

China's "New Diplomacy" under the Xi Jinping Administration

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Abstract: Since the establishment of the Xi Jinping administration, China's diplomacy has undergone significant changes while adopting many legacies of the previous times. It has increasingly manifested the diplomatic thinking of a great rising nation, strategic designs which keep pace with the times, and strong measures to tackle new challenges as well as to promote favorable changes for China's continuing development. With a review of the historical background and current situations faced by China, this paper closely examines the innovations and improvement of China's diplomatic thinking, the characteristics of China's current diplomatic strategy, and the new features of China's diplomatic practice. It is concluded that, despite the large advance in China's diplomatic thinking, strategies and practice, they need to be further theorized, institutionalized and operationalized, in order to fulfill the varying tasks under the rapidly changing domestic and international environments.

Keywords: China's diplomacy; diplomatic thinking; major country diplomacy; exploration and innovation.

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The successful conclusion of the 18th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress in November 2012 marked a new era of China's diplomacy. Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee headed by Mr. Xi Jinping, China's diplomacy has undergone manifold explorations and innovations while adopting many legacies of the previous times. It has increasingly manifested the diplomatic thinking of a great rising nation, strategic designs which keep pace with the times, and strong measures to tackle new challenges as well as to expedite favorable changes for China's continuing development. As an important part of the diplomatic theory and practice with Chinese characteristics, such thinking, designs and measures call for further consolidation, development and improvement, so as to facilitate the realization of the "Two Centennial Goals,"¹ the "Chinese Dream" and the peace, development, and win-win cooperation of the world.

Necessity of China's "New Diplomacy"

The world is undergoing unprecedented great changes. As Mr. Cui Liru, a senior fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), defines, such "great changes" refer to "both the momentous consequences of the ongoing development of the world and, more importantly, the historic turning point or a radical shift during the course of world development."² Externally, China is facing dynamic global trends and the transforming strategic situations in Asia; domestically, the myriad tasks of reform and social development keep posing new challenges to the nation. Such external and domestic environments entail arduous explorations and innovations of China's diplomacy based on past legacies.

¹The "Two Centennial Goals" are two grand goals of the Chinese people under the CPC leadership, proposed at the Party's 15th National Congress on September 12, 1997. According to such goals, China's national economy will "be more developed and the various systems further improved" when the CPC celebrates its centenary in 2021; China will have become a "prosperous, strong, democratic and culturally advanced socialist country" by roughly 2049 when the PRC celebrates its centenary. Such goals have been reiterated at each and every CPC National Congress ever since.

²Cui Liru, "Guoji Guanxi Zhuanbian yu Zhongguo Waijiao Zhuanxing [Changing International Situation and the Transformation of China's Diplomacy]," *Journal of International Relations*, No. 4 (2014), p. 3.

First and foremost, China's diplomacy should better serve the nation's political, economic, social and cultural developments. After 35 years of reform and opening up, China boasts ever increasing national power and ongoing progress in political, social and economic systems. With such changes, China's diplomacy is increasingly intertwined with domestic political processes, which calls for more comprehensive diplomatic thinking, more opportune foreign strategies, more mature diplomatic practice, and more solid basis of understanding and support of the domestic public. In short, more efforts have to be taken to keep upgrading China's diplomacy so as to safeguard its core and vital interests, meet the demands of the great renewal of the Chinese nation, foster a more favorable external environment, and enhance its economic and social development.

Second, China's diplomacy must correspond to the dynamics of Asia's development. As a major country in Asia, China ought to make due contributions to the advancement of the continent.

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Since the turn of the twentieth century, Asia has undergone three historical stages, namely the awakening of nations, the independence of states, and their respective economic and political development. Piloting each stage were such great leaders as Gandhi of India, Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and Mahathir of Malaysia. After Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the CPC leadership consecutively under Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao has furthered Marxism to fit the real conditions of China and incrementally developed a theoretical framework of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In the meantime, the many Asian concepts proposed after WWII, such as "the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," "the Asian Values," "the Shanghai Spirit"³ and

³"The Shanghai Spirit" refers to a series of values and visions in international relations developed through the "Shanghai Five" process, the predecessor of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It features "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations, and pursuit of common development." Such values have formed the core of China's diplomacy over the past two decades.

"ASEAN Consensus," have endured the test of history and are winning recognition by other parts of the world. As the biggest driver of global economic growth and with the increasing political and strategic roles played by major countries and regional organizations, Asia is in ever greater need of new diplomatic thinking and practice that bears its own characteristics, in order to break off the Western monopoly over global politics for the past five centuries and bring international relations into a more just and equitable future.

Third, China's diplomacy is to mirror the lasting progress of developing nations. Developing countries not only constitute the majority of the world, but are a major driving force behind the dynamics of international relations. The Asian-African Conference in the 1950s and the "Bandung Spirit," as well as the "Non-Aligned Movement" and the "Group of 77" at later times, have all played a historic role in promoting the unity and collective progress of developing nations. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the vast developing world has been calling for the establishment of a more reasonable and just international system, and, by taking more strategic initiatives, has been seeking paths of development that take into consideration both the global trends and their respective situations. Nevertheless, developing nations as a whole have yet to set up an endogenous and overall diplomatic theoretical system, nor reach a common strategic goal and concerted policy measures, not to mention the lack of power of discourse and regulation commensurate to their increasing roles in the world. The fact that all developing nations need to increase their soft power also requires that major developing countries like China play a greater role in initiating new diplomatic thinking and strategies other than policy coordination in various global arenas.

Last but not least, China's diplomacy should enhance its contribution to the development of the world. As noted in the Report of the 18th CPC National Congress, "[t]he global trends toward multi-polarity and economic globalization are deepening. Cultural diversity is increasing, and an information society is fast emerging."⁴ In order to promote "positive energy" in international relations and achieve win-win results following such general trends of the world, new thinking, strategies and policies are to be

⁴"Report of the 18th CPC National Congress," *Xinhua News Agency*, http://www.xinhuanet.com/2012-11/19/c_113722546_11.htm.

developed by all nations, among which the multiple Chinese-advocated diplomatic theories and practices are drawing more and more attention from the international society. For different reasons, both developed and developing countries expect China to play a bigger role and undertake more responsibilities in global arenas, and, with its economic might, to add new insights to the ideological, cultural, theoretical and strategic repertoire of the world. Meanwhile, in order to make bigger contribution to peace, development, cooperation and win-win results of the world, China needs to deepen its theoretical explorations on issues of global significance and strengthen its global consciousness and awareness of its own responsibilities, as well as its confidence in helping to shape a more just and reasonable international system.

Innovations and Development of China's Diplomatic Thinking

Based on the legacies of the Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao times, China's diplomacy under the Xi Jinping administration has drawn many lessons from the diplomatic thinking of diverse nations, and exalted both Chinese and other outstanding cultures and traditions. As former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt points out, "With a close observation of him (Xi Jinping) since he took office two years ago, I've come to realize that Chinese senior leaders have largely altered their interest concerns and perspectives while holding on to the Chinese tradition in both domestic politics and in diplomacy."⁵ Indeed, facing the rapid changes of the economic, political, diplomatic, security, technological and social environments, both domestically and abroad, China's diplomacy does not only need to tackle various new issues and challenges, but, more importantly, calls for new perspectives and innovative thinking as well.

Development of the Diplomatic Thinking of Socialist China

China is a socialist country under the CPC leadership, thus the development of its diplomatic thinking naturally bears striking characteristics of a great socialist country of the East.

⁵"Former German Chancellor Schmidt on Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," Xinhua News Agency, http://news.xinhuanet.com/2014-12/03/c_1113508784.htm.

Above all, the realms of socialist China's diplomatic thinking have been ever expanding. Professor Su Changhe finds out that, while consolidating the material basis of diplomacy, the current leadership of China is "taking more efforts to build the intellectual basis. By enhancing Chinese people's confidence and encouraging the spirits of self-improvement, self-reliance and self-confidence in various international engagements, the Chinese leadership is building a common intellectual basis for performing China's diplomatic activities to its own discretion."⁶ To be more specific, China's diplomatic thinking has increased its relevance to the three key areas of the nation's socialist construction since Xi took power, namely deepening overall reforms, improving the governance system and capabilities, and rule of law, thus highlighting the linkage between domestic and international reforms, as well as the compatibility between domestic governance and global governance. Besides, with regard to the turbulences in West Asia and North Africa as well as the rising extremism and terrorism, China's diplomatic thinking is putting more emphasis on enhancing the overall security of the nation, the improvement of the governance system and capabilities, and the CPC's leadership over diplomacy. All these new approaches in diplomacy serve as valuable models and provide insights for other socialist countries, especially in the face of the vicissitudes in international arenas.

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Next, socialist China has attached new significance to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. During the early years of socialist China, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence jointly advocated by China, India and Myanmar helped the newly founded People's Republic to win much moral and practical support, and have since remained as a cornerstone of China's diplomacy. During the early post-Cold War period, the Five

⁶Su Changhe, "Xi Jinping Waijiao Linian Siguan [The "Four Outlooks" of Xi Jinping's Diplomatic Thinking]," *People's Forum*, No. 6, 2014, pp. 28–30.

Principles also played an important role in guarding socialist China's diplomatic essentials against Western pressures. Today, while expounding the Five Principles, socialist China insists on equality among all sovereignties, common security, common development, win-win cooperation, inclusiveness and mutual learning, as well as fairness and justice. The significance of such steadfastness, as Xi Jinping declared at the Conference Marking the 60th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, lies in the common wish "to explore ways to carry forward the Five Principles, promote the establishment of new-type international relations, and join hands in building a better world through win-win cooperation."⁷

Finally, the diplomatic thinking of socialist China is gaining new momentum by offering an alternative path of development to the world. China's diplomatic thinking under the Xi Jinping administration puts great emphasis on enhancing Chinese confidence in their own theories, system, path and values. As Xi Jinping pointed out at the 12th Collective Study Meeting of the CPC Central Committee Politburo, "The only key to solving China's problems is by exploring ways that best suit ourselves."⁸ With China's ongoing progress in domestic development and its rising global status, the Chinese path is offering to the pluralistic world a non-Western alternative that features new thinking and practice of a great socialist country, which is an invaluable contribution to our times.

Development of the Diplomatic Thinking of a Great Developing Nation

As a great developing nation, China has its political and diplomatic basis deeply rooted in the developing world, thus China's diplomatic thinking necessarily reflects the concerns and appeals of other developing nations.

Most importantly, it mirrors the diplomatic thinking of developing nations in Asia. The continent is mainly composed of developing nations, and China's diplomatic thinking to a large extent exhibits their collective appeals. At present, their common objectives are to enhance manifold regional or sub-regional cooperation, and strengthen their influence as well as

⁷"Xi Jinping's Address to Conference Marking the 60th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," *Xinhua News Agency*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-06/28/c_1111364206.htm.

⁸"The Only Key to Solving China's Problems is by Exploring Ways that Best Suit China," *Xinhua News Agency*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-10/13/c_1112807354.htm.

the status of Asia as a whole, in global political, diplomatic, economic and cultural affairs. Over the past three decades, China has regarded development, rather than engagement in an arms race, to be the primary goal of developing nations in Asia, and therefore proposes the concept that "Asian affairs should ultimately be managed by Asians themselves." Its many policies and advocacies such as enhancing the building of free trade zones and financial cooperation, accelerating interconnections of infrastructure and strengthening Asian values and the Asian Consciousness, greatly contribute to the unity of developing nations in Asia and serve as a good example for other Asian countries.

At the same time, China's diplomatic thinking reflects that of developing nations of the world as well. During the Cold War, developing nations of the world shared the diplomatic goal of promoting a more just and reasonable international order which culminated in the Non-Aligned Movement. Since the end of the Cold War, a vast number of developing nations have generally adopted the diplomatic thinking of "unity for strength" on both regional and functional levels, which is coming to fruition in the reconfiguration of the international system and world order. To foster a sense of common destiny, China has set up cooperative mechanisms with all developing regions including the many platforms between China and ASEAN as well as cooperation forums with Africa, Latin America and the Arab world. The "new concept of righteousness and interests" proposed by Xi Jinping on his visit to Africa in March 2013 also sheds light on China's engagement with other developing nations, as well as on the general relationships among all developing countries.

Furthermore, China's diplomatic thinking is also increasingly in tune with that of other major developing countries, too. The rise of major developing countries on the world stage, represented by the BRICS, marks a significant event in contemporary international relations. The institutional

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cooperation among China, Russia, India and Brazil (BRIC) was launched at the first summit meeting in June 2009, which later became BRICS when South Africa joined in December 2010. Since then, BRICS cooperation has been increasingly expanded and institutionalized, and has exerted increasing influence on the world. On such account, major developing countries were emphasized as a key element of China's "major-country relations" at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, a good example for future development and cooperation among major developing countries of the world.

Development of the Diplomatic Thinking of a Global Power

With its global-power status increasingly acknowledged by the world since 2008, China is making effort to enhance its diplomatic thinking so as to be able to adapt to the crucial transition moments.

With very limited national strength and global influence, China had been long confined to the edge of the world stage, and thus its diplomatic thinking was based on deliberations of "low cost, low risks and high returns." Congruent to its increasing status and role in the world, China is

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advancing its major country diplomatic thinking which has striking Chinese characteristics. To be more specific, in diplomatic philosophy, China advocates such pacifist concepts as "peace is most precious" and "a warlike power, big as it is, shall perish." In approaches to fulfilling diplomatic interests, China champions the spirit that "generosity brings more returns." In diplomatic practice, China reiterates its determination to undertake more international responsibilities with a major country vision in embracing and encouraging the common development of the world. Hence

the new concepts of "sharing the express train of development" and "happily accommodating other riders."

In the meantime, China is seeking to promote new theoretical paradigms and long-term visions of major country diplomacy. Traditional theory of big-power diplomacy, whose themes were focused on national

interests, big-power game, geopolitical and institutional competition as well as a winner-takes-all mentality, has been dominated by the West over the past five centuries and has, in turn, by and large served Western values and interests. With the many unprecedented proposals made by the new Chinese leadership, China takes many endeavors to construct a far-sighted theoretical framework for major country diplomacy in guiding principles, strategic planning and policy deliberations. In pursuit of the “Chinese Dream” and the “Asia-Pacific Dream,” China has put forward such new concepts as the China-Russia “joint strategic piloting role,” “new-type major-country relationship” between China and the U.S., and “great developing nations,” greatly enriching the theory and practice of China’s major country diplomacy with its own characteristics, especially from the perspectives of the changing times of the world, the new dimensions of international relations and the re-positioning of China.

In the information age, diplomacy is heavily dependent on effective communications. In its engagement in major country diplomacy over the past two years and a half, China has taken every opportunity to introduce its thinking on major country diplomacy so as to win more global understanding and support. For example, Xi Jinping emphasized at the end of 2013 that “we must put more efforts to refine and explicate the values and outlooks of modern China, and promote them by various means of international communications. The promotion of the Chinese Dream must go side by side with the advocacy for the values and outlooks of modern China.”⁹ In short, the promulgation of China’s thinking on major country diplomacy is conducive to introducing the Chinese culture and thoughts abroad, thereby winning increasing recognition by the world.

Characteristics of China’s Diplomatic Strategy Mirroring Modern Values

The main themes of the modern era are peace, development and win-win cooperation. With such goals and emphases, China’s diplomatic strategy bears many features of the times.

⁹Xi Jinping’s address to the CPC Central Committee Politburo at the 12th Collective Study Meeting on December 30, 2013.

Strategic Visions that Advance with the Times

Unprecedented opportunities have unfolded before China in world affairs since it became a leading country in the G20 in 2008 and the second largest economy in the world in 2010. In the meantime, China has increasingly become the center of strategic attention within international society, especially among other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping has reiterated the need for more strategic thinking, strategic concentration, strategic patience and strategic input.

On a ten-year timeline or even longer, China is actively managing its strategies toward specific countries, different regions and diverse fields on an ever more integrated platform.

Furthermore, he has proposed a whole set of strategic thoughts on the overall security of the world and China's overall diplomacy. With the increasing influence of its peaceful development and rapid rise on contemporary international relations, on a ten-year timeline or even longer, China is actively managing its strategies toward specific countries, different regions and diverse fields on an ever more integrated platform. In short, China is determined to take the precious opportunity to meet the trends of development of history while serving as an important driver for the trends at the same time.

New Insights for Promoting Inclusiveness, Mutual Learning, and Win-Win Cooperation

With regard to the new changes in domestic and international situations as well as of the global power structure, "inclusiveness, mutual learning and win-win cooperation" were greatly emphasized at the 18th CPC National Congress: "In promoting inclusiveness and mutual learning, we should respect diversity of civilizations and development paths, respect and safeguard the rights of all people to independently choose their social system and development path, learn from others to make up for our shortcomings, and advance human civilization. In promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, we should raise awareness about human beings sharing a community of common destiny." To highlight such empathy and win-win spirit, the Congress report further states, "A country should accommodate the

legitimate concerns of others when pursuing its own interests; and it should promote common development of all countries when advancing its own development. Countries should establish a new type of global development partnership that is more equitable and balanced, stick together in times of difficulty, both share rights and shoulder obligations, and boost the common interests of mankind.”¹⁰ Generally speaking, China has adopted three guiding principles in designing and implementing its international strategy: first, the principles of “no conflict” and “no confrontation” in building new-type major-country relationships as well as in promoting reforms of the international system and global order; second, the principles of “amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness” in promoting relations with neighboring countries, exemplified by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the SCO Development Bank, the “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” and the Silk Road Fund, interconnectivity and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) and Asian security cooperation, etc.; third, the principles of “sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith” in enhancing political and pragmatic cooperation with Africa and other developing countries.

Consolidation and Upgrading of China's Strategic Partnerships

The establishment of the China-Brazil strategic partnership in 1993 marked the beginning of a host of strategic partnerships for China's diplomacy. Over the past two decades such partnerships have kept growing, 13 of which have been upgraded into comprehensive strategic partnerships since 2013, including China's partnerships with Mexico (June 2013), Belarus (July 2013), Indonesia and Malaysia (both in October 2013), Algeria (February 2014), Germany (March 2014), Venezuela and Argentina (both in July 2014), Mongolia (August 2014), Australia and New Zealand (Both in November 2014), as well as Costa Rica and Ecuador (both in January 2015). While consultation, coordination and cooperation between China and its strategic partners are largely focused on the construction of the global or regional order, more and more security and military issues are being addressed, adding new dimensions to their partnerships.

¹⁰“Report of the 18th CPC National Congress,” *Xinhua News Agency*, http://www.xj.xinhuanet.com/2012-11/19/c_113722546_11.htm.

Construction of Multifarious Networks of International Relations

Bearing remarkable Chinese characteristics, the construction of China's diplomatic networks helps promote the networking of global affairs and international relations. Over the past two years and a half, China has upgraded its relationships with eight countries into all-round friendly and cooperative partnerships including the Republic of Congo and Tanzania (both in March 2013), Kenya (August 2013), Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (both in September 2013), Bulgaria (January 2014), the Netherlands (March 2014) and Maldives (September 2014). With the establishment of various partnerships with 67 countries and five regional organizations, China has been expanding its global partnership networks and increasingly actualizing its diplomatic thinking by the Chinese approach of "seeking partners rather than allies."¹¹ As Xi Jinping pointed out at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, "We should endeavor to maintain the opportunities and space for development, and to strengthen our closely-

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tied, mutually beneficial partnerships by continuing to extend economic and trade cooperation for win-win results. We must make as many friends as possible on the basic non-alliance principle, in order to form a partnership network that spreads across the world."¹² In the author's opinion, China's networking efforts are targeted at different groups of countries, with the mutually beneficial network mainly aimed at developed countries and the partnership network aimed at developing countries. In the future, China also needs to establish various networks for managing specific global issues and for accommodating public participation. While trying to build all those networks, China should encourage constructive interaction

¹¹Foreign Ministry of PRC, "Toast by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at New Year Reception for 2015," December 11, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1218740.shtml.

¹²"Xi Jinping's Address at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs," *Xinhua News Agency*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-11/29/c_1113457723.htm.

among all related parties and accumulate “positive energy,” so as to achieve more win-win results among all related countries and regions under the international framework.

New Features of China's Diplomatic Practice

In diplomatic practice, the central leadership of China, headed by Xi Jinping, has not only adopted such valuable traditions as grasping the general trends, upholding justice, treating all on equal footing, and taking pragmatic, people-oriented steps, but also developed four new features under the new situations:

Dynamic Inheritance and Pragmatic Adjustments

Extremely consistent as it is, China's diplomacy features dynamic inheritance of the past legacies. For example, China has striven to enhance relations with all other countries, yet when confronted with the rapidly changing situations in its periphery in recent years, Chinese leaders have realized almost the full coverage of summit meetings either by mutual visits or at a third place, thus to a large degree reinvigorating their relationships. In view of the growing confrontation between Russia and the U.S. since the emergence of the Ukraine crisis, China is adopting timely measures to adjust the China-Russia-U.S. trilateral relations, in order to circumvent bloc confrontation in the Asia-Pacific or on the global level. In addressing the difficult issues in China-U.S. relations, China has maintained a “dual-frontline” approach, and hence contributed to the stability of the overall China-U.S. relationship by promoting their cooperation in tackling climate change as well as in finance and trade. For the thawing of China-Japan relations after more than two years of deadlock, China has taken the opportunity of hosting the APEC summit meeting in Beijing to achieve the partial improvement of its relationship with Japan.

Setting Clear Bottom-Lines and Suiting Actions to Words

Diplomacy is an art, but too many ambiguous signals will inevitably lead to miscalculation. When dealing with diplomatic difficulties and flash-points, China has insisted on keeping all issues in the open and candidly exchanging views on each other's real interests and stakes. Besides, China has been true to both its promises and warnings in diplomacy, and has thus

maintained high credibility and considerable feasibility in practice. As Professor Jin Cairong argues, China has many times emphasized the "bottom-line principle" to the outside world, which showcases its growing determination to develop peacefully while firmly safeguarding its core interests.

"bottom-line principle" to the outside world, which showcases its growing determination to develop peacefully while firmly safeguarding its core interests. For instance, when highlighting cooperation with other countries on many occasions, both President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have reiterated that China will never give up its core interests or trade with them. And such is the "bottom-line principle."¹³ Indeed, while affirming China's insistence on peaceful development, Xi Jinping points out the necessity for other countries to take the same path. On developing the new-type major-country relationship between China and the U.S., Xi Jinping underlines both China's efforts and its unbreakable bottom-line. Moreover, the

"Four-Point Principled Agreement" between China and Japan as well as China's "dual-track" approach with ASEAN and the claiming countries respectively have all proven very constructive to the settlement of disputes over maritime rights and interests in both the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

New Features of Summit Diplomacy

As state leaders, President Xi and Premier Li have been two most charming and vivacious figures on the world stage over the past two years. Despite their heavy loads of work, home and abroad, both leaders have put innumerable efforts into China's diplomacy. Within only two years and a half, other than receiving guests from all over the world, they have visited scores of countries in all continents and attended many important multilateral

¹³Jin Canrong and Wang Hao, "Shibada Yilai Zhongguo Waijiao de Xinlinian he Xintedian [New Concepts and New Features of China's Diplomacy since the 18th CPC National Congress]," *Journal of Hubei University*, May 2014, p. 29.

meetings. Especially by hosting two important diplomatic events in 2014 — the CICA Summit in Shanghai in May, and the APEC Summit in Beijing in November, President Xi and Premier Li have both demonstrated their charisma and adroitness, and won much power of discourse in global affairs for China. Their diligent, gentle and companionable images have not only received wide acclaim from the international society, but have also enhanced the world's confidence in China's future progress.¹⁴

Adhering to Principles While Treasuring Historical Friendship

Compared with the utilitarian, interest-only-oriented diplomatic approaches of some countries in the West, China's diplomacy values both principles and friendship. For example, while Western countries keep imposing sanctions against Zimbabwe, China puts greater emphasis on its traditional friendship with the nation instead. During his meeting with Zimbabwean President Mugabe on August 25, 2014, Xi Jinping recalled the traditional friendship between the two countries and lauded the latter's contributions to bilateral relations. He stressed the fact that the Chinese people highly value friendship and will never forget "an old friend sharing thick and thin."¹⁵

Compared with the utilitarian, interest-only-oriented diplomatic approaches of some countries in the West, China's diplomacy values both principles and friendship.

For another example, although China and Romania opted for different paths that best suit their own countries, they share a lot of common experience when they were both members of the same socialist camp, and hence a friendship deeply rooted in history. In meeting with Romanian Prime Minister Ponta in Beijing on September 2, 2014, Xi Jinping opened the conversation by adding his personal emotions for Romania and said, "When talking about China-Romania relations, the first thing that jumps into our mind is "friendship," for people

¹⁴Zhang Qingmin, "Lijie Shibada Yilai de Zhongguo Waijiao [Understanding China's Diplomacy since the 18th CPC National Congress]," *Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 2, 2014, pp. 15–16.

¹⁵"Xi Jinping Talks with Zimbabwean President Mugabe," *Xinhua News Agency*, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-08/25/c-1112221964.htm>.

of my age grew up with the friendly relations between our two countries, and those outstanding Romanian films were very popular in China at that time. I hope China and Romania always respect and support each other with sincerity, and that our friendship keeps generating tangible benefits for both."¹⁶

Conclusion

Drawing from the wisdom and relying on the support of the whole nation, the Chinese leadership headed by Xi Jinping has taken great efforts to promote China's diplomatic thinking and strategic planning with Chinese characteristics, which has enriched China's practice of major country diplomacy and is paving the way for China's development into a great global power. Nevertheless, historical experiences have shown that China will encounter diverse new challenges on its road ahead, thus it has to remain vigilant in its diplomatic thinking and practice, and, most importantly, avoid making any fatal mistakes. To adapt to the changing environment and to fulfill the varying tasks of the future, China's diplomatic thinking, strategies and practice should be further theorized, institutionalized and operationalized.

¹⁶"Xi Jinping Meets with Romanian Prime Minister Ponta," *Xinhua News Agency*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-09/02/c_1112332651.htm.