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Recasting China's Foreign Policy: Focusing on Post-Jiang Leaders' Authority Building

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1. Introduction

Since the 2000s, concerns about China and its external conduct have deepened especially among scholars and policy-makers¹. The rise of China and its power is indeed historically unprecedented, and the fungible nature of power has seemed to stoke concerns, if not outright fears, as China rapidly expanded its military prowess,² surged military exercises in the East China Sea and the South China Sea³, and quite aggressively projected its power as “carrots and sticks” in its interstate relations. Against such a backdrop, many observers suggest that a changing distribution of material capabilities owing primarily to China’s rise has created a Thucydides’ trap when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power (Allison 2017).

At the center of the hegemonic rivalry is the rising power, China, and the established hegemon the United States, and as states are construed as survival-driven in the anarchical international system (Waltz 1979, p. 105), China is expected to challenge the extant rules of international order. From such a perspective, it is only natural to expect China to translate its rapidly growing economic power into military power and perhaps even to adopt its own Monroe Doctrine to challenge the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region (Mearsheimer 2001; 2004). By 2017 China possesses five large military bases, enjoying a home-base advantage in the Pacific Ocean, and is gradually extending the strong presence into the Indian Ocean⁴. Since its dramatic military modernization, China has constructed well-armed outposts in the South China Sea and has increased patrolling in the East China Sea, to dominate the waters off their coastline. Moreover, Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road initiative seeks to coerce China’s neighbors by using infrastructure and investment projects. As China advanced its place in the great power hierarchy, Beijing’s external behavior became more assertive, epitomizing its rising capabilities (Wang 2011; Liff and Ikenberry 2014; Christensen 2015; Friedberg 2015; Glaser 2015).

¹ For 2018, the number of articles about China’s rise and its consequences has been accounted for 561 in *The New York Times* and 79 in *International Security journal*.

² China has established a military base in Djibouti, which started to operate in 2018. The negotiations over the second base in Pakistan are underway. The Chinese military has constructed well-armed outposts on atolls in the South China Sea, as well as an outpost in eastern Tajikistan, hosting Chinese troops (Guardian 2019). China surpassed the US in total naval assets - 714 and 415 warships, respectively, based on Global Fire Power data. For less than ten years, China has acquired two aircraft carriers: Liaoning, purchased from Russia, and put in service in 2012 and Shandong, constructed in China, and began exploitation in 2018. According to different sources, 1-3 carriers are under construction. In contrast, from 2009 to 2019, the US has produced the same amount of aircraft carriers: George H.W. Bush in 2009 and Gerald R. Ford in 2017.

³ East China Sea - from 4 in 2014 to 14 in 2017; South China Sea - from 9 in 2014 to 25 in 2017, based on China’s Ministry of National Defense statements.

⁴ In contrast, the US has six military bases in the Pacific Ocean and three in the Indian Ocean, while there are six potential Chinese military bases in the Indian Ocean (Bloomberg 2017).

As the power-centric structural realist perspective would lead us to expect, both China and the United States, as mere players in a structurally determined world of politics, seem inevitably locked in a Thucydides' trap. While the situation may be looked upon as a Germany-Britain analogue, when Germany challenged Britain's ruling global empire before WWI, the current standoff of China-US could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, where there will always be a danger of conflict. Although the hegemonic rivalry argument is dominant or prevailing among scholars and observers, yet, it cannot provide a sufficient explanation of erratic changes and to some extent continuity of Chinese foreign policy course⁵.

One can assume the change in Chinese foreign policy can be most understood by purposive acts of leaders. Political leaders, like ordinary people, have distinctive personalities, values, and beliefs, which contribute to variation in psychological processes, political socialization, lessons learned from history, and management styles that shape the decision-making process (Levy and Thompson 2010; Jervis 2013). Leaders' goals, abilities (i.e., political skills, which in turn influence the ability to mobilize support for their policies), and foibles are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state (Byman and Pollack 2001, p. 109). For instance, Hu Jintao comes in for much criticism as a weak figure, who never entirely escaped from Jiang Zemin's continuing interference (Shirk 2018) and was easily manipulated by more powerful figures and institutional interests (Shambaugh 2016), asserting his low-key foreign policy course. In contrast, some scholars associate Chinese assertive foreign policy with the phenomenon of Xi, who had consolidated greater personal authority than Jiang and Hu ever did⁶. Therefore, his ambitions to rejuvenate China has resulted in muscular regional policy (Economy 2014; Shambaugh 2016).

The individual-level of analysis provides a useful framework for understanding foreign policy choices. But it cannot fully explain the phenomenon of Xi, that is erosion of institutionalized rules of collective leadership and personalistic leadership, as well as continuity and change in Chinese foreign policy. In fact, China's turn to assertive foreign policy, as well

⁵ China has pursued different strategies in the East China Sea case: delayed response strategy, cooperative strategy, and assertive strategy. For the detailed explanations on Chinese strategies see in the *Case Selection* section below.

⁶ For instance, Xi broke the institutionalized rule and did not promote a successor at the 19th National CCP Congress. More striking, the leader amended the Constitution to abolish the two-term limit of the presidency in 2018. Xi personally controls all the levels of power in the CCP, including the military and the policy, and chairing eight leading small groups. Advocating anti-corruption campaign, Xi purged six powerful opponents in the Politburo: Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai, Ling Jihua, Xu Caihou, Guo Boxiong, and Sun Zhengcai.

as military modernization has begun not during Xi, but during Hu⁷, so to speak, creating a foundation for Xi's full-scale militarization. Thus, the individual explanations obscure the persistently neglected fact of domestic politics and, in particular, elite politics dynamics.

The domestic perspective can provide a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of China's origins of assertive external conduct. The nature of the decision-making process directly depends on the institutional structure of the political and economic systems. When China projects its domestic economic system outward, which is controlled by narrow party elites, it contends the American-led international economy, emerging into a greater conflict (Lake 2014). The current China-US trade war is not simply a tariff conflict between two states, but the clash between two different economic systems.

State's policies often reflect necessary compromises between leadership and domestic political constituents. Arguably, in China, the leader is a core of the CCP, who advances the Party authority, to appease the masses and preserve the elites' monopoly on power. By doing this, the Chinese leadership promotes "core interests"⁸. To strengthen "social contract" with society, the leader offers policy programs that push forward economic development (Zeng 2014). As recently the declining economic growth rate, widening inequality, widespread corruption, and environmental issues challenge the Party authority, the Chinese leadership has increasingly used nationalism in external conduct to rally popular support (Swaine 1995; Ross 2002; Goldstein 2005; Lampton 2008; Friedberg 2015; Shambaugh 2016), profiting from social solidarity, and social mobilization that go along with it.

The territorial integrity problem (Xinjiang and Tibet), national security (Xinjiang, Tibet, East China Sea, and the South China Sea) and "one country, two systems" (Hong Kong) approach challenge the CCP authority, including elites and leader himself. Political elites would not allow any resistance of foreign interference to challenge their authority. The continuing hardline over these core interests is not only necessary to challenge American hegemony, in contrast to the systemic perspective explanations, but it's mainly because of the dynamics of Chinese domestic, and more importantly, elite politics. Overwhelmed by domestic

⁷ Under Hu, China purchased the first aircraft carrier and focused on development on Blue-water navy, instead of traditionally important land troops. Hu pursued pro-active economic diplomacy with neighboring countries, as well as with Hong Kong and Xinjiang domestically, to lay a fundament of political cooperation.

⁸ According to the last report at the 19th CCP Congress, China's core interests are: 1) state sovereignty; 2) national security (the question of Xinjiang, East China Sea and South China Sea); 3) territorial integrity (the question of Xinjiang, Hong Kong, East China Sea and South China Sea); 4) national reunification (the question of Taiwan); 5) social stability (political liberalization problem, the question of Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong); 6) sustainable economic and social development.

politics, leaders fear to appear too weak to stand up to the external threats and, thus, to lose their political credibility (Shirk 2007, p. 66).

To understand the origins of China's assertive posture, we examine complex domestic constituencies and explore the role of leaders in the decision-making process. To do so, we use an authority-building framework that allows to can go beyond more "sterile" perspectives (Park 2007) and provides a consistent and coherent as well as persuasive understanding of the continuity and change in the Chinese external conduct under Hu and Xi. Moreover, authority-building provides nuanced and sophisticated interpretation of the phenomenon of Xi, presenting the evidence that the conditions for personalistic leadership have been former prior to his rule.

The article argues the following. China's change in foreign policy course is associated with the leader's slipping authority, impacted by his policy failures and intention to outflank powerful opponents. To rebuild authority, Hu used economic countermeasures and military threats toward Japan in 2010 and 2012, as his evaporating authority hindered power over policy agenda. The leader acts assertively to mobilize mass against powerful opponents in the political establishment. Likewise, encountered by powerful opponents, Xi proclaimed ADIZ during the first term to show the elites his boldness and commitment to depart from the previous foreign policy course, thereby being successful in bolstering public support. It enlarged Xi's coalition in the political establishment and outflanked powerful opponents from the policy-making agenda.

Yet, post-Jiang leaders continue to insist on national reunification with Taiwan. Started under Hu and continued under Xi, China improves economic and cultural ties with Taiwan, perhaps laying the background of political interference in the years ahead. The inability to abandon Taiwan quest is associated with China's elites' fears of domestic social instability. Departing from Taiwan issue will jeopardize already taken place massive protests in Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, and stipulate their independence movements. As systemic perspective explains that it is necessary for Beijing to oppress Hong Kong protests to challenge American hegemony; yet Xi acts aggressively as a result of elite dynamics. The local resistance and American interference challenge the Party authority, as well as jeopardize leader's authority in the elites. Thus, as all these four cases are interconnected, the more turbulent is the situation at home, the more assertive China acts toward Taiwan⁹.

⁹ In the post-Jiang period, China's assertive external conduct started after the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, when Xi sent an aircraft carrier to Taiwan Strait in 2017.

This article is structured as follows. Part II provides a succinct summary of recent China's assertive external conduct. Based on the created *Assertive Foreign Policy Index*, we choose several cases from the sample for the deeper analysis to understand the reasons behind foreign policy decisions. Part III illuminates the authority-building theoretical framework, redefined from Breslauer (1982) analysis of post-Stalin leaders. Through the authority-building framework lens, we can penetrate into China's domestic politics, having a better understanding of the decision-making process. Part IV explains the specific characteristics of leaders' authority-building in post-Jiang's China and its implications to foreign policy. Part V provides an in-depth case study analysis, comparing Hu and Xi authorities and its influence on a range of foreign policy choices they have. Part VI concludes the analysis and provides some insight for further research.

II. Case selection

This study employs the method of "structured, focused comparison," devised to study historical cases in ways that would yield useful "generic knowledge" of foreign policy problems (George and Bennett 2005, p. 67). To be "structured," the research objectives and questions are asked to guide case selection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation findings of the cases. To be "focused," this study deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases.

We propose *Assertive Foreign Policy Index*, which evaluates the degree of Chinese leadership assertiveness, based on the actions leaders impose in order to solve the international disputes. Although post-Jiang leadership became more assertive in its statements over disputable issues, warning or even threatening the opponent, yet it does not necessary impose actual measures.

We code country's assertive foreign policy, based on absolute values (High or Low) of state actions in three dimensions: Economics, Security and Diplomacy. We use capital letter "E" to express high level of assertiveness in economic dimension, low-capital letter "e" to show low level of assertive economic measures. "S" for high assertiveness in security, "s" for low assertiveness in security. "D" for high diplomatic assertiveness, "d" for low level of diplomatic assertiveness. Additionally, we code foreign policy assertiveness through numerical values in three dimensions: economic, security and diplomatic. The nominal level scale is based on 1) assertive foreign policy costs; and 2) potential counterpart's response.

<i>Case</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Leader</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Ordinal level Scale</i>	<i>Nominal level Scale¹⁰</i>
Anti-Japanese demonstrations	2005	Hu	Delayed response	<i>esd</i>	0
<i>Arms sales to Taiwan</i>	2010	Hu	<i>Cancelation of permission to enter Hong Kong port; cancellation of military-to-military talks (US)</i>	<i>esd</i>	0
Japan's purchase of Diaoyu/Senkaku islands	2012	Hu	Sending navy (lightly-armed)	<i>eSd</i>	0.5
<i>Scarborough Shoal incident</i>	2012	Hu	<i>Sending navy (lightly-armed)</i>	<i>eSd</i>	0.5
Fishing trawler incident	2010	Hu	Ban of rare earth materials; prolongation of Japanese cars custom procedures; Cancelation of high-level officials talks;	<i>EsD</i>	0.8
<i>ADIZ</i>	2013	Xi	<i>Proclamation of China's ADIZ, covering others air space</i>	<i>esd</i>	0
<i>PCA ruling rejection</i>	2016	Xi	<i>Sending civilian airplanes</i>	<i>esd</i>	0
<i>Anti-THAAD</i>	2017	Xi	<i>Consumer boycott of Korean products; closed Lotte department stores in China; prohibition of group tours to ROK</i>	<i>esd</i>	0
<i>Doklam</i>	2017	Xi	<i>Sending military troops (border troops)</i>	<i>eSd</i>	0.5
<i>Arms sales to Taiwan</i>	2017	Xi	<i>Sending one aircraft carrier;</i>	<i>eSd</i>	0.5
<i>Djibouti</i>	2017	Xi	<i>Military base establishment</i>	<i>eSd</i>	0.5

Evidence of diplomatic assertiveness suggests that the state disrupts diplomatic ties, closing embassies and prohibiting any cultural exchanges. The state restricts some forms of diplomatic cooperation, including complications of visa procedures, the prohibition of some forms of tourism, cancellation of joint cultural events. First, diplomatic coercion has a short-run effect and does not directly involve the population. Second, the assertive diplomatic response is low in cost both for the decision-makers and the domestic audience. Therefore, we denote a high level of diplomatic assertiveness as 0.5.

Low economic assertiveness includes the evidence that the state government supports consumer boycott, customs prolongation procedures, surges inspections of

¹⁰ The nominal level of scale is calculated by $\text{economic assertiveness numerical value} + \text{security assertiveness numerical value} + \text{diplomatic assertiveness numerical value}$

products/stores/companies, associated with the opponent state. A high level of economic assertiveness suggests that the state imposes large-scale economic sanctions, including export or import ban, tariffs barriers, and cancellation of the joint economic project. In contrast to diplomatic coercion, economic assertiveness imposes higher costs, as the opponent state would highly likely respond with similar or tighter economic restrictions. This foreign policy has a long-term impact on domestic business and consumers. Therefore, we denote the high level of economic assertiveness as 1.0.

A high level of assertive foreign policy in the security dimension has evidence that the state advances its interests or attempts to resolve disputes by the threat of force without sustained violence. Regularly state's actions include increasing military exercise, military presence, and patrol in the disputed areas and military base enlargement. The state attempts to send lightly-armed warships/aircraft/troops (small in numbers) to resolve disputes. Physiologically, the threat of violence (even without actual military actions) is perceived as dangerous and may result in an escalation of conflict between two states. Therefore, we denote assertiveness in security as 1.5.

The low level of assertiveness in all three dimensions we denote as 0.

Table 1 provides an interesting insight on post-Jiang leaders foreign policy. Both leaders were more cautious in foreign policy at the beginning of their terms. Likewise, Hu delayed response toward Japan's change of history textbooks, plans to establish lighthouse on disputable Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and its bid to UN Security Council. Similarly, Xi's declaration of ADIZ in 2013 was no more than "paper tiger" with no inclination to use force in protecting Chinese newly claimed air zone. However, the difference was that Hu's actions were characterized as defensive, responding to Japan's claims, while Xi's actions were offensive, as it raised the dispute over territories to the air dimension.

Surprisingly, the most assertive foreign policy response belongs to Hu, who is believed to be a less confrontational leader. Hu reacted assertively to Japan's arrest of Chinese fishing trawlers in 2010, using economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure. In 2017 Xi reacted assertively in four cases, starting from Anti-THAAD economic measures, sending a patrol to Taiwan Strait, and to Doklam plateau, culminating in Djibouti with establishment Chinese first military base.

To investigate why Hu acted assertively in territorial dispute with Japan, we analyze three cases: Anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005, Fishing trawler incident in 2010, and Japan's purchase of Diaoyu/Senakaku islands in 2012. The analysis of these cases would allow us to

understand the reasons that urged Hu to change his foreign policy preferences toward Japan, as well as to understand why the pick of the leader's assertiveness occurred in 2010.

To investigate Xi's assertive foreign policy, we start the analysis from the proclamation of ADIZ in 2013 when the leader did not use any of economic, security, or diplomatic sanctions. Similarly, Xi started to project his assertive posture during the second term. In particular, he sent aircraft carrier to patrol Taiwan Strait in 2017 in the reaction of the US-Taiwan arms sales agreement. Xi's outlier case is the establishment of a military base in Djibouti, which has long-term effects on China relations with other countries.

In sum, six cases have been chosen for research analysis: anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005, fishing trawler incident in 2010, Japan's purchase of Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in 2012, proclamation of ADIZ in 2013, arms sales to Taiwan in 2017 and establishment of military base in Djibouti. The analysis of these cases would help to understand the leader's foreign policy choices evolution, make a comparison between two leaders, and investigate the reasons for accepted decisions.

III. Redefining Breslauer's authority-building framework

Breslauer defined authority-building as a process by which leaders "seek to legitimize their policy programs" in the Party (Breslauer 1982, p. 3) in his analysis of post-Stalin leaders. The authority-building framework can help to investigate the power succession outcomes and downfall of leaders, as well as their policy choices and strategies, and, more importantly, analyze the Leader—Elites; Leader—Masses; Elites—Masses interactions, which are usually regulated by informal rules in autocracies, and thus cannot be precisely traced. This study is focused on the ideational dimension of authority. Our main subject of an investigation is leaders' authority-building and its effect on the state's foreign affairs. The main object of the analysis is post-Jiang leaders: Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping.

Authority-building framework scope. In order to understand the trajectory of analysis, we use two variables. The first variable is the level of political competition, expressed in the level of political pluralism and competition for power (low, medium, and high). The second variable is political institutionalization, expressed in 1) the existence of high-level deliberative and decision-making body within parties, legislature and elections (Svolik 2009, p. 773); 2) the extent of rational-legal practices; and 3) the extent of stable and undisruptive forms of political behavior. A political institution should be independent of any particular social group (family, clan, class) or individual personality. Political institutionalization includes the establishment of a new institution, the formation of stable rules and practices of interaction, and the

legitimization of the institution. Most importantly, political institutionalization does not correspond to the level of democracy or governance transparency in our research design.

Table 1. Type of political leadership

Political Institutionalization	Low	Medium	High
High	Bureaucratic type		
	Present Singapore; Mexico until 2000	China (1997-2018)	USA, Japan, European countries
Medium	Oligarchic type		
	Russia (2012-); China (2018-)	Russia (2000-2012)	Ukraine (2016-); Kyrgyzstan (2011-)
Low	Patrimonial type		
	Saudi Arabia; Brunei; Oman; present Azerbaijan	Bolivia (1969-1982); Chile (1973-1978)	Afghanistan (1990-1994)

Table 1 depicts three types of political leadership: bureaucratic, oligarchic, and patrimonial. Patrimonial states commonly have low political institutionalization. In these regimes, the political parties are banned by the constitution, or they are ineffective. There is no well-functioning decision-making body or legislature, and the leader's directives operate the political structure. The power succession usually occurs in the inner family circle; thus, the political power is consolidated. Patrimonial states with medium and high power competition can be described as a competitive and combative dictatorship, respectively. These regimes are very unstable, sometimes brutal, with leaders' frequently exiting the office with bloodshed. Patrimonial type is characterized by the personal relationship between people, which is the essence of political life. Typically, such societies have strong friendships or family ties, the weak rule of law, widespread corruption, low social capital, pervasive patronage with clients, and widespread nepotism. Therefore, the leaders' retainment in position mainly depends on his capability of power-sharing with family or ruling coalition, and coercion of masses. The leaders do not devote to building authority, as their political survival depends on how long the autocrats can provide the spoils for distribution - monetary rewards, perks, and privileges (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007, p. 1281). Therefore, our authority-building framework cannot explain the

political processes in these regimes, cannot adequately analysis power succession, political survival, leader's strategies, and policy preferences.

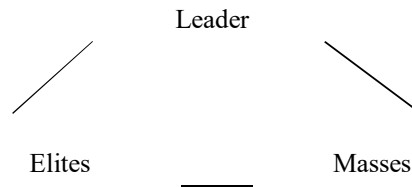
The regimes with medium political institutionalization have relatively well-organized political institutions. However, they are not adequately functioning – skewed political competition, the weak rule of law, independent organizational and civic infrastructure. Thus, the leader does not always abide by the law (meaning that he can amend the constitution or change the existing law by his own will), and informal practices operate political life. The ruling elite consists of diverse factions or groups, advancing their material interests in the political establishment. Factions may include government officials, associated with economic enterprises, security services, military, or leader's family members. Given their diverse material interests, the leader must unite them under his policy appeals. To win elections, the leader mobilizes all available resources, such as popular appeal. He appeals to the masses and manipulates public opinion, which in return signals to the elites whether to support him or to align with his political rival. Although, in some states, elections may be competitive and fair, yet they constitute a mechanism for the accommodation and integration of a political elite. The massive election manipulation and fraud may generate violent and organized mass opposition, which is costly to suppress. There is relatively autonomy of elites, which affects the leader's political survival. The elites may not support the unpopular leader, leading to his deposition. Therefore, the leader builds authority in the elites and the masses, by demonstrating a capacity to effect changes that will appeal to the beliefs, identities, and ideas.

The regimes with strong political institutions have effective bureaucracies, well-organized party, popular participation in public affairs, civil control over the military, effective governmental machinery. Here the leader is accountable to the selectorate. It can be the whole public, or the party and its top ruling. Coalition-building of material interest, which is needed to alter policy changes, is effective until a certain point, at which the expansion of coalition becomes too costly, and a leader's capacity to seize policy agenda cannot be increased or maintained, thereby the leader perceived to be incompetent.

Authority-building channels. In his work, Breslauer has outlined that the primary audience for authority-building is the elites, as the popular participation has no opportunity to participate in the selection of the top leadership (Breslauer 1982). Politics is a private matter. Power succession and power struggles in terms of preferred policy appeal are carried out under a facade of secrecy in order not to raise controversy in the masses and not to undermine domestic

order. However, the redefined authority-building framework can encompass three dichotomies: Leader—Elites; Leader—Masses; Elites—Masses.

Graph 1. The role of leader in power relations under authority-building framework



Leader—Elites. As we already discussed the reasons for the leader’s authority-building in the elites, here we outline the different levels of leader’s engagement. In all politically institutionalized states, the elites, its disunity, and intra-conflicts are the main obstacles of the leader’s promotion of policy programs. The leader has to persuade and bargain with elites for policy. Thus, the final policy choice is a consensus among the powerful groups (economic elite, political elite, military, etc.) and an umbrella for diverse social groups. Likewise, in China leader has to find a balance between two competing factions (*tuanpai* and elitists). In the 2000s, Putin has to bargain with economic elites (oligarchy) and find the compromise with the regional political elites. Another linkage between the leader and the elites is his political survival and power succession. While the first is common for all politically institutionalized regimes, the latest is typical only for autocracies. Even in states with well-developed democratic institutions, the leader’s political survival depends on public opinion and primarily from the compliance of elites. Leader’s slipping authority in the elites forces to relieve himself from the leadership duties. As the elites do not support the leader, they propagate his incompetence in the masses, which leads to the sharp downfall of approval ratings and a leader’s incapability to mobilize the masses against the elites.

Leader—Masses. The masses play an important role in the calculations of leaders. First, the interaction between the leader and the masses is a channel of political participation. In democratic regimes, the leader’s power succession directly depends on the electorate (masses). The perception of authoritarian leaders who focus only on elites, while completely neglecting the mass factor is misguided. The organized and violence mass as opposition creates a threat to the leader’s political survival, thereby urging the leader to consider the mass factor in authority-building strategy. The dissatisfied mass, which potentially can generate unrest, threatens the elites’ privileged position, power, and wealth. The actual power-holders will

unlikely to support an unpopular leader, as they fear uncontrolled mass. Thus, the leader reacts to public demands through the promotion of policy appeals not because of democratic norms but because of fear of mass “too active” political participation and unwillingness to share his and elites’ power and privileges. When leaders are unable to satisfy socio-economic expectations, social frustrations increase, consequently altering social instability. The gap occurs between expectations and achievements. Masses start to demand the expansion of political participation to enforce their demands. In return, social instability and demand for expansion of political participation intimidate elites’ power, privileges, and wealth. Consequently, elites increase the demands on the leader to appease the masses and protect their privileged position. As a politician, the leader is a guarantor of elites’ security; thereby, the also masses indirectly affect the leader’s political survival through the elites—masses. Another channel of leader—masses interaction is political mobilization. The leader mobilizes the masses in support of his policy appeals in order to outcast his powerful elite opponents.

Elites—Masses. The conflictual nature of the elites—masses has been already outlined by Max Weber, who stated that due to the original inequality of people, the formation of the elites is inevitable (Weber 1922). The modern analysis (Dahl 1971) has redeveloped elites—masses linkage, depending on different factors, such as political culture, type of political leadership, the specific political forces alignment, etc. Economic development increases urbanization, rural-urban migration, education levels, health care for the majority of the population. Following the life improvement, masses’ aspirations and expectations increase. Under the authority-building framework, elites want to maintain their privileges, obstructing the majority from the political decision-making process. In order to keep masses dominated and prevent opposition, the leader’s policy choice should balance between elites’ interests and public demands. Due to the conflictual nature, the leader has to maintain a relatively narrow gap between the elites and masses. As the gap increases, the masses are set into the vacuum, which decrease the social mobility and increase discontent against elites. Thus, the leader’s authority depends on how well the masses can buy his policy choice, and therefore how well he can secure elites.

Authority-building strategies, models and process. A leader’s authority is inversely related to power competition in the political establishment. The more elites believe in the indispensability of the leader and support his policy appeals; the higher is the authority and the lower is power competition. The elites align with the leader so that the number of opponents decrease. The lower leader’s authority, the higher is power competition among the elites. They

push forward interests in terms of new policy courses or promote the incumbent to the leadership position, who would advocate their interests. We depicted the inverse relations between power competition and leader’s authority on Graph 7, using the cases of contemporary Russia and China.

Graph 3. Leader’s authority vs Power competition

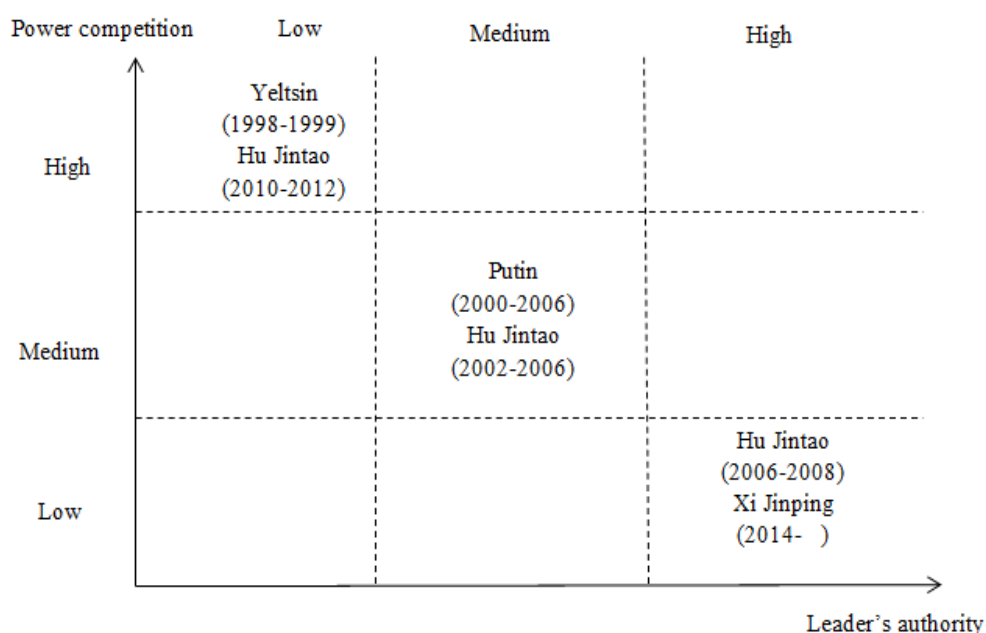


Table 2 describes the leader’s capabilities, according to the level of authority.

Table 2. Authority-building and the level of authority

<i>Low level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader cannot push forward his policy preferences, cannot organize vested interests in the political establishment.</i>
<i>Medium level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader has sufficient authority to push forward policy programs, although cannot entrench traditional interests. Only the leader is in the position to mediate the conflict of interests and formulate final policy appeal.</i>

<i>High level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader seizes the initiative over policy agenda, launches radical reforms and surrounds himself with loyalties. He can violate the established rule of the game or abuse the law.</i>
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The incumbent must have at least a medium level of authority to obtain a leadership position in the political establishment. Building authority in the domestic audience, the incumbent must have a general plan of the reforms that would alter the change and make the system work. To achieve a higher level of authority than other candidates, he must persuade the domestic audience that he would maintain social stability and keep the domestic order, acquiring supporters both in the elites and the masses. His objective is to obtain a high level of authority in order to maximize power.

Table 3 depicts the leader's capabilities during the authority-maintenance period.

Table 3. Maintaining authority and the level of authority

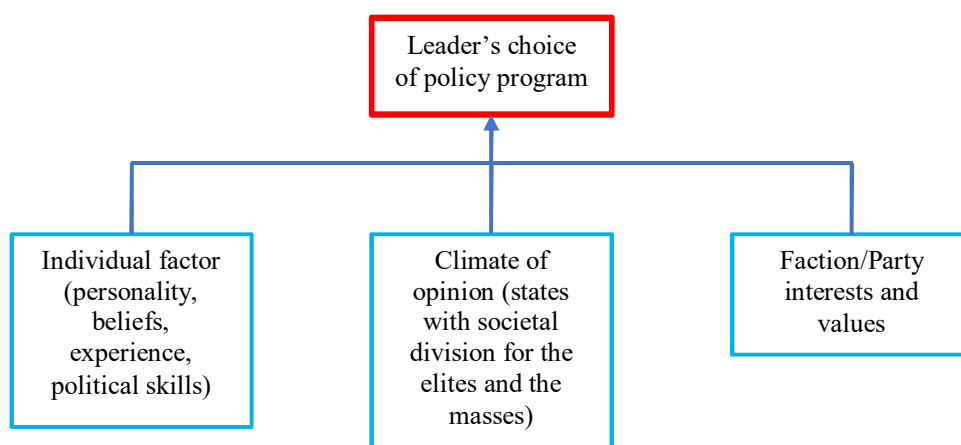
<i>Low level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader's failures lead to widespread frustration and consequently result in impeachment or expelling from the leadership position.</i>
<i>Medium level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader completes his term or terms; his policy program was relatively effective, but he could not overcome the political opposition to cement his legacy.</i>
<i>High level of the authority</i>	<i>Political leader has less checks and balance, monopolizes access to the leadership position and cements his legacy.</i>

First, the longer leaders maintain position, the more authority they have. They can be reelected for the second term or abolish term limits and continue to rule. If the latest occur without any backlash from the elite and masses, it means that the domestic audience sees the leaders as effective problem-solvers and value their leadership more than institutions. In contrast, the leaders, who were impeached or expelled from the position, suffered from slipping authority and could not persuade the audience in their leadership. Second, policy orientation is classified into short-run goals and broad public interest. The broader public interest policy

program leaders support, the more authority they obtain among the elites and the masses. If the leaders promote more immediate material short-run goals, they cannot build authority enough in the long-term. It does not solve socio-economic problems, providing only short-term relief, and soon the frustration over leadership would pile up, resulting in slipping authority.

Several factors that affect the leader’s choice of policy program are depicted in Figure 2. First, policy preferences are influenced by an individual factor: a leader’s personality, beliefs, political experience. Impatient and ambitious leaders tend to be associated with more radical policy preferences, while cautious leaders are reluctant to depart from the previous course. Second, the leader’s political group, faction or party interests affect policy choice. For instance, the faction or party may support market-oriented reforms versus government intervention, export-oriented policies versus import substitution, higher military expenditure versus social welfare expenditure. Third, in authoritarian regimes, another factor associated with policy choice is the climate of opinion. During power succession, there is a consensus about general policy directions. Therefore, in power struggles, the incumbent keeps a low-profile without raising controversy in the elites and preserves the direction of traditional interests (heavy industry, defense, social welfare, economic liberalization or other). As radical reformer may jeopardize elites’ privileged position and the system in general, he may not receive the majority of the elite’s support in power struggles. In contrast, after winning power struggles leader has more space for his individual preferences in policy choice.

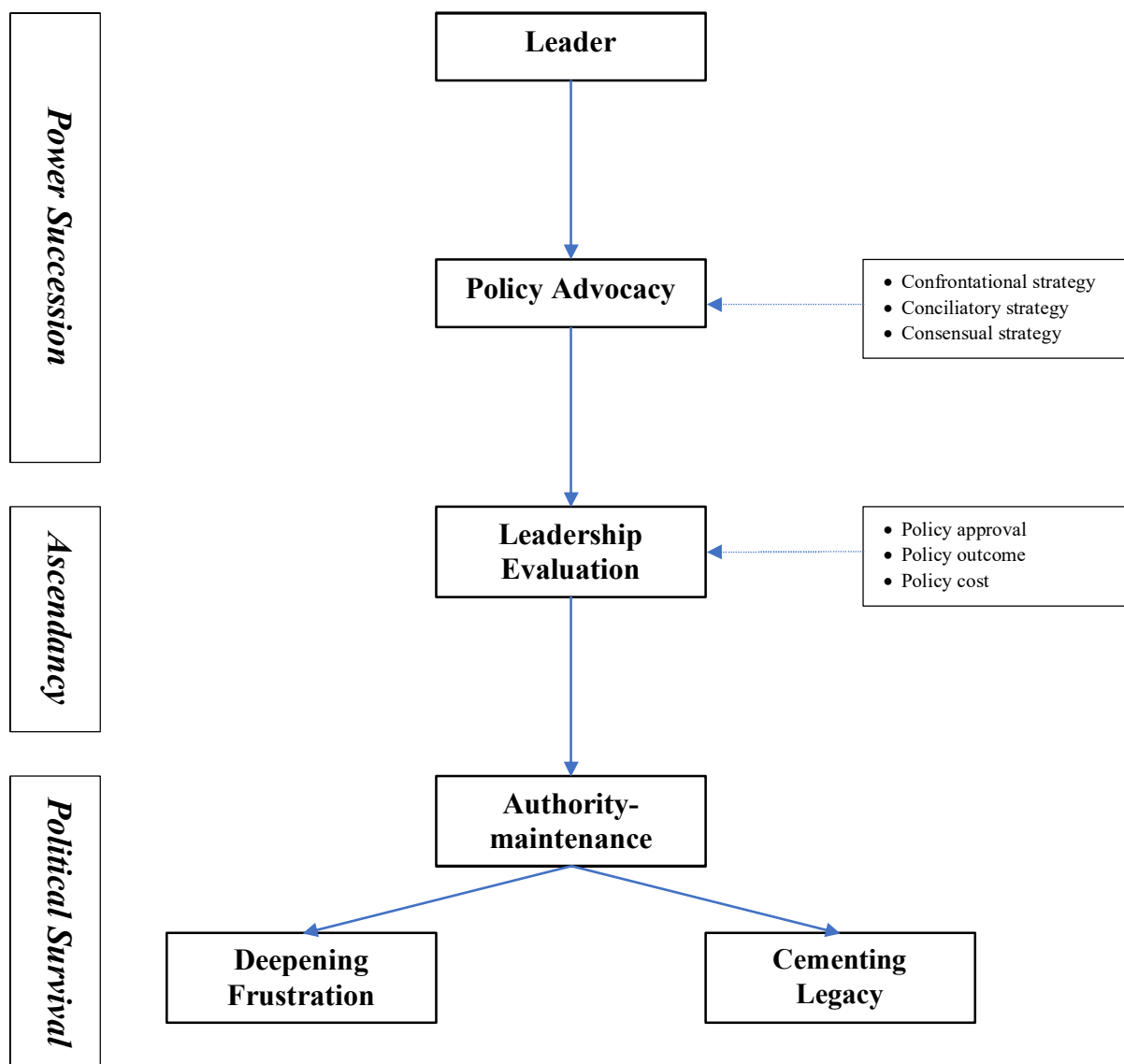
Figure 1. Leader’s policy preference factors



Depicted in Figure 3, the authority-building process includes three stages: 1) Power Succession; 2) Ascendancy; 3) Political Survival. These stages are analytically distinct. Yet, they may overlap in practice, but the sequence is maintained. First, incumbent obtain the top leadership position through power struggles and the electorate support. In contrast to the

outdated process of Soviet leaders' authority-building, modern leaders advocate comprehensive policy programs both in the elites and the masses. Second, political leader consolidates power and builds his authority after successfully pushing forward policy initiatives. Third, the leader attempts to maintain his authority in order to stay in power, as he confronts the consequences of his successes and failures in the earlier stages.

Figure 2. Authority-building process



During the first stage of authority-building, leaders use one (or a mixture) of three types of strategies to promote policy programs: 1) Confrontational, 2) Conciliatory, or 3) Consensual. As the level of authority varies across leadership, so do the authority-building strategies. The choices of the strategy depend on how leaders calculate the malleability of constraints on the realization of their policy appeals. Leaders may use different strategies to promote domestic

policies and foreign policies. As domestic politics is usually prioritized over foreign relations, leaders may choose to build consensus over domestic policies, while confronting the previous practice in external affairs.

Table 4. Foreign policy models under authority-building framework

<i>Leader's authority-building strategy</i>	<i>Level of leader's authority</i>		
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Confrontational</i>	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 1.3</i>
<i>Consensual</i>	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>	<i>Model 2.3</i>
<i>Conciliatory</i>	<i>Model 3</i>		

Model 1.1. A political leader with a confrontational strategy and low level of authority usually takes bold decision in external affairs, in order to restore his slipping authority in the domestic audience. His previous unsuccessful domestic and foreign policies push the leader onto defense, urging him to take a confrontational posture in external affairs.

Model 1.2. A political leader with a confrontational strategy and medium level of authority rarely departs from his chosen policy course. But the level of authority induces him to be more cautious in his bold foreign policy decisions. The elites and the masses interests can mitigate his original position.

Model 1.3. A political leader with a confrontational strategy and high level of authority does not consider arguments that contradict his preliminary position on the chosen policy. Even if the situation is clearly not in favor of this choice, he does often not give up the course and does not revise decisions even under the pressure of domestic audience. The risky decision will be made without regard to the consequences, without considering elites interests.

Model 2.1. A political leader with a consensual strategy and low level of authority is often cautious and timid in foreign policy decision-making. This tendency prevents the adoption of bold foreign policy decisions. While this strategy brings a positive outcome in cases, when radical decisions are too costly, it also decrease the leader's potential to augment his authority at home.

Model 2.2. A political leader with a consensual strategy and medium level of authority analyzes a large number of arguments for and against foreign policy choice, and promotes the policy program that would bring him closer to his goal. As being a synthesizer of elites and public interests is a hard task, the leader does not generally depart from the foreign policy course, outlined by his predecessor.

Model 2.3. A political leader with a consensual strategy and high level of authority balance between the most powerful elites' interests. He is more innovative in his foreign policy appeals.

Model 3. A political leader with a conciliatory strategy does not push his policy preferences. Instead he promotes the powerful elites' interests on international arena. The leader has low level of personal authority, and so is not able to survive politically in the long-term.

The stage of Ascendancy analyzes leader's action to maximize control over policy choice and answers important questions in our study: "Was the leader successful in building authority?" "Did his promises match the policy achievements?" As the leader's authority rests on performance rather than effect, we seek to evaluate policy achievements: 1) Policy approval; 2) Policy outcome; 3) Policy costs. The level of authority depends, first of all, on how well leaders persuade the audience in the necessity of their policy appeals. Did the leader overcome constraints and push forward policy programs? Policy approval by the domestic audience and its implementation signal about a leader's successful authority-building strategy.

The third stage of authority-building is a period when leaders rebuild their authority, affected by failures of policy appeals. Every political leader faces the challenge of how to hold the office. While this desire motivates the policy choice during earlier stages, it also shapes the following political actions. If the leader wants to survive, he must maintain its authority, reestablish credibility, reshuffle support coalition, and redefine domestic and foreign policy programs. The efforts to maintain authority lead to either frustration and removal from the office with subsequent purging in authoritarian regimes, or to political survival with cementing the legacy in the political establishment. There are several ways by which the leader may cement his legacy and influence over policy agenda, even after the end of the term. Leaders may influence the bureaucratic organizational process, patronage, up to the next power successor. Or leaders may abolish the term limits and continue their leadership if they can overcome institutional constraints.

The value-added to the authority-building framework. The value-added authority-building framework assists in analyzing domestic sources of foreign policy. First, it helps to investigate foreign policy decision-making through the leader's consideration of the authority. It explains the leader's different strategies in foreign policy discourse; and, thus, different decisions in similar international situations. The authority-building framework captures the political dynamics: the leader's challenges at home and abroad and his reactions to them. It describes the policy program alternatives and traces the process from policy promotion to policy realization. We redefine Breslauer's authority-building framework in eight spectra:

- 1) We enlarge authority-building framework scope by outlining two necessary criteria: from medium to a high level of political institutionalization and competition for power. Thus, this approach helps to analyze the states with the bureaucratic and oligarchical types of leadership.
- 2) We show that foreign policy takes no less important place for leader's authority-building calculations. Pushing forward foreign policy appeals, the leader augments authority and persuades the domestic audience in the necessity of his leadership.
- 3) We analyze leader's authority-building not only through channel Leader—Elites but also through Leader—Masses and Elites—Masses, through which leaders build authority in the twenty-first century.
- 4) We show how different levels of authority are inversely associated with power competition in the political establishment.
- 5) We describe the leader's capabilities, according to the different levels of authority. While a low level of authority corresponds to the leader's inability to influence the decision-making process, the leader with a medium level of authority can bargain for his policy preferences. The leader with a high level of authority seizes the initiative over policy agenda.
- 6) In the redefined authority-building framework, we distinguish two processes: authority-building and authority-maintaining. Each of them poses a distinct challenge to the leader, urging him to apply different strategies to achieve the goals.
- 7) We add one more authority-building strategy: conciliatory.
- 8) We formulate foreign policy models under the redefined authority-building framework *Authority-building framework limitations*. This section acknowledges the limitation of the redefined authority-building framework, which is not applied to the low politically institutionalized regimes, such as traditional monarchies, military juntas, and some personalist dictatorship. Authority-building includes leader's efforts to bargaining for policy preferences with powerful political figures and to show indispensability to the domestic audience. Low politically institutionalized regimes frequently have no decision-making institutions (Politburo, Council, Parliament, or others) or have just nominal ones, which do not accomplish legislative functions. Formal political institutions create the platform for the incumbent to compete for the leadership position and to bargaining for the policy preferences, thereby precipitating the leader's authority-building.

IV. Authority-building in post-Jiang China

The CCP obtained control over mainland China in 1949, and the Chinese political system has become a competitive oligarchy since then. In competitive oligarchy power is concentrated among political elites or the CCP members; however, the major bargaining power is in the hands of PBSC, which is the top of Party hierarchy structure. To become a member of PBSC, high-rank officials use the tools of patronage, affiliation or coalition-building in order to get support for their candidacy among other Party members. Although there is no direct participation of masses in the election of the Party's leading organs, the "democratic centralism"¹¹ or "inner-party democracy" (Li 2008) creates competition among officials.

Relying only on patronage, coalition-building or pulling the rank in order to become a leader or "first among equals" in PBSC and retain the position in the office proves to be insufficient in Chinese politics. During Hu Jintao's power succession in 2002, his predecessor Jiang Zemin attempted to remain in the positions of General Secretary of the CCP, member of PBSC and the chairman of the CMC, supported by nearly one thousand generals, ministerial and provincial party secretaries (Lam 2002). Nevertheless, without a vision for a better tomorrow and anew policy programs, Jiang's refusal for full retirement led to strong reactions from the all-level Party members, resulting only in retainment of the CMC chairman posts until 2004.

The scholarship identifies power succession in China as an institutionalized process, enforced by Deng Xiaoping. Deng relinquished leader's power by imposing two-terms limits and age threshold to General Secretary and PBSC positions to create stable institutions of public order, jeopardized by Mao's latest years of leadership. There is high political participation during power succession in post-Jiang China. The efforts by one incumbent to obtain leadership position provoke similar actions by others. This political competition is usually expressed through institutionalized channels. Chinese officials compete through the promotion of comprehensive policy programs to attract more supporters for their candidacy. This political activity contributes to stable power succession, conducted without bloodshed, revolts or any other violence; and consequently, maintains the stability of institutionalized order.

¹¹ In organizational building of the communist party "democratic centralism" means the election of all the party's leading organs from the bottom up, accountability of the Party organs to their supervisory organizations, strict party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority, unconditional compliance of lower party organs to higher (Lenin 1969).

In fact, China's power succession lacks generational cycles, which can become one of the reasons for political instability. Out of seven power successions of General Secretary position, only two were fully inter-generational: from Mao Zedong to Hua Guofeng, and from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. As Deng Xiaoping seized the initiative over policy agenda in 1978 by promoting market-oriented reforms, he had become a de-facto leader, although he never assumed the position of General Secretary. After Hua's purge and exile, four CCP leaders were promoted by Deng: Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Jiang Zemin, and partially Hu Jintao. In Hu Jintao's case, his power succession cannot be fully defined as inter-generational due to insufficient time gap (16 years) and Deng's support. However, Hu became a leader already after Deng's death, the achievement of which signals about his personal authority in political elites. Therefore, there are only three generations turnover in China's leadership: the 1st generation: Mao Zedong, Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhang Ziyang, Jiang Zemin, the 2nd generation: Hu Jintao, the 3rd generation: Xi Jinping.

Figure 3. Power Succession in China



In post-Jiang China leaders must advocate policy programs without disrupting political order. During power succession leaders' policy choice is mainly influenced by faction policy

preferences and climate of opinion. In China, there is a division on populist and elitist factions, which usually promotes social welfare redistribution and market-oriented reforms respectively. Yet, these factions have no commonly accepted rules on membership. Therefore, factions are fractionalized on small coalitions: Shanghai Gang (Jiang's affiliates), princelings (Xi's affiliates), Shaanxi Gang (Xi's affiliates), CCYL (Hu's and later Li Keqiang's affiliates), having interconnections between each other. Leaders must propose a policy program that would be supported not only by their coalitions but also by other elite representatives.

The climate of opinion influences the policy choice during power succession. After Mao, there was a consensus within the political establishment for preventing the concentration of power in one hand and restoring elites and people security. During post-Jiang period in order to build authority leaders focus on economic development policies. Notably, they consult, face criticism, bargain and adjust within elites in the CCP. After Tiananmen Incident in 1989, Party officials advocated primarily for a period of stability and predictability that would guarantee their material privileges, their security from the masses.

This study does not systematically investigate which factor has a greater impact on the leader's policy choice. Yet, during power succession the climate of opinion affect leader's policy in order to attract supporters and consolidate power. When the leader is thrown onto defense in the political establishment due to policy failure, personality traits affect his strategies, going along with psychological analysis.

In China, the decision-making takes place within elites, per se the upper levels of the Party-State hierarchy. The elites conduct decision-making under the facade of unanimity and secrecy in order to hide power struggles from the public. While in democracies it commonly accepted that different political parties, government officials are split over policy preferences, as they represent diffuse societal interests, in regimes with no direct elections elites hide the decision-making struggles. The controversy in the political establishment signals to the masses that there is no unity and consensus over policy direction, implying that the leadership is weak. Students' demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989 turned into large-scale protests when the PBSC was divided in the decision how to stop it¹².

The political elite is not the only audience for leader's authority-building. In communist states there is high popular participation: the majority of people are active Party members, who participate in local congresses, delivering the mass grievances and demands, which

¹² Eventually CCP conservatives with the support of Deng Xiaoping won and used martial law over proposed peaceful negotiations of General Secretary Zhao Ziyang.

consequently should go to the top leadership. This political participation and mass mobilization are built upon the communist ideology. However, as a communist ideology has a decreasing power in China, elites lost the essential tool to justify their policy programs or policy failures. Without ideology, the masses are reluctant to bare all the costs from leader's policy preference or take all the burden of its consequences. Therefore, the masses have become more demanding in the provision of public goods, and the leaders have become more accountable to the masses.

In China, the role of communist ideology has diminished since the introducing of economic reforms in 1970s. Chinese society drastically has changed by economic reforms and opening to the world (Shirk 2007, p. 5). It now consists of youth, the middle class, intellectuals, students returned from abroad, ethnic minorities, the migrant population, and the rural population - social groups with distinctive voices and demands. Therefore, with decreasing ideological factor, people have less channels to express their demands and grievances that resulted in Tiananmen Incident in 1989. Acknowledging the negative lessons of Tiananmen Incident, post-Jiang leaders are preoccupied with domestic politics, as their political survival depends on being attentive to the people who might come out on the streets to protest. One of the main responsibilities of the leader is to prevent these protests and protect the elites from the masses. To do that, post-Jiang leaders must appease the masses by implementing the policy programs that would solve problems and provide public goods.

Although post-Jiang leaders occupied by far the most powerful positions in the political system, yet they are continuously grappled with the challenge of building up authority. When policy program promises do not match the achievements, their authority would be undermined, leading to slipping power over policy agenda. The leader can be outflanked by a rival opponent, expelled from the Party, arrested or even pay the price in terms of his own or his family members lives (Shirk 2007, p. 7). The painful lessons of power loss by Liu Shaoqi, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang makes post-Jiang leaders sensitive to political survival¹³.

After Deng's landmark economic reforms and Jiang's economic strategy to maintain GDP growth at all cost, deeper issues came to the fore. How to sustain economic growth without a genuine decentralization of economic power that might challenge the CCP control over economic issues? How to solve national-level imbalances, rural-urban income gap, widespread

¹³ At the center of Tiananmen drama in 1989 was Zhao Ziyang, General Secretary of the CCP, who ascended position from Hu Yaobang. Zhao was a supporter of political reforms, acquiring many conservative opponents in the Party. The split within the PBC over the political liberalization led to the widespread demonstration at the Tiananmen Square. Zhao's incompetence to stop the long-lasting demonstrations strengthened the influence of his rival opponent, Li Peng, who with the support of Deng Xiaoping decided to implement martial law. Consequently, Zhao was expelled from the CCP and spent all his life under "home arrest," similar to Khrushchev's path after political defeat in 1964.

corruption and degradation of the environment? How to appease public demands for political liberalization, which challenges the leading role of the Party and its monopoly of political, economic, and social life?

To address these issues, Hu proposed “harmonious society” policy, focusing on budgetary redistribution, provision of public goods, and expansion of political participation. To promote his policy program Hu used SARS crisis to throw his opponents onto political defense and present the urgent necessity of improving social welfare system, and rural-urban imbalances. At the same time, Hu focused on building his coalition in officialdom and promoting his policy preferences among elites and public. Moreover, the leader increased political participation in order to obtain mass support. When expectations over reforms did not match with actual achievements, the credibility of Hu’s claims came to be doubted during the last stage of authority-building. To rebuild his credibility in the elites, Hu retreated from the previous policy promises, tightening control over media and Internet, and changing the economic course to GDP advancement during the second term. While Hu’s authority declined during the third stage, the leader has no alternative but to leave all three posts of General Secretary of the CCP, Presidency and the chief of the CMC after his term finished¹⁴.

In contrast, Xi’s power succession was the result of consensus-building among all the elites and patronage of Jiang Zemin. Xi has never raised the issue of political reform in his “China dream” concept, which aims to fill the gap in *raison d’être*, creating the sense of national purpose and mobilizing the masses. In contrast to Hu, Xi achieved compliance with his policy preference by pulling the rank and purging rivals in the political establishment. The leader obtained the top position in six out of fourteen Leading Groups, while five groups are led by his affiliates. As the radical socio-economic reforms are difficult to push forward, Xi promoted Belt and Road initiative that seeks to solve China’s national-level imbalances while strengthening China’s geopolitical role in the world. Xi’s proposed policies resulted in rapid authority-building in the elites and the masses, which helped to acquire a high level of personalistic authority by the end of the first term. His high level of authority in the domestic audience resulted in constitution amendment of term limits abolishment in 2018. However, this trend does not ensure his life-long tenure, as the elites and the masses continuously challenge the leader’s authority. When the promises would not match the real achievements in socio-

¹⁴ Although Lam (2015) argues that Hu has tried to stay in the position of Chairman of the CMC after 2012, yet as the generals supported Xi, Hu has vacated the position (Lam 2015, p. 8).

economic or foreign policies, the leader's authority would be undermined, and he would be thrown onto political defense.

Another particular issue in the Chinese leader's consideration is the state's integrity. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang are historically, politically, and economically different cases. Yet, they are similar in the sense that the regions demand for higher autonomy at a minimum and at a maximum the sovereignty from China (except Taiwan, which is de facto sovereign country). Thus, the leader's ability to find consensus or to appease local discontent augment authority in the elites. Hu and Xi adopted two different approaches to Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong policy-making. Hu, in all three cases, chose the consensual strategy, which gradually built an interconnection with Beijing. Although Tibet and Xinjiang have received moderate attention from the leader, Hong Kong's role has increased in financial and investment projects nationwide.

As Hong Kong was transferred to China in 1997, the major objective in dealing with Hong Kong for the leader was to maintain social stability. From the beginning, the policy "one country, two systems" was obvious too difficult to maintain not only to foreign observers but also to Beijing ruling elite. Therefore, after the unsuccessful attempt to impose new constitutional law in Hong Kong and subsequent street protests in 2003¹⁵, Hu offered a new policy vision toward Hong Kong that would integrate it with the Mainland, thereby building authority in the elite. Hu proposed an economic-exchange policy, integrating Hong Kong economically and make it dependent on Mainland. First, there was Pearl River Delta Zone (PRD Zone) that sought to integrate Hong Kong and Macau with Guangzhou. This would balance the labor shortages in Hong Kong while increasing jobs and opportunities for Mainland Chinese. Second, Hong Kong actively participated in Mainland investment projects. In 2003 Hong Kong invested into the Shandong province industry and to Chongqing province (\$331 million). At the same time, the Chinese visiting Hong Kong has sharply increased, thereby developing the tourism sector. While the investment was not much successful for Hong Kong businessmen, nevertheless Hu's goal to engage Hong Kong people in economic activities was reached¹⁶. The introduced policy maintained social stability, resulting in Hu's high level of authority. However, putting to the shelf the political problem, and looking for consensus only

¹⁵ "... Hong Kong shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the [Central People's Government](#)..." (Basic Law 2003).

¹⁶ From 2002 to 2012 the import and export from Hong Kong to China has increased from 41% to 50% and 26% to 47% respectively (Data is taken from www.oec.world).

economic sector was not entirely effective in the long run. The protests outburst ten years later forming the umbrella movement, as a response to Xi’s new policy vision toward Hong Kong.

Similarly, to Hu, Xi had faced the conflict in 2014 in Hong Kong, when first the dock workers were striking for higher wages, and better benefits in Hong Kong, and later the massive students’ protests occurred calling for universal suffrage, promised to Hong Kong by 2017. However, in contrast to Hu, Xi took a harder line toward Hong Kong. Although he promised the city-state universal suffrage in 2017, yet he limited candidacies to candidates to the Hong Kong highest post of “Chief Executive” vetted by the Beijing committee (Tilly 2006, p. 90-91). During the 19th CCP National Congress, Xi made a clear statement that “any attempt to endanger China’s sovereignty and security, to challenge the power of the central government” crosses the red line, referring to Hong Kong’s demands over universal suffrage, Xinjiang and Tibet sovereignty. Xi called Hong Kong to “fulfill constitutional responsibility of safeguarding China’s sovereignty, security and development goals,” undermining any Hong Kong’s desire to have a different political and economic course.

Some observers explain Xi’s confrontational strategy by his individual characteristics. In fact, the domestic politics left little room for Xi to maneuver in Hong Kong pro-democracy demands. Since Hong Kong joined China, Beijing political elite and their family members developed business in Hong Kong. Therefore, the leader has to maintain social stability, striking down the protesters, keeping the Beijing power over Hong Kong’s political and economic activities¹⁷. To gain support from the elites, Xi portrayed himself as a guarantor of their family interests in Hong Kong by introducing the white paper, which deliberated Beijing’s “comprehensive jurisdiction” over Hong Kong. The second domestic reason for a more coercive policy toward Hong Kong was Beijing’s problems in Xinjiang and Tibet. These ethnically different regions challenge CCP’s and leader’s authority for the past 30 years. Therefore, acting hard in Xinjiang and building re-education camps, Xi could not show the more flexible and soft line to Hong Kong. Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are all interconnected. If any part goes independent, it will trigger other secessionist movements.

<i>Leader</i>	<i>Stage of authority-building</i>	<i>Domestic policy</i>	<i>Foreign policy</i>	<i>Level of authority</i>
<i>Hu Jintao (2002-2012)</i>	<i>Power Succession</i>	<i>Harmonious society</i>	<i>Harmonious world</i>	<i>Medium</i>

¹⁷ During Xi’s first term, many of his faction allies have been connected to Hong Kong business. For example, Shanghai Gang member Wu Bangguo’s grandson was CEO of New Energy Industry Investment Fund Feng Shandong, based in Hong Kong. Grandson of Chen Xiaoxin and son of Chen Yuan the member of 17th Central Committee, Chen Xun had Zeniphs China Capital. Politburo member Li Changchun’s daughter Li Dong has BOC International Holdings in Hong Kong.

	<i>Ascendancy</i>	<i>Harmonious society, Scientific development</i>	<i>Harmonious world</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Political Survival</i>	<i>Scientific development, GDP growth, limit of political participation</i>	<i>Mixture of cooperative and assertive foreign policies</i>	<i>Low</i>
Xi Jinping (2012-)	<i>Power Succession</i>	<i>China's Dream</i>	<i>China's Dream and Belt and Road Initiative</i>	<i>Medium</i>
	<i>Ascendancy</i>	<i>China's Dream and Made in China 2025</i>	<i>China's Dream</i>	<i>High</i>

Although domestic problems outweigh international ones in considerations of Chinese leadership, the success or failures of foreign policy strategy affect the leader's authority, strengthening or undermining it respectively. Post-Jiang leaders must provide a new foreign policy vision, which adequately responds to China's ascending role and secure the state's core interests. During the first term, Hu opted to build his authority by demonstrating that China now plays a pro-active role in international affairs, promoting a "harmonious world" policy. He promised to secure Chinese national interests by pursuing a "good neighbor" policy, initiating deeper economic cooperation with Japan, ASEAN, Russia, and the EU, while maintaining nonconfrontational position toward the US. In contrast, Xi created the sense of national élan by introducing his concept of China's dream, which anchors in emotionally-charged nationalism, seeking to provide an unrelenting quest for retrieving "lost" lands and attaining past greatness. Constructing artificial islands and increasing military presence in the South China Sea, a proclamation of ADIZ in the East China Sea are his efforts to advance his foreign policy appeal.

This study finds that both Hu and Xi exploited internal problems and external tensions to create the atmosphere of crisis in order to play upon elite fears of social instability and present their policy appeals as the best solution. The former leader exploited SARS epidemics in 2003 and anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005 to push forward his "harmonious society" and "good neighbor" policies. Through a combination of patronage and payoff, Hu consolidated power within the Party, avoiding playing too heavily upon elite fears of the masses. After "harmonious world" and "harmonious society" policies did not bring the promised results, Hu changed his foreign policy in territorial disputes to confrontational posture, in order to rebuild his slipping

authority. In comparison, Xi exploited the corruption scandal of Bo Xilai in 2012 and proclaimed ADIZ in 2013 to make common cause with the masses against his powerful opponents, playing upon elite fears of the masses and pushing elite to accept his policy proposals. Xi rapidly consolidated power in the political establishment, using the anti-corruption campaign to purge rivals and present himself as a strong leader. When we look back on Hu and Xi administrations, we find that stage of political succession struggle and power consolidation was followed by a period of ascendancy of the Party leader, which in turn was followed by the period of decline in Hu's case and rise in Xi's case. Each stage posed a distinct authority-building challenge to the leader.

V. Case Study

Model 2.2 Anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005. In 2005 China witnessed large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations, holding for three weeks. At least 38 cities held demonstrations, including protest marches, street signature, and Internet campaigns. Began on April 2nd in the cities of Chengdu and Shenzhen, demonstrations have erupted in Beijing, Guangzhou a week later, and other cities across China. In Beijing there were about 10 thousand protesters, gathering along the streets and throwing stones at the Japanese Embassy. In Shanghai, more than 20 thousand people marched and protested in front of the Japanese Consulate. Consumers' boycotts of Japanese goods accompanied the street demonstrations. Later, Japan demanded compensation for all damages, caused by the demonstrations and warned risk of losing US\$178 billion.

A series of events have triggered the anti-Japanese demonstrations. First, in February 2005 American and Japanese foreign and defense ministers signed an agreement, in which Taiwan was for the first time listed as a common strategic objective. The US-Japan statement contradicted "One China" principle, provoking the Chinese citizens' anger (Washington Post 2005). Second, the Japanese government approved new history textbooks, which interpreted the 1937 Nanjing massacre as an incident¹⁸. Third, on February 9, 2005, Tokyo announced that a lighthouse on the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands would be put under Japanese "state control" and managed by the Japanese Coast Guard. The announcement resulted in the demonstration of 50 Chinese activists in front of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. Forth, in 2004 Japan, along with other G4 countries¹⁹ began jointly campaigning to increase the number of permanent seats in the UN Security Council. In contrast to previous nationalistic

¹⁸ In fact, during one month Japanese Imperial army has killed around 300 thousands of Chinese (Wakabayashi 2007).

¹⁹ Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan.

demonstrations, the leadership started to allow to express public anger, by permitting activists to sail around disputable Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and to hold demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy.

As Hu did not fully consolidate power during the first term, he delayed the government's response to the Japanese provocations. Acting assertively to Japan could prove Hu's willingness to be responsive to public opinion, thus strengthening his credibility. Yet, this decision might create unfavorable conditions for China's economic development, as well as would run a risk of letting the demonstrations slipped out of control. Until April 21st, the government showed its first attempts to stop the demonstrations by warning the citizens not to engage in "illegal behavior." Later, China vetoed Japan's bid in the Security Council, referring to public pressures and demanding from Japan to change its attitude toward history first.

Indeed, Hu's strategy in delaying the response to Japan and permitting the anti-Japanese demonstrations allowed him to play upon their fears of social instability. Exaggerating the atmosphere of crisis Hu promoted his cooperation policy among elites to demonstrate the need to change public attitude toward Japan. As Japan is one of the major economic partners, Hu sent retired diplomats to the universities to explain the importance of the relations with the state, instead of detaining people and oppressing the protests. Soon after the demonstrations, Hu sought to ease the tensions through several meetings with Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi during the Asia-Africa summit. In 2006 Hu went one step further with newly appointed Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and proposed cooperation over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

In contrast to Jiang's delayed response strategy, adopted in 1990 and 1996 Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute crises, Hu signed Joint Statement between two governments on Comprehensive Promotion of a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" in 2006 (MOFA 2008). According to this agreement, the East China Sea is an area of "peace, cooperation and friendship," that should accelerate the process of dialogue and consultation between two states. In this rhetoric, states agreed to set up a panel of technical experts to jointly explore the area of Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, fight against illegal fishing and withhold the provocations.

Model 1.1. Fishing trawler incident in 2010. On 7th September 2010, the collision between Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese Coast Guard patrol boats took place near the disputable Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. As Chinese fishing trawler was operating near disputed islands, Tokyo reported this incident as "illegal fishing operation" and arrested Chinese fishing

boat captain (Drifte 2014). Coinciding with the 79th anniversary of the Mukden Incident²⁰, the event has caused an outbreak of anti-Japanese protests in China. The protesters demanded the government to take stronger actions against Japan.

Along with ambiguous achievements in socio-economic development, Hu's good-neighbor policy performance was also questionable. China, Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines could not come up to consensus in organizing collective technical groups for joint exploration of energy resources in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. To the contrary of what Hu promised, the economic integration between China and the states has decreased during 2005-2010²¹. Moreover, Hu's peaceful development was not easily sold in the West. The number of articles, presenting China as a threat has rapidly surged during Hu's administration²². Although, the foreign media coverage was largely beyond Hu's control, yet shaped public opinion and government attitudes toward China, which were still hostile.

To make matters worse, the US President Barack Obama approved arms sales to Taiwan and met the Dalai Lama, adding to Hu's insecurity over domestic instability. In addition, the Sino-US relations continued to be deteriorated by Secretary Clinton's statement at the annual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 2010. At the ARF, Clinton stated that the US supported resolving the various territorial disputes without coercion (Chang 2010). This statement has been interpreted by Chinese leadership as an "attack," signaling that the US would not be dedicated to a joint statement to respect China's core interests in the East China Sea and the South China Sea (Ibid).

In this context, Hu's cooperation strategy became insufficient in the eyes of the elites and the masses, urging him to sponsor a new approach. Deciding to act assertively, Hu demanded the Japanese side to release the Chinese captain immediately and warned to take strong countermeasures if the captain would not be released. To pressure Japan to release the captain, Hu canceled the ministerial-level talks on issues of joint energy and blocked its exports of rare earth, which were essential to Japan's auto and electronics industries. Meanwhile, Hu oppressed demonstrations blocking any blogs and message boards, which concerned

²⁰ On September 18, 1931, Japan bombed a railway line near Shenyang (Mukden), using the incident as a reason to occupy southern Manchuria.

²¹ China and Japan trade integration index decreased from 0.1296 in 2005 to 0.1001; China and the Philippines trade integration index decreased from 0.0123 in 2005 to 0.0093 in 2010. In contrast, the Sino-Vietnamese trade integration index increased from 0.0057 in 2005 to 0.0101 in 2010. Calculations have been made by the author, using formula

$$\text{Trade integration index} = \frac{\text{exports of country } i \text{ to country } j + \text{imports of country } i \text{ to country } j}{\text{total exports of country } i + \text{total imports of country } i}$$

²² See the number of articles, containing word combination "China threat" in Appendix 10.

information about the protests, to control anti-Japanese public anger and to maintain domestic stability.

Hu's decision to act assertively in Fishing Trawler Incident reflected the leadership's consensus over the question of how to mitigate territorial disputes at minimum risks. As the anti-Japanese demonstrations erupted in major cities, the leadership's strong measure to counter Japan's actions met mass demands, alleviating public anger and preventing social instability. Moreover, Hu successfully oppressed the anti-Japanese protests, proving his capability to maintain domestic order to the political elites. Therefore, building consensus in the elites and acting assertively toward Japan, Hu redefined his policy strategy and reestablished his credibility.

Hu's assertive response left Japan with only one choice. On 24th September, Japan's release of the captain and official apology marked a victory of China's foreign policy and, in particular of Hu, who rebuilt his credibility in the elites and the masses. One month after the collision Hu persuade the elites to cool down the tensions. During the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Brussels, Japanese Prime Minister Kan Naoto and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met to reiterate the partnership between two states.

Model 1.2. Proclamation of ADIZ in 2013. In November 2013, Xi declared an ADIZ that covers most of the East China Sea, beyond the Flight Information Regions (FIRs) managed by Chinese air traffic controllers. Overlapping the established ADIZs of Japan, ROK and Taiwan, China's ADIZ includes the airspace over the disputable Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the airspace over the disputable Ieodo rock, administered by ROK. According to the new rules, flying over China's ADIZ requires a report and identification of foreign airplanes. While the US, Japan, and other China's neighbors considered this action as "destabilizing," undermining regional stability, it purposed to build Xi's authority in the masses.

As Xi has proclaimed China's dream concept, focusing on the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the leader felt the need for a quick win to buttress his authority and to demonstrate anew his policy effectiveness. Therefore, the proclamation of ADIZ in 2013 served as an effort to show the necessity of Xi's China's dream strategy, strengthening his authority in public and proving his capability to rule in the elites. In contrast to cases in 2010 and 2012, ADIZ became China's first provocation over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute.

Diaoyu/Senkaku islands provide the best arena for the Xi's China's dream promotion. Recalling the memories of Western and Japanese colonization, the series of territorial disputes between China and its neighbors have intensified Chinese people negative views on both the

US and Japan. In this regard, the Pew Research revealed that the number of Chinese considering China's relations with the US as hostile went up from 8% in 2010 to 26% in 2012; after only 8% of Chinese people had a favorable view of Japan in 2014 (Pew Research Center 2014). Stirring up nationalist sentiments, Xi frequently promoted the concept of China's core interests and "legitimate rights"- i.e., sovereignty and territorial integrity, which China will "never give up" (See Xi Jinping speech during group study session with members of Politburo of the CPC Central Committee). While Xi attempted to balance economic and political issues with South China Sea claimants, it was safer for him to pump up public hostile view of Japan and declare ADIZ. Xi strengthened his credibility in the masses and presented himself as the man who could lead the country responsibly in new directions, preserving China's sovereignty claims and striving for past greatness.

Moreover, the ADIZ proclamation raised public demands and expectation on political elites. Previously, the CCP legitimacy was only the matter of the socio-economic prosperity that the Party should deliver to the citizens. Now the CCP legitimacy also depends on retrieving "lost" lands and attaining past greatness. By openly encouraging masses to raise their expectations and demands in foreign policy, Xi played upon elite fears of the masses and presented himself as a competent leader, who would meet the public needs and protect the elite from masses.

On the other side, the proclamation of ADIZ diverged public attention from the corruption scandal and socio-economic problems. Chinese people actively participated in online campaigns, offering broad support to Xi's ADIZ. According to the Global Times Public Opinion Research Centre, 53.6% of respondents believed that establishing the zone would give China the upper hand in solving its disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands (South China Morning Post 2013).

Nonetheless, as ADIZ proclamation might stir up public anger, Xi prevented large-scale demonstrations, censoring all the information about potential anti-Japanese protests in media and Internet. These measures presented him as a competent leader to the elites, who could maintain domestic control over the masses. Moreover, Xi acknowledged that the ADIZ establishment could heighten tensions with the countries and could be a perfect excuse for the US to expand its military power in Asia. Hence, Xi avoided taking a serious action over ADIZ that would fuel China's tensions with other countries, limiting the ADIZ role to a "paper tiger." Albeit the Ministry of National Defense of China proclaimed to adopt "defensive emergency" if any aircraft do not follow the regulations (China Daily 2013), there has been no evidence of

defensive emergency adopted in series of flight clashes after November 2013. For instance, in May 2014, there was a clash between Chinese fighter jets and Japanese military aircraft, which subsequently entered the ADIZ claimed by China, but China's defense ministry just accused Japanese air forces of "dangerous behavior." Furthermore, in March 2017 the Chinese military has issued a warning to US Air Force B-1 bomber over flying in the East China Sea.

Model 1.3. Establishment of military base in Djibouti. In 2017 China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti with 100 000 marine forces, which has been widely described as China's military expansionism. Geopolitically Djibouti is "a key node" in the Gulf of Aden-Suez Canal route, and where most of China's trade takes place. It is the main transportation route of oil exports from Egypt and Sudan to Asia. Djibouti is a platform for the US to expand its war on terror that has prevailed in the US foreign policy after 9/11. The US military forces account for 186 000 marines and about 40 000 reserves, while Japan has around 2000 militants in Djibouti.

Djibouti military base initiative is one of the programs of Xi's China's dream. While it presents Xi's achievements in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, it signals PLA increasing role security-related policies. Although the fundamental questions of foreign policy reside in the PBSC, where since Jiang there were no PLA members, the generals still affect the decision-making process through informal connection with PBSC members, and notably with Xi. As PLA has become the main support base for Xi's power consolidation during the first term, he has very closed ties with generals. In return to their support, PLA officers have dominated electronic and print media with muscular view on diplomacy. Similarly, to South China Sea military developments, military base in Djibouti is one of the major interests of the PLA. In early, 2018 general Zhou expressed the needs to set up another base in Gwadar (Pakistan) to secure China's national interests.

Second, Djibouti is a hub of the Belt and Road initiative in Africa. In return to the military base establishment, Xi offered Djiboutian government large package of loans and investment under the BRI program. However, the success of Xi's BRI received more skepticism worldwide. Djiboutian government found itself heavily indebted to Beijing and will hand over operations of the port to Chinese state-connected firms and will establish Djibouti-China free-trade zone, which substantially damages Djibouti relations with the US, EU, and Japan²³.

²³ Similar situation happened to Sri Lanka, the government of which has given the 99-years lease of newly constructed on Chinese investments port.

These negative perceptions of BRI create more hostile and untrustworthy international environment for China. Malaysia canceled several mega projects, Pakistan demanded a re-examination of projects costs in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and Myanmar sharply reduced costs for the Chinese-backed Kyaukpyu deepwater port. Subsequently, these measures affect Chinese companies, engaged in BRI projects, raising their costs and dissatisfaction of the leadership performance. The failure of BRI would potentially lead to high criticism of Xi among the Chinese private companies, *yangqi*, masses, and elites, undermining his authority.

VI. Conclusion

Two decades ago, the Chinese foreign policy's main objective was "reunification" with Taiwan, as Chinese leaders abide "hide capabilities and bide time" principle and thereby did not develop coherent foreign policy strategy with other countries. These days China has maintained Taiwan quest while expanding its core interests to the East and the South China Seas. The systemic and individual-level perspectives explain the expansion of Chinese external objectives and subsequent assertive external behavior occur under Xi. However, the domestic perspective and authority-building framework provide a more nuanced and sophisticated interpretation of the continuity and change of Chinese foreign policy.

First, the continuity of Chinese leaders' objective to Taiwan reunification is directly related to Party's and thereby leader's authorities. As Chinese leaders are preoccupied with Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong domestically, Taiwan is a bigger part of territorial integrity and national security objectives. China's elite would not allow any resistance or interference, not only because China challenges American hegemony in the region, but more importantly because these interconnected issues challenge the CCP authority. Departing from Taiwan's unresolved problem will jeopardize the protests for in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong, leading to social instability and slipping elites' authority.

Second, the change to a more assertive posture has occurred during Hu, showing the limitations of systemic and individual-level perspectives, that expects Chinese assertive external behavior under Xi's administration. The authority-building perspective provides several channels through which post-Jiang leaders found assertive foreign policy the best strategy for their political calculations. To rise within the leadership and increase elite dependence, leaders have to be sponsors of ideas, strategies, and projects in domestic politics and foreign affairs. In the post-Jiang period, the change to an assertive posture in the international arena occurs, when leader's policy program promises do not match with actual achievements, thus he tries to rebuild credibility among the elites by coopting and preempting

policy vision from other leadership members. The decision to act assertively in long-lasting disputes can contribute to a leader's augmentation of authority in the elites and the masses and raises his stakes in the decision-making process.

This happened with Hu during the second term when the failure of harmonious society and harmonious world policies became too apparent. His evaporating authority made the good-neighbor policy with Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines over the disputable islands less desirable and less feasible. Therefore, to rebuild credibility among the elites, Hu used economic countermeasures and military threats toward Japan in 2010 and 2012, while sending navies to Scarborough Shoal in 2012 to encounter the Philippines initiative to arrest Chinese fishing trawlers.

To outflank power opponents, the leader acts assertively to mobilize the masses, expanding his authority-building audience. Arguably, nationalism and per se great rejuvenation is a useful strategy to buttress public support. While Xi did not provide a sufficiently new approach for solving socio-economic problems, the leader pushed forward China's dream concept and BRI policy in external conduct. Its assertive promotions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea buttressed public support, while augmented his authority in the elites.

Similarly, during power succession, when a leader's authority is not high, he can act assertively to respond to prevailing opinions in his coalition. The leader attempts to empower his affiliates, providing more power on policy agenda in order to balance the opponents in the political establishment. Likewise, Xi's decision to establish a military base in Djibouti was influenced by the overall climate of opinion among the elites. In particular, to project China's rising capabilities and secure its economic interests. Moreover, the involvement in Djibouti gave the military a greater influence over the policy agenda. As the top military includes princelings, the base of Xi's coalition, the leader tried to empower his affiliates to strengthen the support in the political establishment.

Overwhelmed by domestic politics, post-Jiang leaders understand that acting blindly aggressive is like walking on thin ice. There is always a high possibility that their boldness in external conduct can backfire, leading to disruption of trade flows at a minimum and to a military collision at maximum. As there are objectively too disastrous consequences, this scenario would undermine the Party's authority and lead to social instability, resulting in the leader's slipping authority in the elites and the masses. Therefore, Chinese foreign policy continues to be cautious due to elite politics dynamics. Despite acting assertively, leaders try to escape the escalation of conflict and attempt to cool down the tensions. For instance,

anticipating to become the target of criticism over too ambitious foreign policy by the elites, Xi left ADIZ as a “paper tiger” since 2013, while bilaterally negotiating the disputes over the Spratlys with the Philippines after rejecting PCA decision in 2016. Similarly, Hu’s response toward Taiwan’s arms sales in 2010 has been limited to cancellation of military talks with the US and abolishment of permission to enter Hong Kong port for special vessels.

Although both states may appear to be trapped to compete for the top place of the great power hierarchy with a high possibility of conflict outbreak, yet the hegemonic war (Gilpin 1981) is not inevitable. In order not to nourish a self-fulfilling prophecy, Washington needs to look deeper into the black box of Chinese politics to understand the domestic sources of assertive foreign policy decisions. To do so, the authority-building framework serves as an analytical lens, which explores a leader’s role in the foreign policy decision-making process and traces how the leader maneuvers in the elites and buttresses mass support through advancing his policy preferences. It shows leaders in constant pressure from the elites and public opinion.

Focusing on leader’s struggle of authority-building, this study uncovers Chinese leaders’ fragility and insecurity not only with the masses but within the political establishment as well. Although both Hu and Xi occupied by far the most powerful positions in the Chinese political system, they had to grapple with the challenge of building up authority, fearing to lose power over policy agenda. The authority-building approach presents a different and more holistic portrayal of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping as Chinese leaders.

Although the personalities of Hu and Xi were different, we find them nonetheless engaging in similar patterns of behavior. Our first observation is that both leaders exploited the internal crisis and created an atmosphere of external crisis to present the necessity of their policy programs. Hu exploited the SARS crisis in 2003 to promote his harmonious society policy agenda, which aimed to narrow down the gap between rich and poor, urban and rural areas, east and west provinces. In 2005 the leader created the atmosphere of crisis, premised by Japanese controversy over historical books, bid to UN Security Council and its initiative to build lighting house on disputable Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Playing upon the fears of the elite of social unrest, Hu successfully promoted his cooperation strategy with Japan, as well as with the Philippines and Vietnam over the South China Sea. Similarly, Xi, exploited Bo Xilai corruption scandal to pressure the elites to approve his anti-corruption campaign, while ensuring to preserve political and economic privileges for them. To show the necessity of

China's dream concept, he proclaimed ADIZ, bolstering public support and proving to elites his competence to control the masses.

Post-Jiang leaders have increasingly used mass mobilization in order to outflank their powerful opponents in the political establishment. To push forward policy preferences, it is insufficient to get coalition support in the political establishment. Both Hu and Xi mobilized the masses in support of their policy programs to weaken powerful opponents. Moreover, coercion and repression as methods of mass control, have become increasingly inefficient in contrast to Mao's and Deng's eras due to socio-economic development. After the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, the CCP continuously fears the large-scale demonstrations, entailed by public dissatisfaction over Party performance in both internal and external issues. Therefore, leaders have become more acute to mass attitudes, institutionalizing the leader-masses linkage.

In contrast to the conventional image of Hu as a cautious and weak leader, as this study has found, his policy programs proved confrontational at times, seeking to restructure the Chinese economy and to launch political liberalization to some extent. However, when the costs of policy programs became obvious to elites and policy strategies in territorial disputes did not reach promised results, Hu's authority was undermined. Xi's power grab was possible due to Hu's failures in improving collective leadership in the decision-making process. By the end of Hu's second term, the leader's domestic and foreign policy achievements did not match with his promises, thereby leading to his slipping authority and inability to subordinate confronting factions' interests to form a policy.

Acknowledged the experience of his predecessor, Xi attempted to secure his political survival by redistributing the spoils of power. Yet, Xi fears elites more than masses. Although started under Hu, full-scale military modernization has been launched under Xi. His power consolidation strategy explains the China's recent militarization. Having no solid power base in Politburo, Xi found himself insecure in patronage webs of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao's affiliates. Therefore, the leader has promoted affiliated generals in PLA and princeling proteges in Politburo, while purging Jiang's and Hu's affiliates through the anti-corruption campaign. Moreover, Xi presides eight small leading groups, the effect of which has diminished the role of PBSC on policy agenda. These measures have served Xi to consolidate power and narrow down the decision-making process. Thus, Xi could accomplish party purges, crackdowns on private-sector tycoons, as well as tightening censorship, establishing "re-education" camps in Xinjiang, and oppressing protests in Hong Kong. However, Xi's authority in the CCP is not absolute. He is neither Mao nor Stalin, while China now is not the same as Mao's China. The

more assertive Xi behaves, the more enemies he would acquire. Thus, his ambitions to cling to power would result in the elite's greater conflict, forming the resistance to his leadership. Until that, China's foreign policy would suffer from erratic changes of course.

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