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In This Issue:

Jiang Zemin (right) played an influential role in the behind-the-scene politics leading up to the 18th Party Congress. (Credit: Xinhua)

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In a Fortnight

A SPOILED ANNIVERSARY: CHINA REACTS TO CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE CONTROVERSY

By: Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga

On September 27, Chinese President Xi Jinping celebrated "Confucius Institute Day," commemorating the 10-year anniversary of the first Institute's founding in November 2004, in South Korea. Yet this self-congratulatory atmosphere was clouded by increasing criticism of the Confucius Institute program in the United States, which hosts the largest number of Institutes worldwide. The Chinese media's reaction has cast this criticism as politically motivated by insecurities stemming from the United States' decline, as well as a hypocritical double standard of cultural exchange—even linking the issue to conspiracies about U.S. involvement in the ongoing Hong Kong protests.

Celebrating 10 Years of Getting to Know Us Better

The Chinese media extensively covered the 10-year anniversary throughout the month of September, culminating in a *People's Daily* front page article featuring President Xi's congratulatory remarks that "Confucius Institutes belong to

China and the world" (*People's Daily*, September 28). As Xi proudly recounted, there are now 456 Institutes in 123 countries worldwide, along with 713 Confucius Classrooms (the primary school equivalent), which have taught a combined total of approximately 850,000 students. This includes 16 more Institutes and eight new countries added just this year.

Despite the Institutes' heritage as part of former president Hu Jintao's campaign to develop and project Chinese soft power abroad, President Xi has taken up the mantle as a proud sponsor. During his trip to Europe this March, he visited a Confucius Institute in Germany, and Xi attended a signing ceremony to establish an Institute in Brazil during his tour of South America this July (*Guangming Daily*, March 30; Hanban, July 25). During his visit to the Institute in Germany, Xi reflected upon the Institutes' raison d'etre: "Some people are biased against China, and this is mainly out of unfamiliarity, estrangement and misunderstanding" (*Guangming Daily*, March 30). While President Xi has not made a direct link between the Institutes' soft power agenda and his "China Dream" initiative, Vice Premier Liu Yandong told an anniversary event, "Nowadays, Confucius [Institutes have] become the 'soul high-speed railway' connecting peoples of different countries and a colorful tie linking the Chinese Dream and people's dreams in other countries" (CCTV, September 27).

U.S. Host Institutions Reconsider Cooperation

Several U.S. universities and academic organizations have stepped away from their affiliation with or support of the Institutes since this summer. In June, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) released a report calling for "universities [to] cease their involvement in Confucius Institutes" (AAUP, June). The AAUP stated that host universities had "sacrificed the integrity of the university and its academic staff," since the Institutes "advance a state agenda in the recruitment and control of academic staff, in the choice of curriculum, and in the restriction of debate." On September 25, just two days before its own planned celebration for "Confucius Institute Day," the University of Chicago said it had decided to "suspend negotiations for the renewal of the agreement for a second term of the Confucius Institute" (University of Chicago, September 25). Lastly, on October 1, Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) announced it would end cooperation with the Institutes at the end of the year, saying, "several of our goals are not consistent with those of the [Institutes]" (Penn State, October 1). These announcements follow years of criticism from university faculties and concerned parents in the United States and the rest of the world.

United States Has Lost Its Confidence

The Chinese media's reaction was alternatively surprised, incensed and conspiratorial. The main response to the announcements came on October 6, when the *Global Times* published a diatribe against American cultural imperialism. Wang Dehua—who in September decried the Japanese cartoon character Doraemon—explained that the "closures," timed during China's National Day holiday, were a "strong signal of U.S. resistance to Chinese culture, and the background is that the United States is declining and China is rising" (*Global Times*, September 26; *Global Times*, October 6). Rejecting perceived U.S. concerns over the "Confucius Institutes [serving] as the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) propaganda branch, with the purpose of spreading the CCP's ideology and thus violating academic freedom," Wang accused the United States of a double standard by conflating academic freedom with more general freedoms: "In fact, American culture can freely enter other countries, but other nations' cultures cannot freely enter the United States" (*Global Times*, October 6).

Wang's response was likely so bombastic because of the tense atmosphere surrounding the Hong Kong protests and the necessary increase in xenophobic content for the nationalistic *Global Times*. Wang claimed that the "ban" on Confucius Institutes was because a part of the U.S. intelligentsia "lacks confidence in their culture and their system," as, when compared to China's long history, "the United States' pirate culture is only 200 years old […] and they feel ashamed and scared!" Addressing the protests in Hong Kong, Wang said that the Hong Kong-America Center at the Chinese University of Hong Kong was actually a U.S. consulate-backed training base for the Occupy Central protesters.

U.S. Criticism is Political

While the Chinese media's response to the universities was sensationalist but limited, its response to the AAUP's

June call for ending all cooperation was much wider and more focused at reassuring a domestic audience. The *People's Daily* published first with an article featuring interviews with directors of Institutes in nine countries, all contending that their Institutes never had issues with academic freedom and that the AAUP's accusations were "wholly wrong," "preposterous and laughable" and "stemmed from political motives" (*People's Daily*, June 20). The article further described the purpose of the Institutes as promoting cultural exchange and understanding, reflecting their mission statement. Later that day, the *Global Times* addressed the AAUP's statement by listing several common rebuttals (*Global Times*, June 20). The article claimed: the Institutes are similar to other Western programs; all cultural promotion is political; the United States is insecure, adopting a double standard and a "Cold War" mentality; and the United States' concerns are out of ignorance about China. Two days later, Xinhua published a commentary by a former teacher at an Institute in the United States, who described "the truth about U.S. Confucius Institutes" (Xinhua, June 22). The author asserted that academic freedom was not an issue because the author had discussed "Chinese democracy" and "non-Western style democracy" with students at his Institute.

The media's efforts to couch criticism of the Institutes as politically motivated indeed reflect a larger insecurity within the Chinese political system. A May 2012 directive from the U.S. Department of State that addressed visas issued to Chinese teachers at the Institutes was explained as a backlash driven by U.S. "concerns" about the success of the program and political considerations in the run-up to the 2012 presidential election (Department of State, May 17, 2012; *Global Times*, May 24, 2012). This June's *Global Times* article went to the extreme for every point—the U.S. decision to "refund" the indemnity from the Boxer Rebellion and use the money to found Tsinghua University was "political;" Western education in China was "political and ideological, and even related to the military;" the U.S. fear of the Institutes was "a continuation of McCarthyism;" and, taken together with the U.S. "Rebalancing to Asia" and indictment of five People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers, was a "political move" (*Global Times*, June 20).

Learning From "Growing Pains"

Meanwhile, the Chinese media has also attempted to take the criticism in stride. A 2012 *People's Daily* article recounted the Institutes' "unavoidable growing pains" as part of the process of addressing misconceptions and obstacles, since "some Western countries see Confucius Institutes as political vassals" (*People's Daily*, December 19, 2012). While the Chinese media has yet to address the core difference between other countries' programs and the Institutes—namely that only China places the Institutes directly within schools—the article did concede that "entering the education system is seen as the Confucius Institutes' opening to 'enter' [the host country]."

At the same time, this indicates that the Chinese government is aware of the root cause of the criticism—the program's close government ties—but is unwilling to allow the Institutes to become independent and grow on their own. It appears that for all of the importance Xi Jinping's "China Dream" places on China having confidence in itself, the leadership is far from ready to let the country's soft power flow from the people, not the Party.

Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga is the editor of China Brief.

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Testing the Limits: China's Expanding Role in the South Sudanese Civil War

By Zhou Hang

South Sudan relapsed into war on December 15, 2013, primarily due to the power struggle between South Sudan President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar. China once again found one of its sizable foreign investments—particularly in the oil sector—embroiled in local political turbulence. This serves as a painful reminder to Beijing that independence not only endowed South Sudan with 70 percent of unified Sudan's total oil output, but also daunting political and security risks.

Beijing's conflict resolution efforts in South Sudan were widely applauded by the international community until the delivery of the first consignment of a $38 million order of arms from China North Industries Group (NORINCO) to Juba, South Sudan's capital, in June, which called into question China's neutrality in the peace process (*Sudan Tribune*, July 17). The reported statement by the Chinese embassy in Juba on September 20 that NORINCO would halt the remainder of its arms contract, in addition to the Chinese Foreign Ministry's announcement of the deployment of a full infantry battalion to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), signals a renewed—and hopefully more consistent—commitment to the uneasy peace process. An independent South Sudan, just as the unified Sudan before, is likely to remain a testing ground for China on how to balance its policy of non-interference and the urgent need to protect fast-growing overseas interests (See also *China Brief*, December 17, 2010; *China Brief*, August 12, 2011).

China's Stake in South Sudan

Since South Sudan gained independence in 2011, bilateral economic engagement has grown rapidly. The bilateral trade volume, although largely insignificant to China, almost quadrupled in 2013 to $2.54 billion, representing roughly 18 percent of South Sudan's GDP (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March). Oil continues to feature as the most important component of this bilateral economic relationship. At full capacity, South Sudan would account for approximately 5 percent of China's imported oil (*Wenweipo*, October 8). However, oil production has so far been heavily encumbered by political turmoil both within and beyond South Sudan. Juba shut down oil production for 15 months until this April, due to a row with Khartoum, Sudan's capital, over transit fees. Amid the ongoing conflict, South Sudan's oil production stands at 160,000 barrels per day, a one-third drop since the fighting broke out (Reuters, June 6). Unity state's oil production was again completely shut down by the Greater Pioneer Operating Company (GPOC), in which China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) controls a 40-percent stake. All the oil is now pumped from Blocks 3 and 7 in Upper Nile state, operated by the Dar Petroleum Operating Company (DPOC) in which CNPC has a 41-percent stake.

About 140 Chinese companies are currently registered in South Sudan and the traces of their involvement in non-oil sectors are increasingly perceptible, particularly in infrastructure construction and telecommunication (Xinhua, October 8, 2013). However, the unresolved conflict overshadows this burgeoning expansion of economic cooperation and the potential developmental benefits that should result from it are unlikely to be realized any time (African Arguments, September 12).

China's presence in South Sudan is also a human one. The Chinese embassy in Juba estimated that around 2,300 Chinese citizens resided in South Sudan prior to the conflict (People's Daily Online, December 23, 2013). Thanks to a growing awareness of political risks and preparedness for emergency response that accrues with experience, Chinese enterprises and the local embassy have undertaken swift and timely evacuations in South Sudan (People's Daily Online, December 16, 2013; *Legal Evening Daily*, December 22, 2013; Xinhua, December 24, 2013). The first reported case in which the security of Chinese nationals was compromised occurred on December 17, 2013, when South Sudanese forces evacuated 12 Chinese workers trapped in a quarry near southern Juba (Xinhua, December 19, 2013). The Consular Department of the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a security notice on December 19 and advised that unnecessary staff should be evacuated (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 19, 2013). One day later, CNPC decided to evacuate personnel in non-key and non-productive positions (CNPC, April 25).

Chinese Peacekeepers: More Helpful in Protecting Its Nationals

China's significant stake in South Sudan motivates its participation in the peacekeeping mission there to an unprecedented level. Despite initial resistance from some United Nations diplomats during the negotiation of UN Security Council Resolution 2155, which reprioritized the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) toward the protection of civilians, China succeeded in garnering support to charge the beefed-up peacekeeping mission with responsibility to protect the civilian populations at oil installations (Foreign Policy, June 16). In early September, Beijing decided to contribute a full infantry battalion of 700 soldiers to UNMISS, the first ever Chinese battalion to a peacekeeping operation. This is in addition to the 350 Chinese peacekeepers—mainly engineering units, medical staff and liaison officers—already deployed in South Sudan, which have been helpful in providing medical assistance to both local refugees and other peacekeepers, as well as lending logistic support to international humanitarian organizations (China Military Online, May 26; *PLA Daily*, January 16; China News Service, September 10; China Military Online, October 8). The total Chinese commitment to UNMISS—over 1,000 peacekeepers—will make UNMISS China's largest peacekeeping mission, surpassing the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

China's efforts to secure the arrangement in Resolution 2155 confirms the link between its overseas interests and its participation in UN peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, China's dispatching of combat troops as peacekeepers indicates Beijing's willingness to fully explore all available means under the UN umbrella to protect its overseas interests. In fact, this also dovetails with China's domestic mainstream view that its participation in peacekeeping missions constitutes an effective way to protect its overseas interests, especially when Beijing still lacks long-range projection capabilities and does not intend to move dramatically away from its longstanding policy of non-interference (Ministry of Public Security, May 5, 2010; China National Radio, July 4, 2013).

Some South Sudanese officials suggest that Chinese troops will be deployed to protect "vital installations" in the oil-rich Unity and Upper Nile states, which reinforces the mercantilist interpretation of China's proactive engagement with UNMISS (Bloomberg, September 10). However, the UN mission denied this speculation and emphasized that it will only be called upon to protect civilian oil workers in case of emergency, according to the purview of Resolution 2155 (*South China Morning Post*, September 11). Meanwhile, Beijing claims that the timing and areas for the deployment of its combat forces is still under discussion (Xinhua, September 25).

So far, there is scant empirical evidence to suggest that Chinese peacekeepers are being dispatched to protect any nation's oil infrastructure. A closer look at the map of current UNMISS deployments reveals that they are now concentrated not in oil-rich states, but in Wau of Western Bahr el Gazal state (UNMISS, September). Their presence in South Sudan, however, does bring about tangible benefits for the protection of Chinese nationals. To begin with, the peacekeepers play an important role in enhancing prevention measures and crisis-response planning. In cooperation with Chinese enterprises and the local embassy, Chinese peacekeepers located 31 Chinese living around their mission areas near Rumbek, Wau and Aweil, and they established a working group to make daily contact with these compatriots to ensure a quick emergency response in case of crisis (Xinhua, January 3; *China Police Daily*, December 25, 2013). The peacekeepers also continue to try to raise security awareness among Chinese nationals who refuse to leave the country amid conflict, by arranging security exercises and emergency training, and providing them with food in case of spply shortages (People's Daily Online, February 14).

Additionally, Chinese peacekeepers can assist with evacuating Chinese nationals. They have more updated and first-hand information on the security situation through their attachment to the UN mission, from whom Chinese companies and the local embassy benefit significantly when it comes to making informed decision on whether and when to carry out an evacuation. For instance, CNPC had close contact with Chinese peacekeepers when it decided to only maintain a minimum presence of staff in Blocks 3 and 7. On December 18 2013, Chinese peacekeeping police evacuated three trapped Chinese construction workers to a nearby UN camp and arranged them to take a UN flight from Bor to Juba one day later (Luzhou News, February 26; Xinhua, December 22, 2013). Within the first two months of the conflict, Chinese peacekeepers helped evacuate a total 15 Chinese

nationals out of South Sudan (People's Daily Online, February 14).

China's Noticeable But Limited Role in Mediation

In addition to the unprecedented deployment of an infantry battalion as UN peacekeepers, China's diplomatic involvement in South Sudan is characterized by an active and constant presence in the on-going Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led mediation process, markedly different from its previous diplomacy in other countries' domestic disputes. **[1]** Beijing's more hands-on approach emerged shortly after the outbreak of conflict, as Foreign Minister Wang Yi set a proactive tone for China's role. He made his first public comment on the conflict in South Sudan during his visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in late December 2013, and stressed that China would "make active efforts in its own way to promote peace talks" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 26, 2013). On January 6, during his first trip to sub-Sahara Africa, Wang met with representatives of the South Sudanese warring parties in Ethiopia and said that he was "ready to directly engage" both parties to end the fighting (Bloomberg, January 7). This attempt to diversify diplomatic outreach and engage with all the key players—including those fighting against the incumbent government—is significant and increasingly commonplace in China's crisis diplomacy, as previously seen in China's mediation roles in Darfur and Syria (*SIPRI Policy Paper No.41*, June). Most recently on September 22, Wang Yi met with a high-level delegation from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) in Beijing, which, according to the South Sudanese rebels, was intended to "prepare the ground for" their leader's visit to China (Xinhua, September 24). It is also noteworthy that this invitation was extended directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, different from the invitations extended to the Syrian opposition by the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA), which is a semi-official organization affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aimed at enhancing exchanges between foreigners and their Chinese counterparts.

The main implementer of Beijing's mediation efforts, however, appears to be its Special Representative on African Affairs, Ambassador Zhong Jianhua. Prior to Wang's visit to Africa, Ambassador Zhong was sent to Kenya to attend a special IGAD session on South Sudan on December 27, 2013 and also visited South Sudan and Ethiopia afterwards. One of the key goals for his trip was to establish direct contact with the rebels to express China's willingness to promote peace talks and to request the protection of Chinese nationals and investments in rebel-controlled areas (CCTV, January 3). Since then, Zhong has paid two more visits to the region and met with both domestic and regional stakeholders to promote the stalled peace process.

Chinese embassies in Juba and Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, also tried to facilitate the peace talks. Based on the announcements on the website of China's embassy in South Sudan, China's Ambassador to South Sudan, Ma Qiang, has visited the South Sudanese President, Foreign Minister and Minister in the office of the President at least 13 times since December 2013. China's Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, Xie Xiaoyan, reportedly joined his Western counterparts to call on the South Sudanese factions to "get your act together" after the signing of the first cease-fire on January 23 (Reuters, June 5). Most recently, given the frequent breaches of cease-fires and the stalled negotiation over the transitional government, Xie made palpable his dissatisfaction by criticizing the negotiations for moving at a "snail's pace" and saying the international community was "worn out" (AFP, August 4). Furthermore, media reports suggest that diplomats from both Chinese embassies have joined efforts to monitor the cease-fire agreements (Reuters, February 11).

Despite Beijing's diplomatic activism, caution is needed against an overly optimistic estimate over the depth and width of its involvement in the resolution of the South Sudanese conflict. China is only playing a secondary role to IGAD and Troika countries behind the mediation process. **[2]** Beijing's decision to primarily rely on regional organizations, such as IGAD, to lead peace talks between the warring parties, despite important Chinese interests at stake, highlights the continuity in China's approach to solving disputes far beyond its border. This is partly because China is still in the formative stages of participation in similar mediation processes, and partly due to Beijing's belief in the regional countries' better contextual understanding of the situation.

Conclusion

China's diplomatic efforts to address the ongoing conflict should be first understood against a larger backdrop of growing awareness within the Chinese government of its potential role in African peace and security—which was most recently evident in the announcement of the China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security in 2012, during the fifth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) (FOCAC, July 23). Meanwhile, the need for the Chinese government to protect its significant investments and nationals—whose security is intricately linked with local political dynamics—pulls and encourages Beijing to adopt a more engaged foreign policy. China's responsibility to its own interests abroad is likely a much more decisive factor in the country's stepped-up role in South Sudan when compared with calls by IGAD members and Ethiopia to be more actively involved as a crucial stakeholder. South Sudan, as with the previously unified Sudan, will continue to be a critical test case for stretching the boundaries of Beijing's diplomacy in order to protect its nationals and economic interests in crisis zones overseas.

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Notes

1. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional grouping of Uganda, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. It currently leads the peace talks between the South Sudanese warring parties in Addis Ababa.

2. The Troika comprises of the United States, United Kingdom and Norway. They were particularly involved in supporting and advancing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) process that brought an end to Sudan's civil war in 2005. They now play a significant role in supporting the IGAD-led peace talks.

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An Overview of Chinese Fighters and Anti-Chinese Militant Groups in Syria and Iraq

By Jacob Zenn

In July, Western media reported that China's Middle East envoy, Ambassador Wu Sike, estimated that as many as 100 Chinese citizens are believed to be members of the Islamic State organization (previously known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq (Xinhua, July 29). **[1]** While most of these Chinese citizens are most likely Muslim Uyghurs from Xinjiang Province, a survey of photographic and video evidence suggests that there are also ethnic Han Chinese fighting in Syria and Iraq as well. It is likely that not all Chinese fighting in these two regional conflicts are with ISIS, but rather are part of other rebel factions, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Some of the Chinese in Syria and Iraq may also not even be "fighters" as such, but perhaps could simply be adventurers or dissidents who see "joining" the rebels as a personal way of demonstrating their disagreement with the Chinese government because they believe Beijing is wrongly supporting the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.

Although the estimate of 100 Chinese represents a higher number than can be corroborated in open-source research, the number is proportionate when compared to foreign fighters from other Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have more than 125 fighters combined; and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have more than 400 fighters combined (Daily Star [Beirut], September 26; Financial Review [Canberra], June 10; Geopolitical Monitor, September 18). Yet, what makes the Chinese "foreign fighter" situation in Syria and Iraq distinct from other Asian countries is not only the prospect that they could one day return home to pose a threat to China's domestic security, but that China has the capability to respond with political and possibly military force to combat ISIS should it seek to pursue this goal. Thus far, however, China has shown no signs that it will follow the lead of Western countries and attack ISIS in Syria or Iraq.

The purpose of this article is to present several profiles of Chinese citizens fighting in Syria and Iraq, including the expatriate Uyghur militant organizational presence in

these two countries, and the reasons why China will avoid becoming entangled in Syria and Iraq.

Chinese Citizens in Syria and Iraq

In October 2012, Chinese government officials, including Major General Jin Yinan, first alleged that militants from "East Turkistan terrorist organizations" were joining anti-government rebels in Syria (China Radio, November 1, 2012). These Chinese government claims were not corroborated by visual evidence until March and April 2013, when the first videos of Chinese rebels emerged.

The first video was released by Liwa al-Mujahideen al-Ilami (the Mujahideen Media Battalion), which was the media arm of the predominantly Russian-speaking "Immigrant Battalion," whose Chechen leaders later formally joined ISIS. It showed a Han Chinese man, Bo Wang, who used the Islamic name of Yusuf al-Sini, holding a Kalashnikov rifle and speaking in fluent Mandarin Chinese (YouTube, March 18, 2013). He said he converted to Islam after reading Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood forefather Sayyid Qutb's writings on the Internet and then travelled to Libya to study Arabic. He joined Libya's anti-government rebels when the Libyan civil war started in 2011, and after the "new Libya was born," he travelled to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad's government forces. He also said that Muslims and Arabs have long been friends of the Chinese but would now attack the "Chinese economy" in revenge for China's and Russia's blocking of international aid to the Syrian people and supporting al-Assad politically, economically and militarily.

The second video was posted on YouTube in April 2013 by the user "Al-Nusrah Front" and entitled "Prayer by a Chinese Jihadist in the Land of Epics [The Levant]." The video featured a group of rebels from the FSA repairing a projectile weapon. A bearded militant, who appears to be ethnically Uyghur (as opposed to Han or Hui), is referred to by a Syrian rebel as the "Chinese Man" and leads a prayer asking God to support Muslims against "the infidels" (YouTube, April 18, 2013).

A third YouTube video of a Chinese-born national and naturalized New Zealand citizen in Syria was filmed in November 2012 and other photographs of him were released in 2013 (YouTube, November 23, 2012). It featured Chen Weiming, who has also been referred to by a Muslim name of Muhammed Chen, driving around parts of Aleppo with the FSA. In one of the videos, he chants "Allahu Akbar" and explains that the Chinese people and the Syrian people are both fighting for freedom, while also criticizing the Chinese government for supporting Bashar al-Assad's government. Other videos and photos show him criticizing the Chinese government and spending time with men and children who were displaced by the fighting in Syria (Boxun, October 14, 2012). In Syria, Chen, a sculptor of well-known political figures, including Barack Obama, and a pro-democracy activist, wore a shirt displaying the Statue of Liberty, which is notable considering the anti-Americanism of many rebel factions. However, the shirt likely symbolized Chen's own anti-Chinese government attitudes, as the Goddess of Democracy—a figure reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty—was also a major icon during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, when Chen was around the age of a university student.

Finally, on September 5, two photographs were published on the Facebook account of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense claiming that an injured Chinese national was taken captive during a battle with ISIS in northern Iraq (Iraqi News, September 5). These photos were later reposted by various media-affiliated websites and microblog accounts in China, but there was no further corroboration of this individual's identity. Some Chinese website commentators suggested he was Chen Weiming or Bo Wang, or possibly a Japanese fighter, but the appearance of this fighter was different than both Chen and Wang—and no word on his status has since emerged. Chen also appeared in Los Angeles in June and proved that he was alive (Radio New Zealand, June 11).

Anti-Chinese Groups in Syria

In addition to Chinese fighters, there are also anti-Chinese militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq, which are issuing anti-Chinese propaganda. This supports Major-General Jin Yinan's statements that "East Turkistan [a term that jihadists use to refer to Xinjiang] organizations are taking advantage of the Syrian civil war to obtain experience and raise the profile of Xinjiang among jihadists from other theatres" (China Radio, November 1, 2012).

The main anti-Chinese militant group is the Pakistan-based and Uyghur-led Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). The TIP has carried out several attacks in Xinjiang and claimed or praised many others, including the suicide car bombing in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in October 2013, mass stabbing attacks at train stations in the southeastern

cities of Kunming and Guangzhou this March and May, respectively, and the double suicide bombings at the train station in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, in April (see also *China Brief*, May 23).

The TIP first showed interest in the Syrian civil war with articles in its magazine, *Islamic Turkistan*, which it publishes in Arabic and has issued roughly quarterly since 2008 (see also *Terrorism Monitor*, March 17, 2011). In the 11th edition, which was released in October 2012, the TIP wrote an article called "Oh, Chinese and Russian Regimes, the Arab People's Revolution Will Never Forget You Shameful Stances," which criticized the Chinese and Russian governments for standing against the revolutions in the Arab world, particularly the Syrian revolution (Islamic Turkistan, October 2012). In the 12th edition, which was released in February 2013, the TIP wrote another article titled "The Truth Has Supporters as the Tyrant Has Soldiers," which again criticized the "atheist" countries of Russia and China that "always fight against Muslims" and support the "tyrant" government of Bashar al-Assad. The article also said that "if China has the right to support Bashar al-Assad in Syria, then we have the full right to support our proud Muslim Syrian people" (Islamic Turkistan, February 2013).

In February, the TIP issued its first video offering "advice" to fighters in Syria and comparing the situation of "oppressed Muslims" in Xinjiang and Syria (Sawt al-Islam, February 8). Several months later, the TIP issued its first video purporting to show its fighters in Syria (Sawt al-Islam, June 7). The video, however, only featured an Arabic speaker and several dozen armed and masked militants training in a desert area with new black uniforms, so there was no proof that the militants were ethnically Uyghur or Chinese citizens. The video also appeared around the same time that the TIP adopted a new logo and new uniforms for its fighters in Pakistan and the ethnic Uzbek Imam Buhari battalion in Syria had issued similarly styled videos. This raises questions concerning a link between the TIP's activities in Syria and China, including possibly channeling fighters and funding between the two organizations.

It also appears that some Uyghurs have used their long-standing connections to Turkey to enter Syria, where they have joined rebel groups after carrying out humanitarian operations. The Turkey-based Uyghur organization Eastern Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association (ETESA)—which praised several militant attacks and the assassination of a pro-Communist party head imam in Kashgar in June and features TIP materials on its website—carried out several aid missions into Syria to show "solidarity" between the people of East Turkistan and Syria (*SCMP*, September 29; ISTIQLAL TV, July 31). Some of the Uyghurs in ETESA could have immigrated from China to Turkey—legally or illegally—and then used falsified Turkish documents to enter Syria and live in rebel-held areas where no documentation is required (see also *China Brief*, September 10). In addition, if Uyghur fighters are captured by the Syrian government as Turks, it would be preferable for them to be handed over to the Turkish rather than the Chinese government, for which the punishment for joining the rebels would likely be death. There is a precedent for this. When four Uyghurs were arrested in the town of Poso on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi in August while visiting the pro-ISIS militant group, Mujahidin Indonesia Timor (Mujahidin of East Indonesia, or MIT), the Uyghurs were using Turkish passports and identified themselves as Turks (*Straits Times*, September 15). Perhaps not by coincidence, many of the Indonesians who are fighting in Syria entered the country by way of affiliations with humanitarian organizations.

Beijing Busy at Home: Non-Interference Abroad Remains Default Policy

Considering China's 1.4 billion population, including roughly 15 million Hui Muslims and 12 million Uyghur Muslims and numerous dissidents, there are likely to be at least several hundred Chinese citizens attracted to ISIS's ideology or the Syrian rebels' cause. The blowback to China from returnees thus far, however, has been minimal. The Chinese government has reported that returnees from Syria were involved in some small scale attacks in Xinjiang, while others who were unable to obtain permission from China to leave the country and travel to Syria carried out attacks within China (Radio Free Asia, June 28, 2013; *Global Times*, July 1, 2013). However, Uyghur-led terrorist attacks in China since 2013 appear to be mostly homegrown. In order to contain the growing insurgency in Xinjiang the key issue for Beijing is to crack down on foreign sponsors of Uyghur militants from abroad and groups, such as the TIP, which incite Uyghurs to violence in China by providing training and other forms of propaganda. In addition, a major challenge for China is how to develop policies in Xinjiang to prevent disaffected Uyghurs from recruiting others to support their cause and launch new attacks.

Much to the chagrin of Western commentators, the Chinese government has pursued its optimal policy in Syria and Iraq—maintaining its long-standing non-interference policy and instead concentrating on more pressing issues closer to home. From Beijing's perspective, a theoretical policy reversal to oppose al-Assad in Syria would not necessarily lead to his defeat and would alienate countries that China depends on for energy resources, such as Iran and Russia (The Diplomat, September 15). Even if the Syrian government were defeated by the rebels, this could provide more opportunities for Uyghur and other anti-Chinese militants to train with victorious rebels groups, such as ISIS, for attacks on China. On the contrary, if China overtly supports the Syrian government with weapons, it would likely create a further anti-Chinese backlash from the jihadist groups and possibly incite more attacks inside China.

Conclusion

Due to the complexity of the conflicts, China will likely abstain from deeper involvement in the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq, even though the instability in these two countries will continue to provide fertile ground for Chinese militants. Beijing may also strengthen its efforts to prevent Uyghurs from leaving China by taking steps to further increase its monitoring of Uyghurs, including withholding their passports and staying alert for possible fighters returning from Syria who may intend to carry out attacks in China, even though this risks alienating Uyghurs who want to travel for personal or professional reasons. In addition, it could prompt disgruntled Uyghurs to carry out revenge attacks, which China claims has already occurred (see also *China Brief*, September 10). Implementing these measures alone is no easy task for Chinese intelligence and security officials, but it is still more feasible and far easier to handle than intervening in Syria or Iraq with the hope of crushing the local insurgent movements, which could have a huge unforeseen outcome for China, not too mention dangerous blowback.

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Notes

1. On July 1, 2013 the state-run *Global Times* first reported that "an anti-terrorism official told the *Global Times* in an exclusive interview that about 100 people […] had travelled to Syria to join the fighting alongside Syrian rebels since last year" (*Global Times*, July 1, 2013).

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China's Silk Road Strategy: A Foothold in the Suez, But Looking To Israel

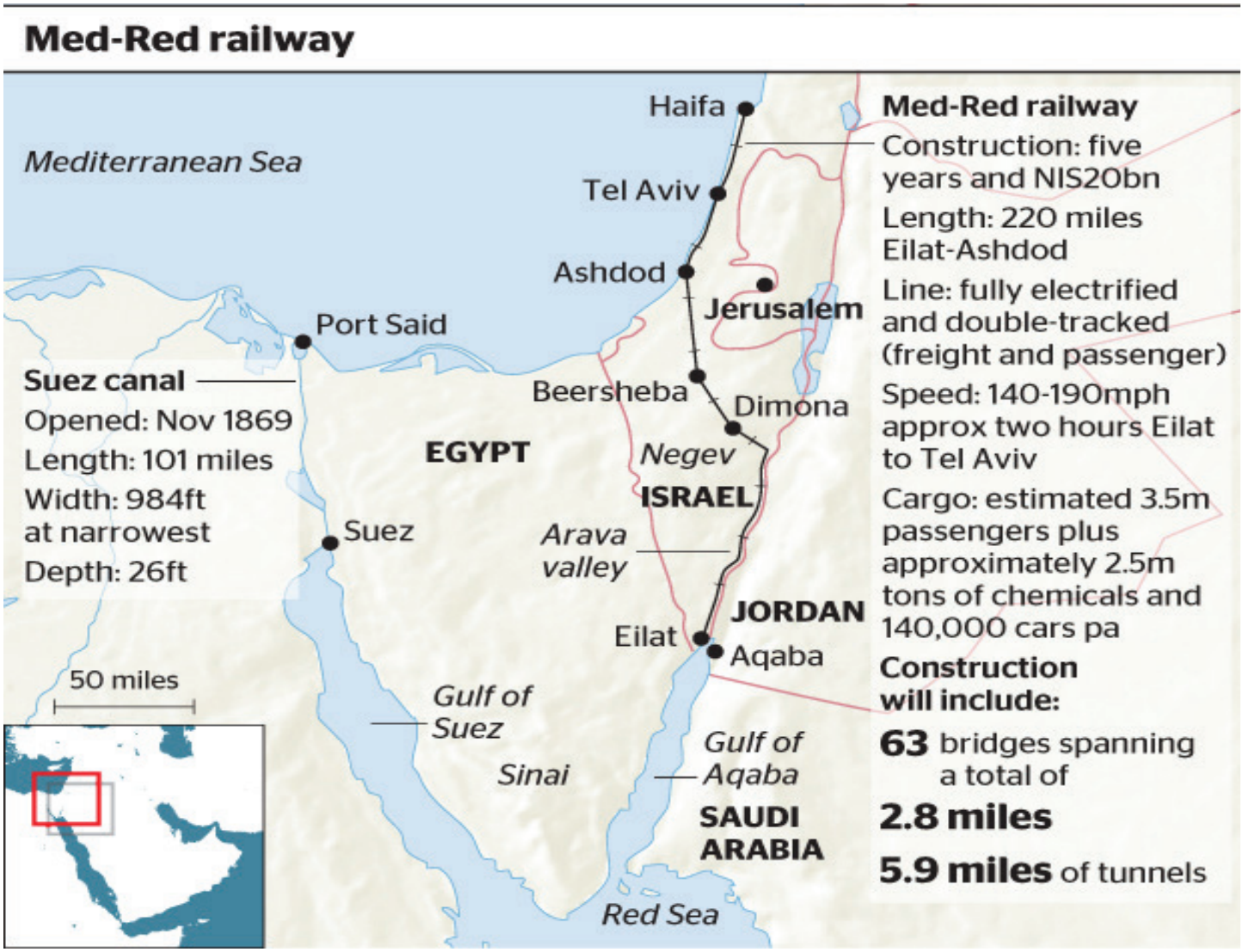
By Emma Scott

China plans to develop a Silk Road economic belt that spans the Eurasian continent and a maritime Silk Road that links the Pacific with the Indian Ocean. We can see on a map that the two Silk Roads will cross in the Middle East region, which spells excellent opportunities and bright prospects for common development and common prosperity for China and the region's countries.

– Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 14).

The Silk Road narrative espoused by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi evokes China's strategy of developing linking transportation nodes between maritime port terminals and inland rail networks throughout Eurasia, including across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With the overall purpose of carving out new export markets, this Silk Road strategy simultaneously seeks to develop large-scale transportation infrastructure construction projects for China's state-owned enterprises (SOE) and create transportation routes to export products to foreign markets. Furthermore, as China's national development has become increasingly dependent on maritime commerce to reach the global marketplace, Beijing has sought to minimize the risk of shipping disruptions by reducing its dependence on any single route through developing a variety of transportation corridors.

In order to ensure reliable access for Chinese commercial shipping from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, the Chinese government has adopted a dual-track approach, simultaneously expanding its interests in the Suez Canal corridor while also pursuing a land-based route through Israel. For its preferred maritime strategy, China's state-owned shipping companies have invested in ports along the Suez Canal Corridor, from the Gulf of Suez to



A map of the two routes China is pursuing in the Suez Canal and the "Red-Med" Railway. (Credit: *The Times*)

Port Said in Egypt. For China's alternative land-based route, Beijing is pursing the "Red-Med" rail project, which completely avoids the Suez Canal by traversing Israel from Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba to Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean. These two routes position China to realize its goal of the two Silk Roads meeting in the MENA region.

High Stakes in the Suez Canal

Beijing's current reliance on the Suez Canal for shipping Chinese exports to Europe represents an increasing risk to the continued growth of China's economy. Prior to the Arab Spring in 2011, China invested heavily in the Suez Canal corridor and considered the Canal its primary access point to Europe, China's largest export market. In 2008, COSCO Pacific, China's largest shipping SOE, invested $185.6 million in a joint venture to operate and manage the Suez Canal Container Terminal (SCCT) in Port Said East Port, located in the western Sinai peninsula at the northern end of the Canal (Cosco Pacific Announcement, December 11, 2008). For this port's second development phase, operating since 2012, state-owned China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC) invested $219 million to construct a 1,200-meter quay (CHEC Press Release, November 8, 2008). CHEC also completed a contract valued at $1 billion to construct a quay in al-Adabiya port at the southern entrance to the Canal (CHEC, 2009).

The overthrow of Egypt's longtime strongman ruler Hosni Mubarak during the Arab Spring in 2011 turned the economic and security risks of China's overdependence into a reality when Chinese cargo ships were severely delayed in the Suez Canal. Ain Sokhna, al-Adabiya and

Port Said East Port experienced intermittent closures, causing a severe container backlog and preventing, on one occasion, Chinese ships from working for over ten days (Port Technology, February 11, 2011; Daily News Egypt, July 11, 2011; Daily News Egypt, December 20, 2012). A representative from China Shipping said that on other occasions their ships were diverted to the Israeli ports of Ashdod, 24 miles south of Tel Aviv, and Haifa, 55 miles north of Tel Aviv (Author's Interview, Port Said, February 26, 2013).

Beyond shipping delays, the turmoil following the removal of Mohammed Morsi from power further increased security risks to ships using the Suez Canal. On August 31, 2013, China's *COSCO Asia*, one of the company's newer and larger vessels, came under fire from two rocket-propelled grenades 30 miles south of Port Said at al-Qantarah, after leaving Suez Port on the southern entrance to the Canal (Egypt Independent, September 1, 2013). The al-Furqan Brigades, who claimed responsibility, said they carried out the attack because the Suez Canal "has become a safe passageway for the Crusader aircraft carriers to strike the Muslims, and it is the artery of the commerce of the nations of disbelief and tyranny" (The Long War Journal, September 7, 2013). China's policy of support for the long-standing military regimes in MENA and unfounded accusations that a PLA Navy (PLAN) escort fleet transited the Canal to supply arms to Bashar al-Assad illustrates a sense of enmity towards China (Al Arabiya News, July 30, 2012; QQ, July 27, 2012; *Global Times*, July 30, 2012). While little damage to the ship was reported, the event underlines the risk of shipping disruptions that the Chinese government seeks to minimize through its dual land and sea strategy.

Yet, China has redoubled its bet on the Suez even after the recent turmoil. According to a representative from China Shipping, a third development phase is underway, which would constitute an extension of Port Said West Port (Author's Interview, Port Said, February 26, 2013). Furthermore, Zhenhua Port Machinery Company, a subsidiary of China's state-owned Communication Construction Company (CCCC), secured a large-scale infrastructure project for U.A.E.'s Dubai Port World Sokhna under development alongside the China-Egypt special economic zone on the Gulf of Suez (Port Technology, July 12, 2012). China proceeded with a $416 million investment in a second contract, for construction of a cargo terminal at al-Adabiya port (Chinese Embassy in Egypt, July 17, 2012). China is also considering the Suez Canal Regional Development Project (SCRDP), which includes the addition of a parallel channel to the Canal, as well as the construction of sub-sea tunnels under the Canal (Daily News Egypt, September 16; Foreign Ministry, August 14).

Seeking an Alternative Route Through Israel

The "Red-Med" railway through Israel represents China's efforts to address its overdependence on the Canal and create a viable backup plan to ensure reliable passage for Chinese commerce from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and on to Europe. The railway, a proposed twin-track, one for passengers and one for cargo, is expected to hurtle through Israel's Negev desert at speeds of 155–185 miles per hour (*Global Times*, July 5, 2012). Of the total 217-mile distance, a passenger track of 55 miles from Tel Aviv to Beersheva has already been completed by an Israeli SOE, Netivei Israel; this line will then be connected to an existing track that runs from Beersheva to Dimona, and thereafter a further 150-mile track that has yet to be built will run to the port of Eilat on Israel's Red Sea coast. This "Red-Med" railway will support China's ambitions to carve out Israel as an export market, as it will allow shipping containers coming from China to be transported via the railway to Israel's interior (Globes Online, July 13, 2011; Globes Online, July 20, 2012).

However, extensive engineering challenges and the railway's high projected cost are potentially prohibitive issues for the project's successful completion. In total, the railway would include 63 bridges extending two miles and five tunnels totaling five miles, raising questions about the project's feasibility (Globes Online, February 29, 2012; Globes Online, October 6, 2013). Current cost estimates range from $8–13 billion, and since transportation of goods by rail is more expensive than by sea, the long-term profitability of the project is not assured (Globes Online, October 6, 2013; Globes Online, May 26, 2013).

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomes China's railway plan, as long as China is willing to pay for it. China's Transport Ministry has been in talks with its Israeli counterpart since Israel opened the project to

public bidding in late 2010, and the two Ministries signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in July 2012, paving the way for the official negotiations (Globes Online, July 3, 2012). For Israel, China's involvement in the project would bring Chinese funding, provided by the state-owned Import-Export Bank and a Dubai-based investment company, as well as a Chinese construction company to lead development (Al Monitor, October 22, 2013). For Beijing, this government-to-government agreement would provide China export credits, boost its construction SOEs and create employment opportunities for Chinese nationals abroad. Yet, some in the Israeli government oppose the deal, so it is still in the early stages.

One part of China's Silk Road strategy in Israel that is for certain is a project to connect the railway to Israel's Mediterranean ports of Haifa and Ashdod. In June, CHEC won the pre-qualification stage of two tenders, after submitting unbeatably low-priced bids, to build one new port in either Haifa or Ashdod, and ultimately decided to build South Ashdod port (Globes Online, June 23). While COSCO Container Lines already offers a transatlantic service from Haifa and a trans-shipment service from Ashdod to Europe's Mediterranean ports, this new project illustrates China's ambitions to fortify its Silk Road in Israel. At the signing ceremony, China's Ambassador to Israel, Gao Yanping, said, "This project will effectively open up the Israeli market to China" (The Times of Israel, September 23).

However, China's alternative strategy through Israel still poses similar risks to that of the Suez Canal in Egypt. In January, a Sinai-based jihadist group named Ansar Jerusalem claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the city of Eilat, and on July 7, as the Israel-Palestinian conflict began, a German cruise ship was showered with shrapnel from a Hamas rocket after leaving Ashdod port (Xinhua, January 22; *The Guardian*, July 8). Nevertheless, China continues to pursue projects in Israel.

Toward a Modern Silk Road: China Pursues a "Dual Approach"

China's interest in the ambitious "Red-Med" railway appears to have crystallized after the numerous threats to its interests in Suez since 2011. As Zhang Le, China program coordinator for the U.S.-based non-profit Israel Project, maintained, "The railway has strategic significance because it will also provide a land-based passage for Chinese cargo to Europe, in addition to the Suez Canal" (*Global Times*, July 5, 2012). China's Minister of Transportation Li Shenglin said that the signing of the MOU would set "a new stage" for cooperation between the two countries' transportation companies (*Global Times*, July 7, 2012). Reflecting his country's view of China's involvement, Netanyahu said, "We have the ability to create an alternative transportation route that bypasses the Suez Canal—this is an insurance policy. Israel must become a continental land crossing route and create great power interests" (Prime Minister's Office Press Release, February 5, 2012).

Israel's proposal for the "Red-Med" railway must also compete with a number of other similar projects seeking Chinese funding around the world. CHEC and the Chinese-Panamanian Office of Business Development have expressed interest in constructing a fourth set of locks in the Panama Canal beyond the current expansion expected to be completed in 2015 (Xinhua, August 6). Furthermore, a Chinese businessman won a 50-year concession for $40 billion to construct an inter-oceanic Nicaragua Canal (Xinhua, June 13). While further development of the Suez Canal and additions to the Panama Canal constitute upgrades to existing projects, the Nicaragua Canal is much more of a long-standing dream than a solid feasible engineering project (*Christian Science Monitor*, January 22).

China's Future Still Depends on the Suez

Despite Beijing's pursuit of alternative routes beyond the Suez Canal, China will likely remain dependent on it for the foreseeable future, due to its large capacity that is needed to accommodate the growing size of cargo ships. The biggest advantage of the Suez Canal over the Panama Canal is that the former is wider, allowing the passage of larger ships, which Chinese companies value for their economies of scale. The Suez Canal and the SCCT are already capable of handling the world's largest container ship, the *Malaccamax*, an 18,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) vessel, tipped as the future global norm. Upon completion of the expansion currently underway, the Panama Canal will only be able to accommodate 12,500-TEU ships. The size of China Shipping's largest ship is currently 14,000 TEU, already too large for the

Panama Canal (China Shipping Turkey, 2014). Thus, Chinese companies will likely remain dependent on the Suez Canal as they follow global trends toward larger ships in the future.

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Political Factions and Spicy Ginger: Elder Networks in PRC Politics

Part 1: The Patronage Network of Jiang Zemin

By John Dotson

Jiāng shì lǎo de là (姜是老的辣): "Aged ginger is spicier"

Chinese proverb meaning that older people possess more experience and wisdom.

When the new senior leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was revealed to the world following the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, most outside observers were stunned by the extent to which officials linked to former CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin dominated the leadership transition. Although formally retired from all offices for eight years prior to the Congress, Jiang was evidently able to muster enough clout to place protégés in six of the seven seats of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), the Party's top policy-making body. By contrast, outgoing General Secretary Hu Jintao—by formal position, the top official in the Party—secured a PBSC seat for only one of his followers, PRC Premier-designate Li Keqiang (*South China Morning Post*, November 16, 2012).

The outcomes of the Party Congress raised questions anew regarding the interaction of formal and informal authority at elite levels of the CCP—and particularly, the continuing influence of "Party elders" on matters of leadership succession. "Party elders"—senior CCP officials who are officially retired, but remain politically active—have wielded a powerful voice in Chinese politics over the past three decades. **[1]** This was particularly true of a core group of senior officials sometimes referred to as the "Eight Immortals"—centered on Deng Xiaoping, and also including powerful figures such as Chen Yun, Li Xiannian, Yang Shangkun, and Bo Yibo—whose revolutionary-era credentials and high-level Party relationships allowed them to exert a strong influence on major policy decisions throughout the 1980s and 1990s. **[2]**

The influence of these figures was given semi-official status by the creation of a "Central Advisory Commission" (*Zhongyang Guwen Weiyuanhui*) of Party elders in existence from 1982 to 1992, with Bo Yibo—father of jailed former Politburo member Bo Xilai—assigned an early leading role (*People's Daily*, September 13, 1982). However, the true power of these men lay in their personal authority and connections within the Party and the military, as displayed during leadership deliberations in the lead-up to the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre. The crucial debates leading to the final decision for the crackdown were dominated by Party elders who made decisions outside of formal channels of authority, resulting in the sacking of CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and the employment of the PLA against pro-democracy protestors. **[3]** Deng himself attributed the Party's survival amidst the Tiananmen crisis to resolute actions taken by his fellow elders, stating that the timing of the "counter-revolutionary rebellion" was fortunate, as "we [still] have a large number of veteran comrades… [who] have experienced many disturbances and understand [how to] deal with them" (Deng Xiaoping's Works, June 9, 1989).

Party elders today may not act as the *de facto* shadow government once represented by Deng Xiaoping and his fellow "Immortals," but they remain influential figures. Retired senior-ranking CCP cadres—particularly, former members of the Politburo—retain a number of privileges, to include bodyguard protection, special housing, and staff support (Andrew Nathan and Bruce Gilley, *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files*, 156, 184). They also maintain access to, and the right to comment on, major policy documents and deliberations (*Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2012). More importantly, within the highly personalized realm of CCP politics, patrons retain significant influence over younger protégés and are

Throughout the tenure of CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao, there were occasional public signs of the continuing influence of Jiang Zemin in the Party hierarchy: Here, Jiang (center right) stands alongside Hu (center left) in the middle of CCP Politburo Standing Committee members viewing the parade celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. (Credit: Xinhua)

in a position to shape the membership of the CCP's top policy-making institutions. **[4]** Elders of lesser rank, while not enjoying the perquisites or the clout of more senior figures, may still seek to leverage their moral authority on policy debates: One such example was seen in 2010, when a group of 23 retired officials (including Li Rui, former personal secretary to Mao Zedong) issued an open letter criticizing the CCP Central Propaganda Department and calling for greater freedom of expression (Bloomberg, October 13, 2010).

Too often, discussion of CCP Party elders treats them as a monolithic and faceless group. However, the CCP's most influential elders are colorful individuals, with sometimes sharply contrasting views on policy and the future course of Chinese society. An examination of the CCP's Party elders, their patronage linkages to younger officials and the extent of their behind-the-scenes influence is long overdue.

The Patronage Network of Jiang Zemin

The elder with the greatest clout in PRC politics is former CCP General Secretary **Jiang Zemin** (age 88). Jiang was himself appointed to the Party's highest offices amid the 1989 Tiananmen crisis on the personal authority of Deng Xiaoping and fellow elders, bypassing formal party institutions(Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, *The Tiananmen Papers*, pp. 308–312). Jiang remained in the shadow of the elders early in his tenure, and for a period in the early 1990s Deng considered replacing Jiang as General Secretary—just as Deng had sacked Jiang's two predecessors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang . Jiang survived in part due to his solicitous attitude toward the elders, with Li Xiannian and Bo Yibo acting as particularly important patrons (*China Since Tiananmen*, p. 67). At one point, PBSC member and Jiang rival Li Ruihuan reportedly mocked Jiang's cultivation of the surviving Eight Immortals as "ancestor worship" (Bruce Gilley and Andrew Nathan, *China's New Rulers*, p. 165). Jiang only came into his own as a more independent figure in the mid-1990s, as he consolidated power in the Party bureaucracy and as Deng and other leading elders either died or were sidelined by age.

Although Jiang stepped down as General Secretary in 2002, and from his last official post as Chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission in 2004, he was reportedly very reluctant to retire. Pressed into retirement, Jiang would have preferred to designate his right-hand man, Zeng Qinghong, as his successor: However, Hu Jintao had been deep-selected by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s, tying Jiang's hands in the lead-up to the 16th Party Congress in 2002 (Zheng Yongnian, *The Chinese Communist Party as Organizational Emperor*, p. 80; U.S.-China Commission, March 2012). Despite this restraint imposed on Jiang by the ghost of Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao's *ex officio* authority was circumscribed throughout his tenure by Jiang's enduring influence—and Hu himself bent over backwards to show deference to Jiang, as demonstrated by his slavish public efforts to promote

Jiang's political theories (Kerry Brown, *Hu Jintao*, p. 49–50; *China Leadership Monitor*, Fall 2003).

Jiang's most significant legacy may well be the current tenure of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping. Some unconfirmed sources have indicated that Hu Jintao made an attempt prior to the 17th Party Congress in 2007 to have his protégé Li Keqiang designated as successor to the post of CCP General Secretary, but that he encountered resistance from "retired leaders such as Wan Li, Jiang Zemin, Song Ping, Qiao Shi and Liu Huaqing, most of whom suggested Xi [as a] more suitable" choice than Li Keqiang to be the designated General Secretary-in-waiting (*China: An International Journal*, March 2009). During his time as *heir apparent*, Xi Jinping made ostentatious efforts to flatter and cultivate Jiang Zemin as a patron: For example, in an October 2009 meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Xi made a public show of presenting her with copies of two books published under Jiang's name (Xinhua, October 13, 2009). **[5]**

Li Peng as an Ally of Jiang Zemin

Arguably the most influential elder remaining from the Deng Xiaoping era, **Li Peng** (86) has acted as a political ally of Jiang Zemin on major issues over the past two decades. Li was PRC Premier from 1987–1998, and then served as Chairman of the National Peoples' Congress (NPC) from 1998 until his retirement in 2003. Li Peng is a stalwart of the conservative "left" wing of the CCP: as a PBSC member in 1989, he was one of the staunchest advocates of the use of force, and has maintained a hardline voice against political liberalization in the years since. He has also been a supporter of firm state control over the economy, and during his tenure as premier took a go-slow approach to the restructuring of state enterprises (Yongnian Zheng, *Globalization and State Transformation in China*, pp. 90–93).

Although nominally subordinate to Jiang Zemin's status as the "core" leader of the CCP's third-generation leadership, in the early years of Jiang's tenure Li reportedly treated him in a dismissive fashion. Li also limited Jiang's freedom of action in some policy areas: For example, as head of the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (LSG), Li's voice trumped that of Jiang's on foreign policy matters through most of the early 1990s (*China's New Rulers*, p. 173). However, Li Peng's attitude and actions shifted throughout the decade, as the second-generation elders gradually passed from the scene and Jiang shored up his position as Party leader. Li benefitted from Jiang's successful maneuvering to retire Qiao Shi in 1997, as Li assumed the NPC chairmanship vacated by Qiao's retirement. Li Peng returned the favor by backing Jiang in 2002 as the latter resisted calls from within the Party for his full retirement, thereby allowing Jiang to control the military for two more years (*China's New Rulers*, pp. 72–73).

From retirement, Li Peng may be expected to weigh in against any initiatives that might weaken the CCP's monopoly on power. His greatest personal concerns are likely ensuring that the Party's official verdict on Tiananmen remains unchanged, and that his children—some of whom occupy powerful and lucrative positions in the electric power and insurance industries—are protected from corruption investigations. **[6]**

In this, Li Peng will be assisted by his longtime protégé **Luo Gan** (79), who since retirement in 2007 has become an elder in his own right, albeit on a lesser tier of influence. Luo is a former PBSC member and director of the Politics and Law LSG from 2002–2007. Luo has been described as the "temple guardian for the legacy of Li Peng," who would firmly oppose any effort to revise the official verdict on the events of 1989 (*China's New Rulers*, p. 109).

Jiang's Protégés

Jiang wields influence through an extensive patronage network of officials—many of whom, such as Premier Zhu Rongji, NPC Chairman Wu Bangguo and Vice-Premier Huang Ju, rode Jiang's coattails from the Shanghai Party apparatus to high offices in the central government. Jiang's most powerful protégé is **Zeng Qinghong** (74). In the later years of Jiang's tenure, Zeng held a trifecta of offices—director of the CCP Central Committee General Office (1993–1999), head of the CCP Organization Department (1999–2002) and chair of the CCP Secretariat (1997–2007)—that placed him at the center of elite-level Party affairs and made him a powerful political fixer for his patron.

Zeng continued this role throughout the decade-long tenure of Hu Jintao—acting formally as head of the

Party affairs portfolio in the 16th Politburo Standing Committee from 2002–2007, and informally as the leading active member of Jiang's "Shanghai Gang" patronage network. **[7]** Although Hu Jintao and Zeng have reportedly enjoyed a good working relationship, Zeng's influence represented a powerful alternative center of authority to that of the Party's official senior leader. This was particularly true regarding senior-level appointments early in Hu's tenure, in which "Zeng made personnel decisions and Hu could only approve them" (*China's New Rulers*, 91). Zeng Qinghong was reportedly a pivotal kingmaker in the backroom bargaining prior to the 17th Party Congress, which resulted in Xi Jinping's advancement to pole position in the contest for the Party's top office (*Duowei*, November 5, 2007; *China: An International Journal*, March 2009).

Other PBSC members who retired following the 16th and 17th Party Congresses also now enjoy elder status, albeit at a lower level of influence: They remain part of Jiang's political machine, rather than independent figures in their own right. Former PRC Vice-Premier **Li Lanqing** (82) appears to possess limited influence. Other figures who acted as political fixers for Jiang, and who possessed stronger bases of bureaucratic support, are likely to remain more influential. In the late 1990s, **Jia Qinglin** (74) worked to consolidate Jiang's control of the capital's Party apparatus following the purge of Beijing Party boss Chen Xitong, and Jia has remained one of Jiang's most loyal supporters. Jia may be particularly beholden to Jiang for shielding him from corruption investigations pertaining to Jia's tenure as Fujian Party secretary (*China's New Rulers*, pp. 124–125). Former propaganda czar **Li Changchun** (70) similarly became a close supporter of Jiang during the 1990s, and as Guangdong CCP Secretary from 1998–2002 worked to bring the province's independently-minded Party bureaucracy to heel (*China's New Rulers*, pp. 118–119).

Former NPC Chairman **Wu Bangguo** (73) is another prominent figure who emerged from the Shanghai Party apparatus, where he served as the city's CCP Secretary in the early 1990s, to enter the top echelon of CCP leadership. Wu is one of Jiang's more powerful lieutenants: As NPC Chairman he held a formal rank second only to Hu Jintao, and in terms of informal authority he likely stands behind Jiang and Zeng as the third most powerful elder of the "Shanghai Gang." Although Wu rode Jiang's coattails to power, he possesses more independent standing than some other members of the Shanghai faction who owe their positions entirely to Jiang. Like Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, Wu was one of the Party cadres flagged as part of Deng Xiaoping's "Four Transformations" effort to promote promising younger officials, and he was appointed as Shanghai's youngest nominee to the 12th CCP Central Committee in 1982 (*China's New Rulers*, pp. 104–105).

Wu also enjoys a good relationship and common views with Li Peng. Wu worked under Li Peng in the State Council from 1995–1998, where he walked a fine line between serving Li, Zhu Rongji, and Jiang Zemin (*China's New Rulers*, p. 106). As a vice-premier in charge of state industries in the late 1990s, Wu shared Li Peng's cautious approach to the reform of inefficient state enterprises, out of both sympathy for local officials and concern for potential social unrest. His approach also reflected concern for the authority of the CCP, with Wu stating that "the Party must absolutely not lose its political leadership powers with regard to the enterprises," and that CCP committees "should take part in the decision-making in the enterprises with regards to key issues" (Krug and Hendrischke, *The Chinese Economy in the 21st Century* pp. [11–12]. Such stances, although reflective of the thinking of Li Peng and Jiang Zemin, sometimes brought Wu into tension with the more impatient and forward-leaning Zhu Rongji, who led economic reforms in the 1990s (*China Leadership Monitor*, Winter 2002; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Politics of China*, pp. 515–516).

Wu is also a political conservative in the mold of Li Peng. Over the past decade, Wu has been one of the CCP's most outspoken opponents of political reform, as exemplified by his 2011 declaration of the "Five No's"—no to multiple parties holding power; no to diversification of the Party's ideology; no to a separation of powers between branches of government; no to a federal model of government; and no to privatization of the economy (BBC, March 10, 2011; Sujian Guo, *Chinese Politics and Government*, p. 118). From retirement, Wu Bangguo may be expected to align with Li Peng, Luo Gan, Jiang Zemin and other conservative elders opposed to any diminution of the CCP's monopoly on power, or to any reassessment of the Tiananmen legacy.

Activities by Jiang Zemin Allies in the Lead-Up to the 18th Party Congress

The leadership transition of the 18th Party Congress in November 2012 held high stakes for the future direction of government policy, as well as the personal interests of many senior CCP power-brokers. In the months preceding the Congress, a number of elders reemerged into public view in an apparent bid to increase their profile—and presumably, their political influence—prior to the transition.

Li Peng was one such elder who stepped out from behind the curtain of retirement in 2012. In June, a CCP publishing house published "Li Peng on Macroeconomics," a selected collection of the former premier's reports, speeches and conversation notes dating from 1984–2006 (Xinhua, June 26, 2012). In early August 2012—just as the Beidaihe leadership conference was getting underway—the *People's Daily* ran a full-page article praising Li Peng's legacy of economic management (*South China Morning Post*, August 7, 2012). Immediately prior to the opening of the 18th Party Congress, Li Peng appeared in the news again for making a donation of three million *renminbi* ($500,000)—supposedly using proceeds earned from his books—to a university scholarship fund for students from Yan'an, the headquarters of the CCP from 1937 to 1947 (*South China Morning Post*, October 31, 2012).

Other, less influential elders also took steps prior to the 18th Party Congress to make symbolic indications of factional loyalty. **[8]** In late October 2012, Chinese media featured unusual stories praising an obscure song titled "Moonlight and Shadows," with the background story that Jiang Zemin had contacted former vice-premier Li Lanqing to seek his assistance in obtaining sheet music for the song. Li Lanqing published an article in *People's Daily* describing his exchanges with Jiang on the matter, and effusive commentary offered on a state-run television channel stated that "[t]his beautiful romantic song, for it to be able to reappear, [and] for us to be able to remember it, all the credit should go to our comrade Jiang Zemin" (*Caixin*, October 31, 2012; *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 2012).

The elder who adopted the highest public profile prior to the Congress was Jiang Zemin himself. This followed earlier uncertainty regarding his health and continuing clout: In July 2011, rumors spread that Jiang Zemin had died or was gravely ill after he failed to appear at celebrations marking the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CCP. However, in October of that year, state media made a point of showing a frail-looking Jiang appearing at ceremonies commemorating the centennial of the fall of China's last imperial dynasty. Cheng Li of the Brookings Institution called Jiang's scripted re-appearance "highly political," and interpreted it as a sign that "retired top leaders […] want to have more say on the country's economic policy, political succession and foreign relations" (*Straits Times*, May 17, 2012). In February 2012, PRC state media announced the publication of foreign language editions of the second volume of Jiang Zemin's selected works (Xinhua, February 18, 2012). In the mid-autumn weeks preceding the congress, Jiang conducted a significantly higher number of public appearances, including a September concert in Beijing, where he was accompanied by Zeng Qinghong and former vice-premiers Li Lanqing and Zeng Peiyan; an early October meeting with the president of Shanghai Ocean University; and an appearance at the 110th anniversary of his high school (*Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 2012; *South China Morning Post*, October 12, 2012).

These moves coincided with persistent rumors that Jiang and other elders were actively involving themselves in the behind-the-scenes deal making preceding the Congress. Candidates particularly favored by Jiang reportedly included Yu Zhengsheng, Zhang Dejiang, Zhang Gaoli and Wang Qishan, all of whom were elevated to seats on the PBSC (*New York Times*, November 7, 2012; *Washington Post*, September 26, 2012). At the opening of the 18th Party Congress itself, Jiang occupied a prominent seat next to serving CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao (*South China Morning Post*, November 9, 2012). As stated by Christopher Johnson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "My sense of the games that Jiang is playing is, 'This is my last hurrah, and I want to show that I still matter' " (*New York Times*, November 7, 2012).

Jiang's enduring political clout—alongside that of other elders such as Li Peng and Song Ping—was a contributing factor in shaping the conservative politics of the Hu Jintao era. Hu's tenure saw considerable continuity with that of Jiang—in terms of both resistance to any political

reforms that might dilute the CCP's monopoly hold on power, as well as a determination to maintain the Party's control of key pillars of the economy. Jiang's influence and the checkered pasts of many of his protégés were also likely factors in the limited and highly selective nature of corruption investigations throughout the past decade. As Hu himself has now entered formal retirement and become an elder in his own right, he will have his own opportunities to influence policy behind the scenes—an issue to be addressed in the next article in this series.

This is the first of a two-part series of articles examining the role of retired senior officials in elite-level Chinese politics. Part 2 of this article will address the loose coalition of elders aligned with Hu Jintao, and offer assessments on the likely future influence of elder figures in Chinese politics.

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Notes

1. Terms commonly used in Chinese are *zhengzhi yuanlao* (政治元老), "political elders;" and *lao tongzhi* (老同志), "old comrades."

2. The "Eight Immortals" were: Deng Xiaoping, Bi Yibo, Chen Yun, Song Renqiong, Peng Zhen, Wang Zhen, Li Xiannian and Yang Shangkun. For more analysis of their families and history, see: Bloomberg, December 26, 2012.

3. For two accounts of how retired CCP elders dominated elite-level decision-making regarding the Tiananmen crisis, see: *The Tiananmen Papers*, pp. 256–264, 308–314; and Pu, Chiang, and Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, *pp.* 25–34.

4. For a detailed, empirical study of advancement in the CCP, see: *American Political Science Review*, February 2012.

5. For commentary on the significance of this event, see: *Elite Chinese Politics and Political Economy Blog*, October 15, 2009; and *Asia Sentinel*, October 13, 2009.

6. For commentary regarding Li Peng's concerns for the Tiananmen verdict, see: *The Guardian*, May 29, 2012. For a sample discussion of the business interests of Li's children, see: *Asia Times*, August 17, 2007; and *The Telegraph*, October 10, 2013.

7. The continued dominance of Jiang's followers in the new Standing Committee indicates that Jiang Zemin, and to a lesser extent Li Peng, have remained more powerful figures behind the scenes than many realized (U.S.-China Commission, March 2012; *China Leadership Monitor*, Winter 2001).

8. For discussion of the tradition in CCP politics of praising a leader's writings, speeches or cultural tastes as a means of signaling loyalty, see: *Journal of Politics*, October 2008.

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