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Xi's Op-Ed Diplomacy: Selling the "China Dream" Abroad

By Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga

Chinese President Xi Jinping's six-day trip to South Asia during September 14–19, on state visits to the Maldives, Sri Lanka and India, redoubled China's efforts to increase its presence in the Indian Ocean while also trying to improve its relations with neighboring India. Xi signed major economic agreements in each country, including a \$20 billion investment in Indian infrastructure and cooperation on a \$1.3 billion port project with Sri Lanka. Xi's tour also included public diplomacy with a personal touch—he published signed articles in the leading newspapers of each country. These articles prominently feature Xi's concept of the "China Dream" as an alluring component of increased bilateral cooperation, serving his foreign policy goal of increasing Chinese soft power abroad while also burnishing his credentials as an inspirational leader at home.

Repurposing the Op-Ed

Xi appears to be the first Chinese president to regularly publish articles in major national newspapers on the first day of his foreign visit. Xi began publishing signed articles, or *shuming wenzhang*, in foreign countries when he visited Europe

this March, penning op-eds at each stop in Holland, France, Germany and Belgium (see also [China Brief](#), April 9; [Xinhua](#), April 2). Xi appears to have adopted the public outreach campaign from Premier Li Keqiang, who began this practice in Spain in 2011. [1] By the author's count, Xi has published 10 articles abroad and Li has published 13. Of note, Xi did not publish any *shuming wenzhang* during his tour of South America this July, but did conduct a written group interview with a major newspaper from each country on his trip, which followed largely the same style ([Xinhua](#), July 15). [2] By comparison, U.S. President Barack Obama similarly publishes op-eds when he travels on state visits abroad ([White House](#), April 16, 2009).

Xi's articles represent a break from tradition and reflect his more personal approach to diplomacy. Chen Mingming, vice president of the Translators Association of China and former ambassador to New Zealand, told [Changjiang Daily](#) that Xi's decision to publish op-eds was "innovative," since past Chinese presidents usually accepted interviews by local media while premiers wrote op-eds ([Changjiang Daily](#), March 27). For example, then-President Hu Jintao and Xi, as vice president, both conducted written interviews with the [Washington Post](#) before their 2011 and 2012 visits to the United States, respectively ([Washington Post](#), January 16, 2011; [Washington Post](#), February 12, 2012). Tsinghua University professor Lu Shiwei explained that the op-eds, intentionally published in "authoritative local newspapers," serve as an "excellent response" to "all types of analysis and speculation" by foreign media before the visit. Lu added that Chinese leaders usually review the op-ed personally after it is drafted, with expert input and edits to ensure acceptability in the host country ([Changjiang Daily](#), March 27).

Your Dream Is Our Dream, We All Dream Together

Xi's op-eds largely reflect his own ambitions for China, especially the "China Dream" and the economic reforms announced in November 2013 at the Third Plenum, and seek to relate these efforts to his host country (see also [China Brief](#), November 22, 2013). In connecting the two countries, Xi invariably references their shared history, highlighting an era of Chinese prosperity. Xi noted Ming dynasty explorer Zheng He's voyages in the Maldives, Mongolia's role in the ancient Silk Road and Germany's shared status with China of "[prominently embodying] the Eastern or Western civilizations" through their proud

history of philosophers ([Xinhua](#), March 28). This shared history is repurposed as the basis for the host country's contemporary cooperation with China's policy initiatives. The Maldives' location in the Indian Ocean provides it a new role in China's "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" and Mongolia's boundary with China affords it inclusion in Beijing's "Silk Road Economic Belt" (see "Xi and Putin in Ulaanbaatar: Mongolia's Balancing Act," in this issue).

The "China Dream" plays a prominent role in Xi's efforts to encompass the host country's ambitions within China's own, especially for Asian countries. In Sri Lanka's [Daily News](#), Xi's article was titled "Let Us Become Partners in Pursuit of Our Dreams," and he told Sri Lankans that "The Mahinda Chintana, which represents Sri Lanka's dream of national strength and prosperity, has much in common with the Chinese dream of realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation" ([Daily News](#) [Colombo], September 16). In Seoul, Xi said that China and South Korea both need a "peaceful external environment" because China is pursuing the "China Dream" and South Korea is also creating "the Second Miracle on the Han River" ([Xinhua](#), July 3). Xi also used the "China Dream" to bridge tensions with India, as he wrote that "our respective dreams of national renewal are very much aligned with each other. We need to connect our development strategies more closely and jointly pursue our common dream of national strength and prosperity" ([The Hindu](#), September 17). This rhetoric echoes Xi's May speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), where he said, "The Chinese people, in their pursuit of the Chinese dream of great national renewal, stand ready to support and help other peoples in Asia to realize their own great dreams" (see also [China Brief](#), July 31; [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), May 21). However, the "China Dream" apparently is not universal, as he mentioned it in every Asian country as well as France and Belgium, but not Holland or Germany. [3]

This emphasis on the "China Dream" abroad appears exclusively by Xi, as by the author's account, none of Li Keqiang's 13 signed articles have contained the phrase "China Dream" or "revitalization of the Chinese nation," reinforcing Xi's ownership of the concepts (see also [China Brief](#), March 28, 2013; [China Brief](#) April 25, 2013). The "China Dream" also ties into Xi's broader efforts in regional diplomacy, as he pointed out during

the October 2013 periphery diplomacy conference that “good peripheral diplomacy [...] is a requirement for the realization of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation” (see also [China Brief](#), November 2, 2013; [People’s Daily Online](#), September 22).

Economic Cooperation Makes Dreams Come True

China’s economic reforms are also compared favorably to the local economy’s development path as a way to merge each country’s “dream.” In France’s *Le Figaro*, after explaining Beijing’s strategy for realizing the “China Dream” as “advancing the new type of industrialization, IT application, urbanization and agricultural modernization,” Xi said that “France, on its part, is stepping up its structural reform while working to ensure growth [...] and fulfill the new French dream. Both China and France are reform-minded nations” ([Xinhua](#), March 26). In Germany’s *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Xi linked the Third Plenum reforms with Germany’s “Industry 4.0” strategy and “energy transformation,” calling for “a new stage of ‘precision running-in’ and ‘seamless docking’ ” in Sino-German economic cooperation ([Xinhua](#), March 28). Writing in India’s *The Hindu*, in English, and *Dainik Jagran*, in Hindi, Xi said that “the combination of the ‘world’s factory’ and the ‘world’s back office’ will produce the most competitive production base and the most attractive consumer market” ([The Hindu](#), September 17).

In Mongolia, Xi explained the “China Dream” as achieving a moderately well-off society by 2020 and having a strong and prosperous modern socialist nation by 2049, evidently changing its definition from his earlier article in France to cater to his Mongolian audience. Xi wrote in four Mongolian newspapers that “the Mongolian people are also currently striving forward on their road of reform and development [...] continuing to deepen the development of Sino-Mongolian relations and cooperation has come at the right time” ([Xinhua](#), August 21). Explaining the link between economic cooperation and the “China Dream,” Qu Xing, president of the China Institute of International Studies, told *Xinhua*, “China is trying to achieve the Chinese dream. Mongolia is also at a crucial period of economic development, which indicates that there will be new contents in the economic and trade cooperation between the two countries” ([Xinhua](#), August 19). This focus on similar reform paths as a binding part of Beijing’s relationships echoes Xi Jinping’s ongoing

emphasis on “development as the key to peace” (see also [China Brief](#), May 23).

The articles also highlight political solidarity between the two countries. Xi defended Sri Lanka from human rights criticisms by citing China’s long-standing principle of non-interference, as he wrote that China “resolutely opposes any move by any country to interfere in Sri Lanka’s internal affairs under any excuse” ([Daily News](#), September 16). Citing France’s status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Xi said the two countries, “have the capability and wisdom to make good proposals and good initiatives to advance world multi-polarity and democracy in international relations” ([Xinhua](#), March 26). Noting the world is “[moving] towards multipolarity,” Xi called on India to work with China to “make the international order more fair and reasonable, and improve the mechanism and rules of international governance, so as to make them better respond to the trend of the times and meet the common needs of the international community” ([The Hindu](#), September 17). This was an obvious nod to their cooperation on the BRICS’ New Development Bank and increasing their influence in Western-dominated international institutions.

Xi’s op-eds appear targeted at foreign elites, despite the image of him engaging in grassroots diplomacy through a newspaper article. Xi’s efforts to extend the “China Dream” beyond its original domestic context, especially when combined with a heavy emphasis on bilateral economic cooperation, suggest a revamped soft power campaign linking foreign elites’ economic future with China’s national rejuvenation and development strategy. Both of the national dreams Xi referenced for Sri Lanka and South Korea, “Madhina Chintana”—President Mahinda Rajapaksa’s vision to revive his country’s economy after the end of the civil war—and the “Second Miracle on the Han River,” respectively, are signature policies of their leaders, enabling Xi to personally tie their government’s development strategies to his own.

Signaling Back Home

Beyond advocating his initiatives to China’s neighbors and friends, Xi’s op-eds also support his efforts to rebrand the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at home. Xi’s articles have received regular billing on CCTV’s nightly news program and have gained traction in the state-run media.

The Chinese media paid greater attention to Xi's op-eds in South Asia than his earlier articles in Europe, with CCTV's coverage nearly doubling in length on average. One headline asked "What Signal Did Xi Jinping's Signed Article in the Sri Lankan Media Send?," and other articles noted his use of Deng Xiaoping's concept of the "Asian century" and Xi's fondness for classical Chinese phrases, which are included in every article ([People's Daily Online](#), September 16; [Beijing Times](#), September 18; [People's Daily Online](#), September 14). The Chinese media also reported extensively on the op-eds' reception abroad, noting the leaders of Mongolia, Belgium and the Maldives read and supported the article, as well as the "high praise" Xi's article received in South Korea ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), August 21; [Xinhua](#), July 3). Xi's efforts to extend the "China Dream" abroad are intended to demonstrate its global influence and reaffirm to the Chinese people that their quest for national rejuvenation resonates with other nations, especially in Asia. This, in turn, may restore some people's faith that the Party can pursue equally successful economic reforms at home.

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Notes

1. Other senior Chinese leaders have written in foreign newspapers without visiting the host country, including Vice Premier Wang Yang's July 2013 article on the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in the *Wall Street Journal* ([Wall Street Journal](#), July 8, 2013).
2. On his way to South America, Xi Jinping also made a technical stop in Greece, where he met with Greek President Karolos Papoulias over lunch. He did not publish an op-ed in Greece, likely because the visit was announced last minute and Li Keqiang had just visited and published an op-ed in June ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), June 18).
3. Xi Jinping also did not mention the "China Dream" in his article during his visit to Tajikistan, where he attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting. This is likely because the focus of the visit was multilateral cooperation on security issues ([Xinhua](#), September 10).

The Rise of the Military-Space Faction

By Willy Lam

Much has been written about the growing influence of People's Liberation Army (PLA) generals on China's foreign policy. Little has been said about military entrepreneurs and other non-combatant PLA personnel moving into China's domestic governance. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, an unprecedented number of senior cadres from the country's labyrinthine *jungong hangtian* (military-industrial and space-technology) complex are being inducted to high-level Party-government organs or transferred to regional administrations. Given the perception that officials with military backgrounds tend to be more conservative and unquestionably loyal to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership, the partial militarization of the civilian Party-state apparatus will have far-reaching implications for the prospects of political and economic reforms, among others.

Uptick Under Xi Jinping

Until Xi Jinping became Party General Secretary and Chairman of the Central Military Commission at the 18th Party Congress two years ago, China's ten major military and space-related *yangqi* (centrally controlled conglomerates) assumed a relatively low profile. [1] These multi-billion yuan state-owned enterprises (SOE)—which are supervised by the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND), a unit under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT)—were thrust into the limelight at the Congress, when an unprecedented

number of *jungong hangtian* entrepreneurs and researchers were made members of the policy-setting CCP Central Committee. Four CEOs from the military-space establishment were admitted to the Central Committee as full members. They were Lin Zuoming (born 1957) of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC); Xu Dazhe (1956) of the China Aerospace Science & Industry Corp (CASIC); Ma Qingrui (1959) of the China Aerospace Science & Tech Corp (CASC); and Zhang Guoqing (1964) of the China North Industries Group Corp (Norinco). By contrast, only two top managers from non-military *yangqi*—Jiang Jiemin, then president of China National Petroleum Corp, and Xiao Gang, then Bank of China president—made it to the elite body (CEweekly.cn, November 6, 2012; People's Daily, November 5, 2012).

Moreover, a number of *guofang hangtian* officials from the Sixth-Generation corps of cadres (officials born in the 1960s who are positioned to move up the Party hierarchy at the 20th Party Congress in 2022) were elevated to the Central Committee as alternate, or second-tier, members at the 18th Party Congress. They included Cao Shumin (born 1969), Director of the MIIT Research Institute; Jin Donghan (1961), Chief Engineer at the China Shipbuilding Industry Corp (CSIC); Jin Zhuanglong (1964), General Manager of the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, Ltd. (COMAC); Liu Shiquan (1963), CASIC Vice-President; Ma Weiming (1960), Professor and Chief Engineer of the PLA Naval University of Engineering; Qian Zhimin (1960), General Manager of the China National Nuclear Corp (CNNC); Ren Hongbin, President of the China National Machinery Industry Corp (Sinomach); Wu Mengqing (1965), a top researcher at the China Electronics Technology Group Corp (CETC); and Yang Xuejun (1963), President of the National University of Defense Technology (360doc.com, November 26, 2012; Xinhua, November 14, 2012).

It was during the Hu Jintao–Wen Jiabao administration (2002–2012) that *jungong hangtian* talents, in addition to CEOs of automobile and energy companies, began to take up important posts in the civilian Party-state hierarchy. For example, Hao Peng (born 1960), a senior researcher and manager at AVIC, was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 2003. Hao was promoted to be the Governor of Qinghai province last year. Also in 2003, Xu Fushun (1958), a former

assistant general manager at CNNC, was appointed Vice-Governor of Qinghai. Xu was named Vice-Chairman of the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) late last year. Renowned rocket scientist Zhang Qingwei (1960), a former CASC General Manager and President of COMAC, was appointed Deputy Party Secretary and acting Governor of Hebei province in 2011. In early 2012, deputy general manager of CASC Yuan Jiajun (1962) was named a member of the Standing Committee of the Ningxia provincial Party Committee; Yuan was recently promoted Executive Vice-Governor of Zhejiang province (Xinhua, August 13; Ta Kung Pao [Hong Kong], July 16, 2013).

Yet it was after the 18th Party Congress that the influence of *guofang hangtian* cadres has taken a leap forward. Last year, Wang Yong, a former deputy general manager of CASIC and Chairman of the State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), was promoted to State Councilor. CASC's Ma Xingrui and Norinco's Zhang Guoqing were appointed Deputy Party Secretary of Guangdong province and Deputy Party Secretary of Chongqing, respectively. In January 2013, CASIC alumnus Chen Qiufa (1954), a former MIIT vice-minister, SASTIND director and head of the China Space Administration (CSA), was made Chairman of the Hunan province People's Political Consultative Conference. Chen's concurrent posts at MIIT, SASTIND and CSA were subsequently taken over by CASIC's Xu Dazhe. Other vice-ministerial or ministerial cadres with military-industrial or space-technology background include Deputy Governor of Hunan province Tan Zuojun (1968), who is a former general manager of CSIC; Party Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang (1957), who is former CETC general manager; and Vice-Chairman of the ACFTU, Jiao Kaihe, who is a former general manager at Norinco. Two former deputy directors of SASTIND, Hu Yafeng and Huang Qiang, were transferred to regional administrations earlier this year. Hu (1958), a former manager of the arms manufacturer North Tool Co. Ltd., was appointed to Vice-Governor of Heilongjiang province. Huang (1963), former director of the AVIC First Aircraft Research Institute, was promoted Vice-Governor of Gansu province this January (Sina.com, August 12; Ta Kung Pao, July 28).

Reliable PLA Cadres Can Save the Party and Lead Economic Reforms

What are the reasons behind these personnel moves? As China seeks to move away from manufacturing up the value chain to high-tech industries and compete with developed countries, military and space-related industries are playing a bigger role in helping civilian factories make the transition. The assignment of cadres with military-industrial experience to manufacturing centers such as Guangdong, Zhejiang and Chongqing will facilitate synergy between civilian and military companies. It was while Xi was serving as Party secretary of Zhejiang from 2002 to 2006 that he resuscitated the quasi-Maoist concept of “*pingzhan jiehe* [the synthesis of the requirements of peace and war] and sharing of resources [between civilian and military sectors]” ([Xinhua](#), February 14, 2006). Successful examples of *pingzhan jiehe* have included Tianhe Supercomputers, whose research and development was handled by the National University of Defense Technology and other military-run laboratories. Both CASC and CASIC are helping design China’s first commercial aircraft, the Comac C919. Military facilities have also made contributions to some of China’s most prestigious architectural structures. The steel frames for the 2008 Olympics Bird’s Nest Stadium were produced by China State Shipbuilding Corp ([Ministry of Education](#), June 18, 2013; [Liberation Army Daily](#), July 24, 2008). Given that the United States and other Western countries have restrictions regarding joint ventures with military-related companies in Communist countries, the *pingzhan jiehe* tradition could put a damper on the investment and related activities of Western technology firms in China.

Xi’s Militarization of Elite Politics

There are, however, fundamental political factors behind the changing career trajectories of *jungong bangtian* cadres. First, the installation of *jungong bangtian* cadres in the Party-state apparatus has served to broaden Xi’s power base, as the defense establishment is a key pillar of political support for him as President and commander-in-chief (See “All the General Secretary’s Men: Xi Jinping’s Inner Circle Revealed,” *China Brief*, February 15, 2013). This explains the fact that at a national conference on boosting the employment prospects for demobilized PLA personnel last May, Xi indicated that “I am also a *junzhuang ganbu* [cadre transferred from the military].” Second, at

a time when a record number of mid- to senior-ranked officials are being investigated for corruption, Xi hinted that cadres with a military background could be less amenable to the temptations of material benefits. “At this new historical period, large numbers of *junzhuang ganbu* have taken into consideration the requirements of the national situation and made proud contributions to the reform and open-door [policy] through selfless devotion,” Xi told the conference ([People’s Daily](#), May 30; [Xinhua](#), May 27).

It is instructive that at an August meeting of the Central Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reform, Xi urged SOEs, especially the *yangqi*, to rectify the “unreasonably high salaries and income of managers.” Xi told the meeting that “responsible comrades in the *yangqi* should strengthen their sense of responsibility and their sense of devotion [to the Party]” ([Jinghua Times](#) [Beijing], August 19; [China News Service](#), August 18). The CEOs of military-industrial and space-technology companies, whose remuneration is generally lower than those of non-military corporations, are set up as paragons of political correctness and lofty morality. This seems to be one reason why Xi has rewarded them with seats on the Central Committee as well as senior posts in the government hierarchy. No senior managers of military or space-technology firms have been detained for graft-related investigations since Xi began his large-scale anti-corruption campaign in late 2012.

Since assuming power in 2012, Xi has initiated ideological and rectification campaigns geared toward upholding the purity of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and thwarting alleged attempts by “anti-China foreign forces” to promote “peaceful evolution” in the country. It seems evident that the commander-in-chief hopes that PLA officers—as well as *junzhuang bangtian* personnel—can set an example against “bourgeois-liberalization,” a code word for the infiltration of “Western” democratic ideas in China. This summer, the General Political Department of the PLA kicked off a campaign that aims at “seriously guarding against political liberalization” within the military. A key slogan of this ideological movement is “implementing reform without changing [the country’s] directions; undertaking transformations without changing the color [of the Party].” According to legal scholar and social critic Mou Chuanheng, Xi wanted the military sector to set a national example of political

rectitude. “Xi is pushing the military to the first line of domestic politics,” Mou indicated. (Minzhuzhongguo.org, September 14; *Liberation Army Daily*, August 11).

Soon after Xi arrived in Zhejiang in 2002, the Party boss talked about the intimate correlation of the civilian and military sectors in an address to the Zhejiang Military District: “Without a strong national defense, there won’t be a peaceful international situation and a stable domestic situation—and it will be impossible to implement economic construction.” He called upon Party and government officials to “use one hand to grasp economic [work], and the other hand to grasp national defense.” [2] While raising the profile—and exposure—of *jungong bangtian* cadres may bring substantial benefits to the economy, the militarization of the polity could enshrine the mentality of the “one-voice chamber” that Chairman Mao imposed on China with the help of his ever-loyal defense establishment.

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Notes

1. The ten leading military-industrial and space-technology corporations are China Aerospace Science & Tech Corp (CASC); China Aerospace Science & Industry Corp (CASIC); Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC); China State Shipbuilding Corp (CSSC); China Shipbuilding Industry Corp (CSIC); China North Industries Group Corporation (CNGC or Norinco); China South Industries Group Corporation (CSGC); China National Nuclear Corp (CNNC); China nuclear Engineering Group Corp (CNECC); and China Electronics Technology Group Corp (CETC).
2. Cited in Xi Jinping, *Work on the Substance, Go Along the Front Ranks* (Beijing: The Central Party School Publishing House, 2013), p. 283.

Community Corrections and Stability Maintenance

By Yaqiu Wang

During the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress last November, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced the abolition of Re-education Through Labor (RTL), or *laojiao*, the largest formal institution of administrative detention, which enabled Chinese police to incarcerate an individual for up to four years without a trial. In the decision document issued following the Third Plenum, the Party also hinted at the future direction of China’s penal code—to “improve the community corrections system” (*Xinhua*, November 15, 2013). Community corrections, a system that requires a trial but, once convicted, still allows arbitrary detentions of offenders for 30 days, now appears to be one of the preferred tools for local officials to maintain social stability and deal with dissidents.

History of Community Corrections

The use of community corrections has spread rapidly in China in recent years, especially since the abolition of RTL in late 2013. Community corrections, widely used around the world today, serves as an alternative to incarceration. Convicted offenders serve a sentence that is based on supervised programs in their residential community, as opposed to being confined in a prison. Compared with incarceration, community corrections has many advantages. These include decreased costs and allowing offenders to stay with their families, which research suggests deters criminal behavior, reduces recidivism and promotes pro-social behavior.

In China, community corrections is used to administrate criminals sentenced to control (*guanzhì*), suspended sentence (*huanxing*), temporary parole (*zanyu jianmai zhixing*) and probation (*jiashi*) (*Procuratorial Daily*, March 22, 2013). Before the implementation of the community corrections system, people who were sentenced to any of the above categories were not put in jail but supervised by their local police station. The legal enforcement of community corrections is now under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, and daily administration falls to local justice bureaus. All justice departments at the provincial level have their respective bureaus of

community corrections, and local community corrections offices have been set up in about 90 percent of county, city or district-level justice bureaus ([Ministry of Justice](#), May 2014). Governments at all levels across the country have been aggressively recruiting new community corrections personnel, and a portion of the personnel were transferred from the former RTL system ([Xinhua](#), January 21; [Xinhua](#), August 25).

Community corrections was first introduced to China in 2003 after the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Justice jointly issued the policy document "Announcement on the Execution of Community Corrections Pilot Work" (2003). Pilot programs were first carried out in Beijing and Shanghai, followed by a nationwide trial program in 2009. Provisions regarding community corrections were added to the Criminal Law (2011) and the Criminal Procedure Law (2012) in 2011 and 2012, respectively, providing legal basis for the community corrections system. In 2012, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice jointly issued the document "Regarding Further Strengthening the Work of Guaranteeing Community Corrections Funding" (2012), which makes funding for community corrections part of the overall budget at each level of the government. However, an independent and comprehensive law on community corrections is still missing. A draft of the Community Corrections Law was introduced in 2013 and is currently under review by the State Council. It is expected to be sent to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval ([Ministry of Justice](#), July 29, 2013). Both President Xi Jinping and Meng Jianzhu, Secretary of Central Political and Law Commission, the Party organ that oversees legal enforcement authorities, have made speeches pushing for the legislation to be passed ([Ministry of Justice](#), August 25).

The Chinese government's use of community corrections has expanded dramatically since it was given its legal basis in 2012. By this February, five years since its nationwide rollout, over 1.8 million people had been through community corrections, with that total doubling in the last two years ([Ministry of Justice](#), May 17, 2012; [Xinhua](#), May 27). The number of offenders currently in community corrections is nearly half of China's prison population, which is technically a separate system (709,000 people

in community corrections as of May 2014, compared with 1.64 million in prisons in 2012, the latest numbers available from the Ministry of Justice) ([Ministry of Justice](#), May 27; [Xinhua](#), April 25, 2012). Of note, China's official prison population does not include people held in custody and education centers, drug rehabilitation centers and other extralegal detention facilities. They are generally offenders of lesser criminal acts, as were people put in the RTL system. This suggests there are people who would have previously been sent to RTL camps that are now likely placed in community corrections.

No Significant Change From RTL

China's community corrections system retains many of the negative aspects of RTL and should not be considered an improvement in its current form. Jiang Aidong, the Director of Community Corrections Bureau at the Ministry of Justice, claims that the implementation of community corrections is intended to reflect international practices and "explore, reform and perfect China's penal enforcement system." Jiang further contends that community corrections is not a replacement of RTL, since the community corrections statute only applies to adjudicated criminals, not administrative offenders ([Xinhua](#), January 5). While it is true that the decision to place someone in community corrections must be rendered by the court, as opposed to RTL's authority falling to police officers without judicial oversight, community corrections retains RTL's empowerment of the police or other government officers to arbitrarily detain adjudicated offenders, and undermines offenders' ability to exercise their constitutional rights.

The pending Community Corrections Law appears written to enable the continued violation of the Chinese constitution by denying basic guaranteed rights to citizens through penal procedures. Article 44 stipulates, "To exercise their freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, protest and demonstration, offenders serving sentences in communities should obtain the approval of the community corrections agencies" (2013). This runs contrary to the higher level of law, the Criminal Law (2011), since the Criminal Law only strips away the civil and political rights of a narrow scope of serious and violent felons, and community corrections offenders do not fall into those categories of offenders ([Minsheng Guancha](#), April 16). Article 50 also stipulates that

offenders who “could possibly obstruct the public order of important public places or during important national holidays and activities, but do not meet the conditions for readmitting to prison” can be “centrally managed in community corrections facilities [...] for up to 30 days.” This stipulation enables the authorities to exercise a broad mandate for arbitrary detention and isolation, restricting the personal freedom of offenders for as long as 30 days without them actually violating corrections regulations. It could particularly affect offenders who want to voice their opinions in public, especially those who are placed in community corrections for protesting or petitioning in the first place.

New Preferred Policy for Stability Maintenance

Community corrections is embedded in China’s omnipresent stability maintenance system. As Minister of Justice Wu Aiyong puts it, “Community corrections work is an important part of the work of maintaining social stability” ([Ministry of Justice](#), August 25). While describing the stability maintenance aspect of community corrections, Professor Zhang Jing of Beijing University of Technology says that in all the nearly 20 policy documents regarding community corrections issued by the Beijing Bureau of Justice, “risk prevention” and “emergency notification” are emphasized, so that if there is any unrest involving community corrections offenders, they can be dealt with swiftly and at the source. Besides the heavy presence of correctional officers from the prison system in communities, the Beijing government also employs residents to assist in the monitoring of offenders in their communities. According to Zhang, the Beijing government specifically looks for those who are 40 to 50 years old, unemployed and have been living in their respective communities for a long time ([People’s Daily Online](#), April 29). These people, called “assistant managing personnel,” or *xieguan yuan*, act not only as effective instruments of information gathering and reporting, but also ideological propagandists, tasked with helping offenders and their families develop an acceptance of the policies of the government ([People’s Daily Online](#), April 29). This management model of community corrections is also widely used in other cities

Community corrections is also used extensively to monitor and control offenders, especially during national events and holidays. In their annual work

summary reports, some local justice bureaus boast of their “zero petition rate” and “zero protest rate” of community corrections offenders, which suggests these governments make concerted efforts to prevent and stop offenders from presenting their cases to higher authorities and airing their grievances in public ([Tongren Government](#), July 10, 2013; [Lishui Bureau of Justice](#), April 2). Furthermore, authorities also punish community corrections offenders for speaking to the media. For example, a policy document issued by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice, the “Tentative Provisions Regarding the Evaluation and Categorization of Community Corrections Offenders,” lays out a points-based evaluation mechanism. It stipulates that offenders who speak to the media will have four to five points deducted from their evaluation report. If an offender accumulates 18 demerit points within three months, he or she can be detained ([Guangdong Provincial Government](#), December 1, 2013). Other provinces have implemented a similar evaluation mechanism ([Southern Metropolis Daily](#), December 16, 2013). Despite not yet becoming law, Article 50’s emphasis on maintaining stability during “important national holidays and activities” is already a key facet of community corrections. For example, during the plenary meetings of the National People’s Congress and the National People’s Political Consultative Conference, or *lianghui*, this April, many local governments issued policy documents requiring community corrections officers to check on offenders twice a day and strictly prohibited them from leaving town ([Yuhang Justice Bureau](#), April 10).

A Tool to Silence Dissent

Community corrections is an integral part of the CCP’s efforts to punish and silence dissent. Local authorities use community corrections in an attempt to leverage the program’s expansive powers to inhibit political dissidents from continuing their activities. As mentioned earlier, community corrections includes those sentenced to control, suspended sentence, temporary parole and probation. Numerous political dissidents have been sentenced to one of these categories. Among them, Gao Zhisheng, a well-known rights lawyer who was recently released after serving three years in jail, was first given five years of suspended sentence in 2006 by the Beijing First Intermediate Court for inciting subversion of state power. In 2011, Hangzhou based dissident Lu Gengsong,

while being released after four years in prison for inciting subversion of state power, was pressed by authorities to sign the Community Corrections Affidavit. Lu refused and claimed that he would not succumb to community corrections. In August of this year, he was again arrested and charged with inciting subversion of state power ([Human Rights in China](#), August 13). In 2012, Hainan-based environmentalist Liu Futang, who was once extolled as an “environment fighter” by the Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily*, was given three years of suspended sentence ([Radio Free Asia](#), April 12, 2013). This July, Liang Haiyi, who was detained in 2011 for participating in the pro-democracy “Jasmine Revolution” protests, was formally sentenced to two years of suspended sentence ([Radio Free Asia](#), July 18).

Recent developments show that community corrections is also being used to target religious groups and petitioners. For example, the website of the Justice Bureau of Zhuanghe City in Liaoning Province states that people who have been sentenced to community corrections in Zhuanghe include those who are “using a cult to undermine law enforcement” ([Zhuanghe Bureau of Justice](#), May 10). Several articles also describe how Falun Gong practitioners were “reformed” after being helped by community corrections officers ([Ziyun Government](#), March 7; [Shanxin Kaifeng](#), January 16). One report mentions that a man and his son in Hubei Province were sentenced to community corrections for their non-stop efforts to protest the forced demolition of their home ([Wuhan City Donghu District Procuratorate](#), July 20, 2012).

Further Judicial Reforms Needed

In the past, incarcerating dissidents, such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, resulted in negative publicity for the Chinese government. It now appears that Beijing’s optimal strategy is to keep them quiet without actually locking them up. Besides formally sentencing dissidents to community corrections, the Chinese government has a history of controlling dissidents without any legal justification, closely tracking their activities online, physically following them, or, when necessary, placing them under house arrest. With the passing of the Community Corrections Law and the continuing expansion of the community corrections system, such activities against dissidents could be openly codified,

and better financed, staffed, organized and coordinated between different governmental agencies at different localities. In other words, the proposed law would make community corrections a more powerful system, implanted in residential communities and within the legal framework, to monitor and control those who fall out of favor with the CCP. As dissident-intellectual Mo Zhixu told the author, “to enact the Community Corrections Law is to give legal justification to the stability maintenance system” (Author’s interview, September 18).

The original theory of community corrections was intended to help offenders reduce the probability of continued criminal behavior and better adjust to society. Yet what the Chinese authorities are doing—repressing offenders from airing their grievance and seeking redress—certainly does not improve the offenders’ ability to rejoin society as a normal citizen. The Chinese government claims that abolishing RTL and promoting community corrections signifies its efforts to reform and modernize the criminal justice system and advance the rule of law, but it is also becoming clear that community corrections is a core element of China’s stability maintenance mechanism.

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Chinese Designs on the Arctic? Chill Out

By Matthew Willis

It is not fashionable, these days, to downplay China's interest in the Arctic. Recent news that Beijing plans to publish a guidebook on Arctic shipping, that China will receive preferential treatment along the Northern Sea Route (NSR), or that Chinese investors plan to finance Russian gas extraction in the Yamal all creates the impression the country is moving into the Arctic in a big way ([Barents Observer](#), June 20; [Barents Observer](#), May 21; [Reuters](#), April 30). A steady stream of analysis, mainly from Western commentators leaning heavily on the notion that the Chinese are both revisionist and far-sighted, suggests that something more sinister is afoot.

Purporting to expose a “long game,” “emerging play” or “long con,” this analysis alleges that Beijing ultimately aims to “control the awarding of select Arctic energy and fishing-related concessions as well as the [...] political arrangements governing the use of strategic waterways...” ([Macdonald-Laurier Institute Commentary](#), September 2013; [The Diplomat](#), November 14, 2013; [Center on Foreign Relations](#), April 4). Even academic efforts have contributed to China's looming shadow in various ways, including by analyzing Beijing's “national Arctic strategy” when, in reality, no strategy has ever been released ([Naval War College Review](#), vol. 66 no. 2, Spring 2013; [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#), April 2013). Coupled with China's 2013 admission as an observer to the region's leading intergovernmental forum, the Arctic Council, these articles and others have persuaded some analysts that China is planning a hostile takeover of the region.

There is no denying that China's international persona can be abrasive and its interpretation of international law unconventional. However, when it comes to the Arctic, it has hardly been the menace some claim. Many Chinese commentators hold uncontroversial views on China's future role in the region, and diplomats from several Arctic states have made a point of emphasizing how sanguine their governments are about China's presence. A comparison of China's interests to those of other non-Arctic states reveals that there is little to set it apart from

the likes of India or Singapore. Indeed, what unites all three is the domestic origins of their northern interests. As for China's recent admission to the ranks of the Arctic Council observers, a foreign policy success but certainly no coup, Beijing arguably made more concessions than gains en route to the prize.

Reporting on China: a Critical Look at Critical Coverage

Western perceptions of China's attitude toward the Arctic have been shaped by highly selective reporting, particularly regarding governance and access to resources. As an example, remarks by Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo more than four years ago—to the effect that no nation has sovereignty over the Arctic and that China's sheer size gives it an “indispensable role”—are still being cited ([IISS Strategic Comments No. 6](#), March 6). Readers will no doubt also be familiar with the statements of Guo Peiqing, at Ocean University, who has said that “[c]ircumpolar nations have to understand that Arctic affairs are not only regional issues but also international ones” ([Center for Strategic & International Studies Report](#), January 2012). These statements, typically framed within a “China threat” narrative and treated as timeless, continue to be quoted by Western analysts, perhaps because they validate entrenched prejudices concerning China and suspicions of its strategic aims.

Little effort is required to turn up a wealth of uncontroversial—even conventional—statements as well. In 2013, Yang Huigen, head of the Polar Research Institute of China, stated, “We insist that [the Arctic's] resources are not ours, and China's partnership with Arctic countries in the [energy] sector will come naturally as it is part of the widening economic co-operation among countries in the context of globalization” ([China Daily](#), June 6, 2013). Qu Tanzhou, head of the Chinese administration in charge of Arctic and Antarctic exploration, observed in 2012 that “[a]s the world is increasingly concerned about the effects of climate change, it is fairly natural for China to embark on and step up Arctic research missions” ([Xinhua](#), January 31, 2012). Gao Feng, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's delegate to the Arctic Council, explained to the author his government's interest in Arctic affairs by saying, in part, that “[t]he issues relating to the Arctic are mostly regional ones, but some of them are trans-regional such as climate change

and marine shipping. Arctic states and non-Arctic states need to work together to cope with [those ones]” (Email correspondence, August 8, 2013). Every country has its hawks, but the debate in China appears about as balanced as anywhere else. This more balanced debate is crucially missing from Western coverage – and only Western coverage: analysis out of Russia, Japan and Singapore has hinted at China’s supposed ulterior motives as well.)

Even “provocative” Chinese statements deserve a discerning read: they frequently make the very same points as North American and European commentators. Admiral Yin’s opinion, quoted above, may have been representative of his government’s—an open question—but he could be forgiven for expressing concern. In 2010, the “New Cold War” narrative, which has been fed by sensationalist coverage, was still ascendant, and even some Arctic governments, notably Canada and Russia, had through their shrill rhetoric given it a whiff of truth (See, for instance, [Eye on the Arctic Blog](#), August 26, 2013). Guo, for his part, may have been indelicate, but he put his finger on an issue that later divided the Arctic Council. Some countries, like Iceland and Norway, were all for bringing extra-regional states into the Arctic; others, like Canada and Russia, far less so.

Chinese Interests, Shared Interests

Beijing’s Arctic interests fall into three categories: using science to understand how the changing Arctic climate will affect food production and weather in China; determining whether the NSR could be an alternative to established shipping lanes; and ensuring that China has access to hydrocarbons and resources like fish. [1] Although China’s policies are only in “a nascent stage of formulation,” Chinese interests so far appear strikingly similar to those of other non-Arctic states, such as Japan and South Korea ([Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#), April 2013; [CIGI Policy Brief no. 26](#), April 2013). But the similarities extend beyond northeast Asia to the likes of Singapore and India—also new Arctic Council observers.

India has even less connection to the Arctic than China geographically, but both it and China share massive populations, overstretched infrastructure and serious vulnerabilities to hostile climatic trends and weather. No one questions New Delhi’s assertion that right-minded

energy, agricultural, industrial and environmental policies depend on understanding how the Arctic is changing. The port of Singapore, perhaps the busiest in the world by shipping tonnage, has helped make Singapore a global trading power. The Singaporeans are thus very interested in whether a gradual opening of the NSR could change the configuration of global shipping networks. The Chinese, for their part, could diminish their reliance on trade and energy shipments through the straits of Malacca, a strategic chokepoint that leaves China vulnerable to U.S. coercion, if the NSR proved a viable alternative. This “prospecting” makes a great deal of sense for a country that does not get on well with some of its neighbors.

This comparison also illustrates the strikingly *domestic* character of China’s Arctic preoccupations: none of Beijing’s various activities in the region are part of a willfully expansionist agenda. Policy that begins as domestic but bleeds into the international sphere can still have geopolitical implications, of course, and must be handled accordingly; nonetheless, in China’s case intent matters because so many analyses of its regional presence assume it to be driven by clandestine aims.

As an important aside that actually merits its own study, it is still not at all clear that China, or any other country, will be rewarded for its interest in energy or shipping. As the trials and tribulations of Shell, Statoil, ENI and other oil majors have demonstrated, extracting energy from the region is no given. When it comes to shipping, some recent scholarship has shown that the benefits of a navigable NSR could be far less generalized than typically presumed ([The Arctic Institute](#), November 2013). Chinese enthusiasm for the Arctic’s commercial promise could well wane with time.

Arctic Council Observer Status: A Badge, Not a Battering Ram

Much was made of China’s accession to the rank of full Arctic Council observer in May 2013. In fact, the prize was both small and expensive. It was expensive because Beijing made important concessions to receive it, most notably recognizing the Arctic states’ ‘sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic’ and acknowledging the Law of the Sea’s applicability to the region. Reportedly, Chinese officials were not pleased with this, but agreed ([Stockholm International Peace](#)

[Research Institute](#), April 2013). If China ever does want to challenge the Arctic's existing governance structures, therefore, it will have to do so within a framework it has acknowledged to be legitimate, rather than by questioning the structure itself. The prize was small, partly because the Arctic Council is a forum for discussions about governance, but does not itself generate rules, and partly because observer status is not a prerequisite for engagement in the region. [2] China had struck deals with countries, including Iceland and Denmark, before being admitted. Also, as the *Arctic Council Observer Manual* indicates, an observer's role is heavily circumscribed: observers may only propose projects through an Arctic state or Permanent Participant, and only fund projects to a level matching but not exceeding member-state funding. Their status is subject to review and they do not have a vote on Council business ([Arctic Council](#), April 27, 2011).

What China obtained was nonetheless valuable. Symbolically, observer status validates the image Beijing seeks to project—that of a rising power with legitimate global interests. Concretely, access to Council proceedings means access to information: about the Arctic itself, member states' policies and opportunities for involvement in Arctic projects. For a country with genuine regional interests, being in the loop is vital. Recall the Netherlands and the G20: Dutch diplomats fought tooth and nail to be invited to the 2008 summit before anyone knew what the G20 would become. The point is to become a member of an organization while the door is open; second chances are hard to come by.

It is a little-known fact, moreover, that China applied for observer status only at the Arctic Council's instigation. In the early 2000s, when the Council was still a fledgling organization, its members were looking to raise awareness of the Arctic's relevance to the broader climate change debate and saw bringing China into the fold as a crucial step. The message was delivered in Beijing in 2004 by the then-chair of the Council shortly before the high-profile release of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA, co-produced with the International Arctic Science Committee). Whether or not it was that visit that ultimately prompted Beijing's application three years later, it was the Arctic Council that initiated things, not the other way around.

Concluding Thoughts

Fear-mongering over China is strikingly similar to commentary on Russia not long ago. Following Russia's 2007 "*Arktika*" expedition (a more international effort than usually reported), predicting a new "New Cold War" was *de rigueur*. Little regard was given to the region's governance structures, the distribution of hydrocarbons or the nature of the boundary disputes involved, and still less to the affinities and fault lines between the various players. Only belatedly did commentators realize that pre-existing templates were inadequate to explain the Arctic's geopolitical dynamics. Now that the "New Cold War" has begun to lose currency, different grounds for conflict are being sought.

As part of research into the Arctic Council's admission of observers, the author and a colleague recently conducted interviews with the diplomats of almost every Arctic country, including Russia. Several diplomats emphasized not only how relaxed their countries were about China, but how important it had been to them that Beijing's application be approved. [3] In the eyes of countries like Norway, for whom the Arctic Council's spearheading of climate change research is part of its *raison d'être*, China's inclusion was absolutely vital. And this despite the political and economic price Oslo continues to pay for the awarding of the 2010 Nobel peace prize to dissident Liu Xiaobo. Russia and Canada, who were less keen on admitting new observers, never took issue with China, although Russia had expressed some reservations years earlier. On the day the matter was settled, US Secretary of State John Kerry was one of the most forceful proponents of admission.

The Arctic is its own region, where states' relations with each other are not always governed by what is happening elsewhere. China's interests could, in time, prove incompatible with those of one or more of the Arctic states, but reading future threats into Beijing's current posture is premature. China does have policies for the Arctic, particularly in the scientific realm, but not a coherent strategy. Neither its analytical community nor its official line is hawkish, and Chinese commentary encompasses a broad spectrum of views. China's regional interests are not unique, and are more reflective of domestic priorities than geopolitical ambitions. Moreover, the Arctic states are generally keen to attract China's business, meaning

Chinese “prospecting” for resources and other business opportunities is part of a two-way exchange. Finally, China’s new status on the Arctic Council, which the Council’s own members encouraged, is not a ram with which to “break into” the region. On the contrary, it may have long-term benefits: the better China’s understanding of the politics, climate, environment and peoples of the Arctic, the more likely it is to see the region through the eyes of its Arctic counterparts.

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Notes

1. For a more detailed analysis of China’s interests, see Linda Jakobson’s several excellent reports.
2. The Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement (2011) and the Agreement on Co-operation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013) were binding treaties. However, though negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, they were signed only by the eight Arctic states.
3. The length of the admission process had less to do with the applicants than the suitability of the Council’s institutional framework to hold them. It took members and Permanent Participants years to agree on the role of observers and criteria for evaluating applications. During this time, the Council deferred consideration of all applications, rejecting none. Once consensus had been reached, the approval process went as quickly as the Council’s meeting schedule allowed. See Matthew Willis and Duncan Depledge, ‘How we learned to stop worrying about China’s Arctic ambitions: Understanding China’s admission to the Arctic Council, 2004–2013’ in Leif Christian Jensen and Geir Hønneland (eds), *The Handbook on the Politics of the Arctic*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing (forthcoming).

Xi and Putin in Ulaanbaatar: Mongolia’s Balancing Act

By Alicia Campi

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s state visit to Mongolia on August 21–22 signaled closer trilateral economic cooperation between China, Russia and Mongolia on their shared vision of a new Silk Road economic corridor. However, this positive forward momentum must be placed in the context of what happened in Ulaanbaatar and Dushanbe in the subsequent three weeks. During this same time Mongolia sought to balance its closer ties to Beijing and Moscow by reassuring its major investment partners, Japan and South Korea, that its outreach to China and Russia would not endanger their political and economic cooperation.

Building a “New Silk Road” Through Mongolia

Commentary on Xi’s trip by the Chinese and Mongolian governments was overwhelmingly positive, with the focus on the Chinese president’s vision of elevating bilateral ties to an invigorated strategic partnership. *Xinhua* cited unnamed officials and experts who called the results of the trip “fruitful” in two ways: First, the visit had “great practical significance to the further development of bilateral relations,” and second, it infused new vigor into Northeast Asian regional development as the embodiment of the philosophy of “‘amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness’ in China’s diplomacy with its neighbors” (*Xinhua*, August 23). Mongolia’s state-run *Montsame* news agency noted Xi’s trip was “praised as a historic visit that will lead bilateral relations and cooperation between Mongolia and China to a new level, and expand and define strategic perspectives from both parties” (*Montsame*, August 22). This public messaging suggests both sides are eager to improve relations during Xi’s term.

China and Mongolia signed a series of 26 economic agreements, including a Joint Declaration on Relations, which set a bilateral trade target of \$10 billion by 2020 (up from \$6.2 billion in 2013). Xi proposed a “three-in-one” cooperation model, integrating mineral resources, infrastructure construction and financial cooperation (*China Daily*, August 22). China agreed to provide

Mongolia \$260 million in aid within three years for major economic projects and to grant a soft loan worth \$162.7 million. However, these agreements have so many conditions that it is possible that Mongolia will never see much of the money—making them rather empty political gestures. The Bank of Mongolia and Bank of China agreed to increase their currency swap exchange from 10 billion RMB (\$1.6 billion) to 15 billion RMB (\$2.4 billion), which will help provide foreign currency to Mongolia's domestic market and support repayment in the foreign currency market. Six Chinese seaports, including Tianjin and Dalian, were designated to facilitate Mongolian exports to overseas markets, providing Mongolia easier access to Asian maritime shipping routes. China agreed to border crossing cooperation and to allow Mongolia access to rail capacity within China, while Mongolia opened four new ports (Shiveekhuren, Bichigt, Gashuunsukhait and Nomrog) for rail transport. The two countries established new tariffs and volume limits for Mongolian cargo on Chinese railroads, and China also granted Mongolia a 40-percent discount on current transportation tariffs. A key breakthrough was the agreement that two-thirds of Mongolian goods transported on Chinese rails will be sold in China and one-third will be for third-country export via Chinese seaports. This would answer complaints from third countries that they cannot receive Mongolian exports through the bottleneck of China's Tianjin port and allow the Mongols to increase trade with these partners. Most of these agreements are subject to ratification by the Mongolian parliament.

Mongolian Reaction

Mongolian officialdom and media were generally pragmatic, if not positive, in their assessment of Xi's visit. Mongolian President Tsalkhiin Elbegdorj, after his private meeting with Xi, asserted, "We have to strengthen our good neighbors' relations" (*Montsame*, August 22). Mongolian Deputy Prime Minister Dendev Terbishdagva, who also co-chairs the Mongolia-China intergovernmental commission, said he was impressed by Xi's parliamentary speech (*Xinhua*, August 23). Ulziibayar Ganzorig, President of the Mongolian Financial Markets Association, told Mongolian Eagle TV that, "the visit has clearly sent a message to the world that Mongolia is not dependent upon a single company called Rio Tinto and the country can continue to work with China in many ways" (M.A.D. Mongolian Newswire, September 3).

Presidential adviser Bat-Erdene Batbayar emphasized Xi's pledge to respect Mongolia's chosen development model and expected that Chinese purchases of Mongolian goods would garner the attention of international investors (*UBPost*, September 2).

Despite the positive messaging by both sides, Xi appeared to cause some controversy during his visit. The Chinese media played up the fact that Xi made a rare stand-alone state visit to Mongolia and was granted the privilege of addressing a special session of the Mongolian parliament, which was called back from its summer recess (*Xinhua*, August 21; *China Daily*, August 23). In parliament, he reassured Mongols that, "We will respect Mongolia's independence, sovereignty, immunity and its chosen path according to the China-Mongolia Friendship and Cooperation Treaty...Bilateral strategic partnership relations between the two countries will be maintained whatever changes come in international relations" (*Montsame*, August 22). However, the Chinese and Mongolian state-run press made no mention of the nearly universal grimaces on the faces of the listening parliamentarians and high-ranking officials or the lack of applause, which were caught by China's CCTV cameras but not Mongol TV coverage. This negative reaction may have been due to Xi's opening recital of a famous Mongolian nationalist poem, "My Native Land," in which he incongruously said, "This is my native land. The lovely country. My Mongolia." After Xi's speech, Mongolian blogs erupted with criticism of this strange gesture, which seemed to overwhelm Xi's attempted outreach to the Mongolian public through the release of an article to the major Mongolian newspapers, timed to coincide with his arrival. In this article, Xi noted that visiting Mongolia was more like visiting one's relatives and "China hopes that both countries can push cooperation on building inter-connecting railways and roads, [as well as] the development of mines and processing" (*Өнөөдөр, Одрийн Сонин*, August 21).

Back-to-Back Visits Suggest Coordination

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Mongolia on September 3 suggests China and Russia coordinated the timing of their visits. According to discussions with Mongolian diplomats, the Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MMFA) worked all spring to schedule Xi's and Putin's visits. Putin's timing was locked into the

75th anniversary of the Soviet-Mongolian victory over a Japanese invasion force in late August 1939. While the Mongols in March originally wanted Xi to visit in early August to avoid overlapping with Putin, the MMFA said publicly in June that Xi and Putin had agreed to meet in Mongolia in late August for a “trilateral summit” (see also *China Brief*, July 11; Author’s interviews, Ulaanbaatar, March 12–14). This change in timing was likely discussed in Shanghai during May meetings between Xi and Putin at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (see *China Brief*, July 31). However, the Russians retreated from this idea seemingly because Putin decided to package his Mongolia visit into a several-day swing through the Russian Far East.

The five transportation-related Sino-Mongolian agreements signed during Xi’s visit suggest his willingness to cooperate with Russia on their separate rail projects (see also *China Brief*, January 24). Mongolian policymakers believe that while Putin was in China, he agreed to not oppose Chinese proposals for deeper investment and economic ties with Mongolia in exchange for China’s support for Russian plans on modernizing and developing rail links with Mongolia (Author’s interviews, Ulaanbaatar, August 7–8). When comparing these rail agreements to those signed with Russia ten days later, a pattern of trilateral cooperation is evident. Mongolia has been seeking to become an international transportation hub and diversify its customers for mineral exports. This concept meshes with Xi and Putin’s plans for a new Silk Road rail artery across Eurasia. Several of the rail projects covered in the Russo-Mongolian agreements directly impact Sino-Russian rail cooperation. This includes electrification and construction of a second track for the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) rail from Mongolia’s northern border with Russia through the planned Sainshand minerals processing industrial zone in the Gobi to Zamyn Uud on the Chinese border. The cooperation also includes potentially exploring development of a western Mongolian railway line joining Russia and China for Russian exports to China, India and Pakistan, as well as researching the possibility of using the 230-kilometer (143-mile) Choibalsan-Erentsav eastern railway to transit via Bichigt to China (see *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, September 12).

Mongolia Reassures “Third Neighbors”

Mongolia also sought to balance its increased cooperation with China and Russia by reassuring its democratic partners and foreign investors. After Xi’s and Putin’s trips were announced in July, President Elbegdorj met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo to sign an economic partnership agreement (EPA) and discuss security and regional issues (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 22). Afterwards, while Xi was in Ulaanbaatar, a delegation from the Japanese-Mongolian Friendship Group of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party visited the Mongolian parliament. Parliament Speaker Zandaakhu Enkhbold told them that “developing cooperation and friendly relations with Japan is one of the major goals of the foreign policy of Mongolia and it places high priority on developing strategic partnership relations with ‘Third neighbor’—Japan” (Mongolian Parliament, August 20). The day Xi arrived, Mongolia announced that South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se would travel to Ulaanbaatar on August 26–27. During his visit the next week, Yun met with Elbegdorj, Mongolian Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag and Foreign Minister Lu Bold and explained that South Korea welcomed cooperation with Mongolia in the rail and sea transport sectors and in economic and investment collaboration (see also *China Brief*, March 30; InfoMongolia, August 26).

Follow up Meeting at SCO Signals Closer Trilateral Cooperation

China and Russia’s deepening relationship, especially regarding Mongolia and greater Eurasia, was reaffirmed at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Dushanbe on September 11–12. Xi stated that China’s Silk Road Economic Belt initiative could be coordinated with Russia’s transcontinental rail plan and Mongolia’s Prairie Road program to build a China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor. He asked the three sides to achieve this goal by strengthening traffic interconnectivity, facilitating cargo clearance and transportation and studying the feasibility of building a transnational power grid (*The Mongol Messenger*, September 19; Mongolian President’s Office, September 11). At the SCO meeting, President Elbegdorj announced there would be a meeting in Ulaanbaatar on implementing the Railway Transit Transportation agreements just signed among the three governments and a working group established to study

opportunities to stretch the “Western Corridor of Natural Gas,” Elbegdorj’s concept for linking Central Asia’s natural gas fields to China and South Korea, through Mongolia (Mongolian President’s Office, September 11).

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Prior to the opening of the SCO, Xi and Putin held trilateral talks with Elbegdorj to discuss his proposal to hold an official trilateral summit every three years in Ulaanbaatar. Elbegdorj trumpeted the historical significance of his discussions with the two others as “unique in terms of content and format of the summit in that it was held for the first time in the history of the three countries, except for a three-partite meeting held almost a century ago at the level of vice foreign ministers” (*The Mongol Messenger*, September 19). Xi and Putin both indicated interest in this idea but each proposed other possible venues and timing. Putin stated that: “Things discussed at this meeting create the appropriate mechanism to discuss and resolve the largest projects to be implemented by us in the future, and we agreed to promote our cooperation in this regard” (*The Mongol Messenger*, September 19).

Xi’s trip to Mongolia and offer to the Mongols to participate in his “China Dream” initiative was seen in Mongolia as a positive attempt to polish China’s image as a peaceful and generous neighbor interested in working to improve economic and political relations with Mongolia and in the entire Northeast Asian region. The Xi summit, followed by the Putin summit and Dushanbe trilateral summit, raised the profile of President Elbegdorj, who has been increasingly criticized for the drop in his nation’s growth rate from 12.3 percent in 2012 to 7.4 percent in the first quarter of 2014 a precipitous falloff in foreign investment. The plethora of agreements with both China and Russia to improve Eurasian transportation connections through Mongolia also could benefit “third neighbors,” especially Japan and South Korea, and meet Mongolia’s goal to diversify its trade partners. Yet, it is not clear that closer Sino-Russian-Mongolian economic and political ties will reassure Mongolia’s restless foreign investor community.

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