caused the PLAN to adopt a very defensive posture against the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed forces based in Japan. Indeed, the PLAN assumed only a supporting role in strategic coastal defense, which was led by ground forces; it was generally understood during the Cold War that any response the PLAN might make to an intervention by the Seventh Fleet would be counterproductive and would simply expose its own weakness. The PLA was quite unable to come up with any viable solution to this problem, so the Chinese navy was limited to coastal-defense ships and conventional submarines, ceding to the U.S. Navy control over all the East Asian seas.

These days, however, the PLAN is no longer a mere theoretical power limited to the continental littoral, for China’s economic growth has supported the development of a considerable offensive oceangoing capacity with far-seas operational capabilities sustainable for long periods of time, with significant implications for China’s diplomatic and political stance. A process of reorganization is ongoing that seems to have resulted from Xi Jinping’s autumn 2013 directive to improve operational “agility” and develop combat “synergies” to deter new external threats on land and at sea.<sup>42</sup> It is for this reason that the refurbished *Liaoning* was commissioned in 2012, and indigenous carriers, which will surely be far more capable, are believed to be under construction.<sup>43</sup> Over the last few years, the PLAN has impressively expanded its naval fighting capabilities, with many new ship classes, great improvements in overall design, and much better sensors and weapons.

One of the newest surface combatant classes to enter service is the Luyang III (Type 052D) destroyer. On 21 March 2014 the first of ten, *Kunming*, was commissioned by the PLAN, with a multipurpose sixty-four-cell vertical-launch system that provides increased weapons stores and potential payload flexibility.<sup>44</sup> Such innovations are coming thick and fast these days. For example, the Jiangdao (Type 056)–class light frigate, at 1,440 tons, can be seen as the PLAN’s version of the U.S. Navy’s Littoral Combat Ship, for use in regional waters and for export to countries that do not have or cannot afford full-size frigates.<sup>45</sup> A mock-up

seen at the Wuhan University of Science and Technology has been reported as evidence that the PLAN is building a missile cruiser larger than any U.S. or Japanese analogue. Such a warship might be an air-defense ship intended to address the PLAN's weakness in sea-based missile capabilities and would be a significant addition to a Chinese carrier battle group.<sup>46</sup>

China's economic growth has driven four decades of progress, lately marked by seventeen straight years in which defense spending has increased by about 10 percent annually.<sup>47</sup> Successive PLAN task forces in the Indian Ocean, each comprising two large and sophisticated combat vessels and a large logistics vessel for replenishment at sea, have been deployed since December 2009, and in 2011 there was a successful evacuation of noncombatants during the Libyan crisis. For the Chinese this recalls Zheng He's fifteenth-century peaceful missions to the Gulf of Aden. Other significant deployments include scientific survey missions undertaken by *Liaoning* in the SCS in December 2013, during which its organic air wings demonstrated the ability to control the first island chain domain. More remarkably, PLAN marines deployed from their tropical bases in southern China for cold-weather training in the Chinese autonomous region of Inner Mongolia. This is an indication that the PLAN is getting ready for complex, composite naval warfare that might call for wider integration with the rest of the PLA to improve operational agility and develop combat synergies. It reflects the new roles and functions envisaged for the PLAN and its marines—they are preparing for a potential crisis in the ESCS and taking the opportunity to get practice with new doctrines and warfare manuals.<sup>48</sup>

There are other clear signs as well that the PLAN is successfully developing new missions and operational concepts. It conducted its largest joint fleet exercise ever in October 2013 in the Yellow Sea. This was a campaign-level scenario involving more than a hundred surface combatants and submarines from the North and East Sea Fleets, along with more than thirty aircraft, coastal missile, and other units. The exercise was designated by the PLAN as "an experiment in joint warfare with Chinese characteristics," designed to enhance commanders' joint warfare capabilities and prepare them to implement Xi Jinping's new naval doctrines.<sup>49</sup>

Third, Xi has restructured China's unwieldy civilian maritime law-enforcement apparatus to offer more options in territorial disputes with neighboring countries. The reputation of these civilian agencies has improved markedly; the CCG, for instance, has attracted media attention for playing a leading role in protecting China's legitimate maritime rights and interests. After the establishment of the central policy group already mentioned, which oversees maritime interests, and following the Third Group Study of the CCP, but before convening the National Party Congress session in March 2013, Xi Jinping revealed a plan to merge the

main maritime law-enforcement agencies. Four entities—the China Marine Surveillance, the old Coast Guard of the Ministry of Public Security, the Fishery Administration Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Maritime Anti-smuggling Police, under the General Administrative Service of the Ministry of Customs—are being united to form a unified maritime law-enforcement agency, the China Coast Guard, with a function and mission similar to those of the U.S. Coast Guard.

There has been some international skepticism about this regrouping process, noting interagency friction and internal resistance to being merged into the CCG. Nevertheless, this reform appears to reflect Xi Jinping's desire to strengthen China's maritime capabilities at every level as part of the transformation of China into a true maritime power.<sup>50</sup> Guided by Xi's slogan of building a "Strong Nation" with a "Strong Navy," the ambitious structural reorganization that the CCG will require to be effective will deliver a single, unified maritime law-enforcement command-and-control structure capable of providing strong support for China's rights and interests in disputed waters.<sup>51</sup>

The CCG is an important tool in China's quest to establish sea boundaries on the basis of its historical presence in the East Asian seas.<sup>52</sup> The roles and missions of the CCG will assist China in asserting its territorial claims independently of the prevailing international law and legal principles, notably those of UNCLOS, which has been used to adjudicate a variety of other maritime disputes even though the United States has not ratified this convention, supposedly for national-security reasons. (In practice, the United States has so far abided by UNCLOS principles, but obviously this could become hostage to domestic politics at any time.) The capabilities and scalable force sizes of the CCG will constitute a significant challenge for China's neighbors, and perhaps some may reconsider the idea of a single principle to justify the legality of sea boundaries.<sup>53</sup>

Fourth, Xi Jinping is keen for China to engage actively in all kinds of international maritime interactions, including joint development projects, forums, seminars, and bilateral or multilateral naval exercises, and he will take advantage of every opportunity to represent China as an honest and responsible maritime stakeholder in East Asian seas. Its policy of peaceful rise attempts to project a peaceable and nonthreatening image while seeking to secure status as a great power under the slogan of "Strong Nation, Maritime Power, and the Chinese Dream." Zheng He has been a useful propaganda weapon in advancing maritime interests through "soft power." For instance, Xi Jinping promoted the concept of a "Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century" as the Chinese vision for a networked relationship between China and ASEAN when visiting five of its member countries in October 2013. Just as Zheng He had a lasting impact on the countries he visited, Xi is seeking to build lasting connections between China and the

Southeast Asia nations, and he proposed extensive maritime cooperation with them. The Maritime Silk Road, a trade corridor extending from China to India via the SCS, was first introduced in a speech to the Indonesian parliament in 2013. In that speech Xi suggested improvements in maritime and port infrastructure along the sea route, such as upgrades to Malaysia's eastern port of Kuantan, for which two billion U.S. dollars in Chinese funds had been earmarked.<sup>54</sup> In a similar vein, at the fourteenth ASEAN-China Summit, in November 2011, China suggested setting up an ASEAN-China Maritime Cooperation Fund, amounting to three billion RMB (about U.S.\$473 million), to commemorate Zheng He's contributions to China's neighbors and partners, again an effort to enhance maritime connectivity with ASEAN.<sup>55</sup> Underlying Xi Jinping's charm offensive are some lessons rooted in the past; the burgeoning economic interaction between China and ASEAN is certainly one aspect of the restoration of China's great-power status, but it is also a means for Beijing to extend its political influence and expand trade volumes.<sup>56</sup>

In April 2014 there was another opportunity for China to show itself in a more positive light and encourage other nations to focus less on China as a threatening bully—the hosting of the 2014 International Fleet Review (IFR) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), at Qingdao. A two-day multinational naval exercise, MARITIME COOPERATION 2014, held in the waters off Qingdao was mainly focused on joint search-and-rescue operations.<sup>57</sup> China had hosted the same events four years earlier, but the 2014 IFR commemorated the sixty-fifth anniversary of the PLAN's foundation, and the WPNS, a biennial forum for naval staff chiefs that now attracts representatives from twenty-five regional nations, had the theme of "Cooperation, Trust, and the Win-Win Spirit." These events comprised a multilateral workshop, symposium, and program of exercises that offered a chance for the crews of ships and aircraft from many navies, both friends and potential adversaries, to interact.

In hosting this IFR and the fourteenth WPNS, China was surely aiming to promote peace and stability in the western Pacific, but it was also seeking to improve its public image, damaged by the PLAN's calculated assertiveness toward smaller, weaker neighbors. For example, the events in Qingdao, oriented toward crisis management, provided a valuable opportunity for the Chinese to demonstrate their willingness to work for peace and cooperation and to present themselves as reasonable, rational actors in the context of these forums—even as China continues to ratchet up tension in the ESCS. The chiefs of naval staff at the WPNS endorsed a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), a protocol of safety procedures, communications, and maneuvering instructions that naval ships and aircraft should follow. CUES is not legally binding, but all participants were urged to implement its provisions in their operational manuals.<sup>58</sup>

The PLAN has submitted a preliminary application to host the 2024 WPNS meeting.<sup>59</sup> Multilateral forums like WPNS, which has twenty-one member countries and four observers, offer a useful political platform for China. Such extended diplomatic leverage allows Beijing to spread its influence and work to restore China's Middle Kingdom maritime prominence and simultaneously to reassure neighbors of its benign intentions.

#### XI JINPING'S COMMITMENT TO TRUE MARITIME POWER: IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACTS

True maritime power, in Xi Jinping's conception and implementation, is clearly a multifaceted phenomenon. Much of the analysis from commentators outside China has been primarily concerned with negative interpretations and consequences: schizophrenic qualities, reactive assertiveness, tailored coercion, disproportionate retaliation. They also point out implications for crisis prevention in maritime territorial disputes and the delicate balance China is seeking between attaining declared core national interests in disputed waters and avoiding unacceptable diplomatic cost with respect to the United States.<sup>60</sup>

##### *Implications*

Xi Jinping appears more committed to a long-term maritime strategy than were his predecessors, but his current priority is the consolidation of true maritime-power status. As long as China's capabilities remain inferior to those of Japan (technologically) and the United States, it will be essential to avoid any serious military confrontation with these powers; similarly, it would be best not to provoke collective action by ASEAN, which might draw direct intervention by Washington.

Despite these constraints on broad unilateral actions, time is on China's side. China continues to modernize its naval forces. Meanwhile, although the U.S. military is attempting to rebalance its naval power to the Asia-Pacific, given financial sequestration it lacks the resources to do this quickly or effectively. In addition, U.S. forces are still engaged in other regions, like the chaotic Middle East, as well as lately in Europe, where Washington is acquiring new commitments to check Russia's westward advance through Ukraine. Thus, the American rebalance to the Asia-Pacific may be some time in coming and hard to implement, and in the meantime China can lean on its rivals in ESCS disputes as opportunity allows and slice the salami whenever it becomes possible.<sup>61</sup>

Since the informal summit meeting between Barack Obama and Xi Jinping in June 2013, and with the Chinese proposal for a new great-power relationship with the United States in the background, the two countries have gained clearer perspectives on what each requires of the other and what may and may not be possible. This clarity has effectively widened Xi Jinping's choices for unilateral

action on ESCS issues, and it helps make sense of his policy on maritime power—he expects U.S. influence in the region to continue to weaken.

The modernization of the PLAN, the restructured CCG, and the essentialist ideological stance China has adopted to validate its claims—for China's neighbors, things have already gone too far. The U.S. security commitment that has shielded them since 1945 is clearly becoming less effective. But even more seriously, the Chinese economy is so intimately integrated with the economies of all its neighbors, and also of the United States, that none of them can now afford to stand up to China—not even the United States can offer anything beyond token resistance. The reality is that China has already become too powerful militarily and too influential economically to be “dealt with” in any meaningful sense. The countries of the region, especially some of those with maritime disputes with China, are beginning to acknowledge this truth and to realize that in the longer term their only option may be to accommodate the wishes of the big boy on the block.

### *Impacts on the Region*

Xi Jinping's policy for China to establish itself as a true maritime power will likely have a serious impact on China's neighbors. Those nations that most cherish their ability to act independently will feel the greatest effect. Any that attempt to obstruct Xi Jinping's intentions will surely meet even sharper reactions than have been seen recently. China's ambition to become a true maritime power should not be seen in narrow terms, as simply an issue of a continental or a maritime perspective; the nations of the region must understand its real purpose, which is nothing less than the restoration of China's traditional maritime order. When the Middle Kingdom was the hegemon of East Asia, the surrounding seas constituted a medium through which its overwhelming power and influence were propagated throughout the region, together with Chinese attitudes and values. Xi Jinping will not be satisfied until this system has been re-created around modern China.

The true maritime power to which the Chinese aspire involves the strategic interconnection of land and sea power and the balance of short-term crisis management with long-term interest. In practical terms, it can be readily understood as a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine, which the United States declared in 1823 to deter the European great powers from interfering in seas that the United States construed as in its natural sphere of influence. Certainly, the current maritime policies being pursued by China are intended as warnings, especially to the United States and Japan, not to intervene in Chinese affairs in any part of the ESCS. They represent an implicit challenge to the collective defense posture encouraged by Washington, the self-appointed guardian of the Indo-Pacific region. It is easy to sympathize with the concerns of China's weak and vulnerable

neighbors, like South Korea and Vietnam, that well remember the bitter historical experience of living as tributary nations under the Middle Kingdom umbrella.<sup>62</sup>

Let us then examine some specific ways in which China's maritime ambitions are likely to affect the region significantly. First, Xi Jinping's attitude toward his less powerful neighbors seems to be hardening considerably. The region may face more unilaterally imposed restrictions and obstacles designed to establish, as "facts on the ground," legal and administrative structures inspired by China's historical presence in the East Asian seas. Examples include China's November 2013 declaration of an air-defense identification zone over the ECS and the announcement in January 2014 of new fishing regulations whereby the Chinese government, acting in the name of the province of Hainan, obliged all foreign fishing vessels to apply for permission before entering a vast swath of the SCS, including areas contested by Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>63</sup>

Second, Xi Jinping is finding it harder to reconcile China's maritime interests harmoniously with those of other claimants in the ESCS. The Chinese are growing less willing to enter into substantive negotiations to resolve such differences and disagreements. The Chinese have refused to take part in the proceedings resulting from a four-thousand-page submission by the Philippines to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on 30 March 2014. The Philippines is seeking a definitive ruling on Chinese claims and activities in the South China Sea, China having asserted a historical right to over 90 percent of the SCS by its so-called nine-dashed line, which overlaps with about 80 percent of the Vietnamese claims.<sup>64</sup> On 1 May 2014 an oil-drilling rig belonging to the China National Offshore Oil Corporation was moved unilaterally into the Vietnamese EEZ, and the Chinese have expressed their determination to put it in operation, despite widespread rioting in Vietnam targeting Chinese-owned factories.<sup>65</sup> There is also an active dispute between China and the Philippines over the Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, which is 105 nautical miles from the Philippines. Chinese actions there conflict with the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, which calls for the maintenance of the status quo, and they are hindering efforts to draw up a binding Code of Conduct.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, recent developments in the ESCS disputes have clearly demonstrated that China, ASEAN, and Japan are unable to agree on mechanisms to apply international law in the maritime domain. There is a little good news, however. China responded helpfully to the Typhoon Haiyan disaster in the Philippines in November 2013, though its initial pledge of only U.S.\$100,000 in aid to the Philippines attracted international criticism (in contrast, China had pledged U.S.\$1.5 million to its close ally Pakistan when an earthquake killed five hundred people there in September of that year).<sup>67</sup> China also proved willing to cooperate

with many other nations in the response to the mysterious disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March 2014.<sup>68</sup>

Third, Xi Jinping is making very clear that the United States can no longer continue to behave as if it were the only player in the game—those days are past. China is deliberately setting up confrontations by asserting “traditional historical rights,” and of course, the United States is resisting, but the U.S. commitment to allies and partners in the region has become ambiguous. As the struggle in the region between the two great powers becomes ever more open and obvious, the other regional powers, especially those that can be characterized as “middle powers”—ASEAN, Australia, Canada, India, Japan, and South Korea—are seeking to establish strategic cooperative partnerships and networks with one another.

Fourth, and relatedly, the other countries of the region are very sensibly fearful about Xi Jinping's commitment to make China a true maritime power, since none has forces on the scale of the PLAN or much military leverage to resist expressions of Chinese will. The nations of the Indo-Pacific region can only band together, and of course, they have long been doing this through bilateral security arrangements with the United States, the guarantor of regional peace and stability since the Cold War ended. But times are changing, and although the United States has always tried to bind China to the maritime interests of its allies in the Indo-Pacific region, the lesser powers are now feeling much more exposed.

Fifth, despite all the talk of China's core national interests, Xi Jinping has yet to issue any grand doctrine describing how the People's Liberation Army should protect them. The PLA has had very little experience of conducting expeditionary joint campaigns, so some kind of guidance is needed, and of course, the rest of the world is concerned about the content of such a doctrine as well. The U.S. “Weinberger Doctrine” of the 1980s and the later “Powell Doctrine” are the best examples of such protocols. But until the Chinese issue such an explicit declaration, we will be left with the ambiguities of Xi Jinping's salami slicing and what appears to be a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine.

#### A MIDDLE KINGDOM REGIONAL ORDER?

Xi Jinping's declared intention that China become a “true maritime power” is meant to secure China's maritime domain, but it is also part of a balanced national strategy in which inherently military affairs are interwoven with strategic issues of sovereignty, regime legitimacy, and major-power politics. Xi's commitments on maritime policy go substantially beyond any of his predecessors, and an impressive modernization and reorganization of the PLAN and the CCG is under way. China, then, is preparing for conflict, should conflict come, but it is also pursuing a shrewdly balanced strategy that maximizes ambiguity. It is maneuvering stealthily to realize its objectives incrementally in the disputed waters

of the East and South China Seas without provoking effective reaction from the United States.

None of China's neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region can match its maritime capabilities on an individual basis, but the United States continues to argue that by acting together they can form a credible counterweight against China. One of the principal aims of President Obama's April/May 2014 visit to Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines was to shore up support for the U.S.-led maritime security coalition. The United States continues to urge China's neighbors to work together to respond to China's long-term strategy and to do everything possible, without escalating maritime tensions, to prevent China from establishing a fait accompli by which the Middle Kingdom regional order would be restored.

But time and circumstance are on China's side, and a war-weary United States is unwilling to chance any serious maritime confrontation with it. From an East Asian perspective, the U.S. security umbrella is starting to leak. The only practical alternative for China's neighbors is to reorganize their collective security in terms of a cooperative enterprise among particular emerging middle powers, for which South Korea, Australia, India, and ASEAN are the most plausible candidates. Of course, the Chinese would surely try to use their economic leverage to discourage such cooperation, and the very idea that China can be influenced by any kind of collective pressure may underestimate its resolve.

So where does this leave us? Throughout the region there is an earnest desire to believe that China really does want to be a responsible player, that it wishes to maintain maritime peace and stability. We can only hope for greater Chinese restraint in the use of "tailored coercion" and "forceful persuasion." Xi Jinping's control of several high-profile maritime committees can be seen as a strategy of crisis management, and there is now at least a policy to avoid the use of naval warships for law enforcement in disputed waters. Nevertheless, and unpalatable as it seems, accommodation of China's aspirations may ultimately be the lesser evil.

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#### NOTES

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maritime powers utilize their capacities in different ways according to the general national and strategic characteristics that define the state, including geographic, political, economic, sociocultural, and military factors. The use of the term "true" implies something more than a mere passive facticity—it suggests an active plan to produce some kind of significant transformation.

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
4. James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Navy: A Turn to Corbett?," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (December 2011), pp. 42–46; Holmes and Yoshihara, "Hardly the First Time," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (April 2013), pp. 22–27.
5. Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (London: W. W. Norton, 1997).
6. Historically, "maritime power" has referred straightforwardly to the exercise of absolute seaborne power as a strategy to secure a nation's goals and interests, whether through sea control or sea denial. In modern usage, however, maritime power has taken on a broader meaning that includes a variety of more qualitative values, such as peace and stability. The orthodox ideas of maritime power were primarily concerned with geography, whereas the modern understanding takes more account of maintaining peace and good order at sea through maritime cooperation.
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15. Paul Kennedy, "The Rise and Fall of Navies," *New York Times*, 5 April 2007; Geoffrey Till, *Seapower* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).
16. Cho Youngnam, "China's Diplomatic Challenges and Prospect in the Xi Jinping Era," *Strategy 21* 17, no. 1 (Summer 2014), pp. 16–17.
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19. "Hu Calls for Efforts to Build China into Maritime Power," Xinhua, 8 November 2012, news.xinhuanet.com/.
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23. Nat Rudarakanchana, "China Absorbs Wheat: Imports Skyrocket 5000% for December 2013," *International Business Times*, 4 February 2014, www.ibtimes.com/.
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25. Nicholas Thomas, "Going Out: China's Food Security from Southeast Asia," *Pacific Review* 26, no. 5 (December 2013), p. 531.
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27. Such heated nationalism is symptomatic of a profound irredentist desire to restore the maritime territories China lost after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in the early twentieth century.
28. The concept of a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine has received some support in the United States, but it has also been challenged by analysts from the United States, India, and Japan. See Sukjoon Yoon, "The Emergence and Consolidation of a Chinese Version of the Monroe Doctrine: Implications for Korea's China Policy," in "Comprehensive Security in Northeast Asia I: Maritime Security," special issue, *KAS Journal on Contemporary Korean Affairs* (1/2013); Sukjoon Yoon, *Xi Jinping's "Monroe Doctrine": Rebuilding the Middle Kingdom Order?*, RSIS Commentary 102/2014 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies [hereafter RSIS], 29 May 2014); and Kai He and Huiyun Feng, *Rethinking China's Monroe Doctrine*, RSIS Commentary 128/2014 (Singapore: RSIS, 4 July 2014).
29. "Salami tactics," also known as "salami-slice strategies," involve a divide-and-conquer process of threats and alliances to overcome opposition. By this means an aggressor can influence and eventually dominate a landscape, typically through politics, piece by piece; the opposition is reduced "slice by slice" until it realizes (too late) that it has been entirely neutralized.
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32. Philip C. Saunders, "China's Juggling Act: Beijing Balances Stability, Territorial Claims," *Defense News*, 14 April 2014, p. 21; Ely Ratner, *(Re)Defining the "New Type of Major Country Relationship" between the United States and China*, PacNet 4 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies [hereafter CSIS], 13 January 2014).
33. Koh Swee Lean Collin, *Westward Ho: Expanding Global Role for China's Navy*, RSIS Commentary 005/2014 (Singapore: RSIS, 7 January 2014).
34. Sam LaGrone, "U.S. Pacific Commander: Chinese Spy Ship off Hawaii Has an Upside," *USNI News*, 29 July 2014, news.usni.org/.
35. Michael Richardson, "China's Troubling Core Interests," *Japan Times*, 26 April 2013.
36. China's core national interests have been explicitly connected to the Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan issues, and since 2012 this concept has been expanded to encompass the ESCS, so that external issues concerning China's smaller and weaker neighbors have effectively been recast as internal issues. China has eight neighbors on the ESCS and the Yellow Sea.
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38. "New Vitality in Peripheral Diplomacy," *China Daily*, 23 September 2014, www.chinadaily.com.cn/.
39. You Ji, *Policy Brief*.
40. On 3 December 2013, Lt. Gen. Ren Haiqun, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Military Science, made this clear in a speech at the welcome dinner of the Beijing conference of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific in Beijing.
41. President Xi Jinping also presides over six crisis-response policy-coordination groups: the Central National Security Council (中央國家安全委員會), the Central Network Security and Intelligence Group (中央新網安全和情報化領導小組), the Central Comprehensive Reform Group (全面深化改革小組), the National Defense and Military Leadership Reform Group (中國國防和軍隊改革深化領導小組), the Taiwan Affairs Group (臺灣業務領導小組), and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Group (香港澳門業務領導小組).

42. See Sukjoon Yoon, *Is Xi Jinping Reshaping the PLA?*, RSIS Commentary 013/2014 (Singapore: RSIS, 21 January 2014).
43. James Hardy, "Images Suggest China's First Carrier under Construction," *IHS Jane's Navy International*, September 2013, p. 5.
44. "New PLAN Destroyer Type," *IHS Jane's Navy International*, April 2014, p. 4.
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57. This is also the home port of *Liaoning*, China's first and only aircraft carrier—though its hull number indicates simply a scientific survey and training ship.
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63. "Beijing Moves to Bolster Claim in South China Sea," *Wall Street Journal*, 9 January 2014.
64. "Philippines Seeks Arbitration at U.N. over China's Claims in South China Sea," *Wall Street Journal*, 30 March 2014.

65. James Manicom, *Vietnam's Next Move: Sue CNOOC*, PacNet 38 (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 13 May 2014); Ha Anh Tuan, *China Sending Giant Oil Rig to Vietnam's EEZ: Four Strategic Mistakes*, PacNet 38A (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 14 May 2014).
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67. Hannah Beech, "China to Philippines: Here, Have a Measly \$100,000 in Aid," *New York Times*, 14 November 2013.
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