

## **China's Assertive Behavior**

### **Part One: On "Core Interests"**

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Among both casual observers and experts alike, the single most dominant theme in Sino-U.S. relations of the past year or more has been the emergence of a more "assertive China." In CLM 32, we examined how both Chinese and outside observers look at China's growing assertiveness on the international stage, i.e., the purely perceptual dimensions of the issue. In this and several subsequent CLMs, we intend to assess whether, to what extent, and in what manner, the Chinese government is becoming more assertive in several major areas of relevance to the United States: first, in defining and promoting the concept of "core interests;" second, with regard to U.S. political and military behavior along China's maritime periphery; third, concerning a variety of economic, trade, and finance issues, from so-called indigenous innovation to global standards regarding reserve currencies; and fourth, with regard to several international security-related issues, from counter-proliferation to climate change.

In each of these four areas, we shall to varying degrees attempt to answer several basic questions regarding Chinese assertiveness that build on those addressed in CLM 32: In what ways are Chinese leaders becoming more assertive, employing what methods, and to what apparent ends? Is Chinese assertiveness a "new" and highly significant phenomenon for U.S. interests, and if so, in what manner? What misconceptions, if any, exist about China's assertiveness? What internal and external forces are driving China's assertive behavior? In particular, is Chinese assertiveness associated with particular interest groups or factions within Chinese state and society? How is China's assertiveness evolving in response to both inside and outside pressures? And finally, what does the above tell us about the likely future direction and strength of China's assertiveness over the next several years?

#### **What Kind of Assertive Behavior?**

As indicated in CLM32, China's assertiveness means different things to different people. As a result, the concept, in describing Chinese behavior, is somewhat vague and ambiguous, potentially encompassing everything from attempts to play a more active role in a wide variety of international regimes, to deliberate efforts to alter basic international norms and challenge the fundamental national interests or policies of the United States. In addition, there are many forms

of assertiveness, from mere verbal statements or comments, to concerted official actions that appear designed to intimidate or even to force other nations or foreign entities to change their behavior. As this typology suggests, some types of Chinese assertiveness are probably beneficial to the workings of the international system and U.S. interests while others are not. Indeed, U.S. officials welcome a more active, engaged China that seeks both to strengthen and to shape international institutions and norms in ways that advance prosperity, stability, and the peaceful resolution of problems. They presumably do not welcome a China that desires or appears to do otherwise.

In addition, not all indications of Chinese assertiveness (whether “good” or “bad” for the U.S. and other Western powers) are sanctioned or supported by the Chinese government. Indeed, as we have seen in CLM 32, many unofficial Chinese observers and pundits express or advocate various levels and types of assertiveness that are not reflected in official Chinese statements or documents.

Thus, any assessment of Chinese assertiveness must distinguish between official and unofficial actions or utterances, productive or creative assertiveness (what one might call “positive activism”) and confrontational, destabilizing, or threatening (from a Western or U.S. perspective) assertiveness. This essay, and those that follow, focus primarily on identifying, measuring, and assessing official or governmental forms of negative or potentially threatening Chinese assertiveness, given its clear significance for future Sino-American relations and the obvious attention that it has received among outside observers.

### **Why “Core Interests”?**

Since at least November of 2009, when it was inserted in the U.S.-China Joint Statement between Hu Jintao and Barack Obama during the latter’s state visit to China,<sup>1</sup> the notion of China’s “core interests” (核心利益) has received enormous attention among both media pundits and experts alike. Many observers interpret the use of this concept by the PRC government as an indication of strong (and growing) Chinese assertiveness in the international arena, for three apparent reasons: first, because in recent years the concept has been more formally defined and included in official PRC (and at least one bilateral U.S.-PRC) statements and documents to a greater extent than in the past; second, because some Chinese officials and unofficial observers have apparently asserted that China’s “core interests” are essentially non-negotiable in nature, thus conveying a level of rigidity and perhaps militancy toward whatever issue might be defined as a core interest; and third, because China is allegedly steadily defining more and more controversial international issues as affecting its “core interests,” including U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, meetings between foreign leaders and the Dalai Lama, and disputed territories in the South China Sea, thus by implication challenging an array of foreign activities relating to such issues. In the remainder of this essay, we shall examine these observations in turn.

### **Increasing Usage and an Official Definition**

An examination of the historical record indicates that the Chinese government has indeed in recent years invoked China's "core interests" far more frequently, and presented publicly a more explicit definition of the term, than it has done in the past.<sup>2</sup> In fact, official Chinese sources only began referring to China's "core interests" on a fairly frequent basis in 2003-2004. The term was initially used in Chinese official media during the eighties and nineties in reference to the interests of *other* nations.<sup>3</sup>

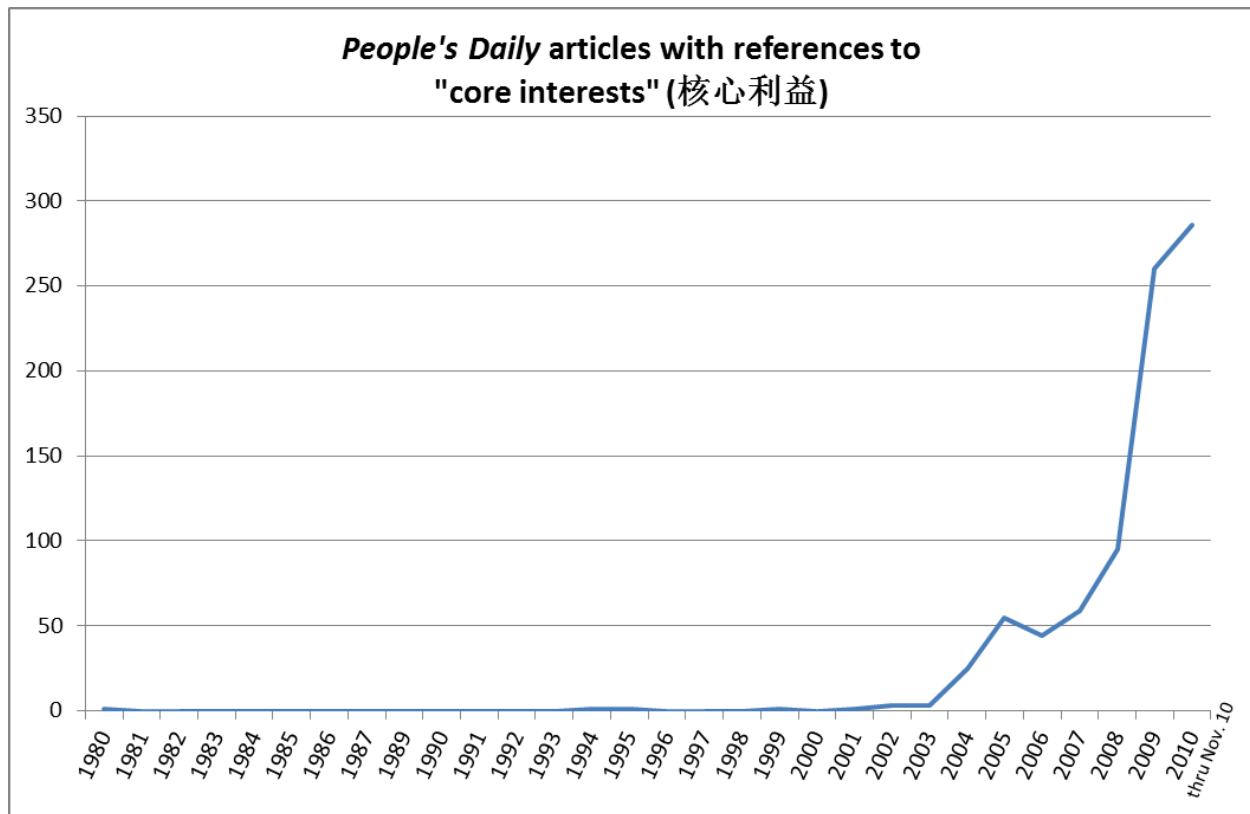
It was first used with reference to China in the mid-nineties and in the first years of the new century, but primarily in a domestic context. At that time, the term was closely associated with and seemed to emerge from the term "fundamental interests" (根本利益) as applied to China's economic and social reform policies and the general maintenance of domestic order and stability.<sup>4</sup>

The term "core interests" has also been used in official PRC media alongside the term "major concerns" (重大关切).<sup>5</sup> The latter term was in fact employed earlier than "core interests" in official PRC media and at times was used in joint statements between China and foreign governments, e.g., in a report on a meeting between Jiang Zemin and President Chirac of France in 2000. It has also been used to refer to the Taiwan issue and the One-China policy.<sup>6</sup>

The term "core interests" was apparently first applied to China in a foreign context in PRC media in early 2002, but in an unofficial capacity, i.e., in an article written by a Chinese scholar.<sup>7</sup> The first official foreign-oriented reference to the term "core interests" appeared in a report of a meeting between former Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and former Secretary of State Colin Powell on January 19, 2003, in which Tang identified Taiwan as among China's "core interests." (see below for more on the link between Taiwan and the emergence of the official PRC use of "core interests").<sup>8</sup>

The first apparent official identification of the oft-espoused concepts of "sovereignty and territorial integrity" (主权和领土完整) as a Chinese "core interest" occurred in April 2004, again in the context of a discussion of Taiwan.<sup>9</sup> During the remainder of 2004, both official and unofficial Chinese usage of the term "core interests" *in reference to sovereignty and territorial interests (and Taiwan in particular)* increased significantly.<sup>10</sup> The related issue of "national security" (国家安全) was apparently first explicitly identified officially as a core interest in a speech given by former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in September 2006 and reported in the *People's Daily*.<sup>11</sup>

As one might surmise from the above references, major official and unofficial PRC media mentions of China's core interests in a foreign policy context increased notably beginning in the early 2000s, from a mention in one *People's Daily* article in 2001 to 260 articles in 2009 and 286 articles in 2010 as of November 10.



Moreover, by approximately 2004-2006, Chinese officials were routinely mentioning the need for countries to respect and accommodate one another's "core interests" in speeches with foreign officials and dignitaries, thus indicating that the term had not only entered the official lexicon but also become an important element of PRC diplomacy.<sup>12</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the senior Chinese official responsible for PRC foreign policy (State Councillor Dai Bingguo) publicly defined the general elements of China's core interests in July 2009, during a session of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED). Dai stated in his closing remarks at the S&ED that the term includes three components: 1) preserving China's basic state system and national security (维护基本制度和国家安全); 2) national sovereignty and territorial integrity (国家主权和领土完整); and 3) the continued stable development of China's economy and society (经济社会的持续稳定发展).<sup>13</sup> Variations of this multi-part definition have occurred officially since that time, and been repeated by unofficial Chinese sources as well.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, Chinese officials have also at times identified "national unity" or "reunification" (国家统一/两岸统一/统一大业) as a Chinese core interest, as well as "independence" (独立), in some instances alongside the above three elements. However, the former references were almost invariably intended to buttress the Chinese position regarding issues associated with territorial integrity, such as Taiwan, and hence can be taken as largely duplicative of an element contained

in Dai Bingguo's list.<sup>15</sup> In the case of "independence," references have been very few in number, always occurred in a bilateral or multilateral context (with regard to the "core interests" of both countries or of countries in general), and in some cases the word was inserted within the phrase "sovereignty and territorial integrity," as in: "The defense of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is the core interest of every country."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the concept is, as with "national unity" or "reunification," most closely associated with the general category of sovereignty and territorial integrity as a core interest.

Chinese officials have also identified "human rights" as a Chinese core interest. However, this has only occurred nine times in official Foreign Ministry sources. Hu Jintao used it twice, in November 2006, during state visits to Laos and Pakistan. In both instances, he was expressing China's appreciation for the support the two countries have extended to Beijing's position on "...Taiwan, Tibet, human rights and other major questions involving China's state sovereignty and core interests."<sup>17</sup> The seven other references include two from Yang Jiechi in 2008 and five from various ambassadors, including statements by Zhou Wenzhong, ambassador to the U.S., in November 2009, and Song Zhe, ambassador to the EU, in December 2008.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, overall, this context seems to suggest that human rights as a core interest refers primarily to Beijing's right to determine how the lives of China's citizenry will be promoted, especially in contested regions such as Taiwan and Tibet, e.g., via the advancement of local economic and social conditions. In other words, the issue is again associated with domestic interests or other core interests involving sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Therefore, overall, the most common and authoritative formulation of the general concepts comprising China's core interests appears to remain that of Dai Bingguo, presented in July 2009. That said, since Dai articulated his definition, Chinese officials have continued to place the most emphasis on "sovereignty and territorial integrity" as the most important characteristic of China's core interests. The first and third elements of Dai's definition—"basic state system and national security," and "continued stable social and economic development"—are still only infrequently mentioned in the context of China's "core interests."

### **Motivated by the Taiwan Issue?**

It is not entirely clear what prompted official Chinese sources to begin employing the term "core interests" to such a degree and in this manner. Of course, the defense or protection of China's national security, the PRC system or regime, and Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the protection and advancement of China's economy and society, have been a staple of PRC foreign policy for decades. Indeed, they are basic to any nation's definition of its national interests.

That said, it is quite likely that Beijing began to sharpen and promote vigorously the concept of "core interests" in response to growing concerns over the Taiwan issue. By 2004-2005, Beijing had become extremely worried about what it regarded as the efforts of former Taiwan president

Chen Shuibian to achieve *de jure* Taiwan independence, possibly with U.S. backing. In response, during that time, the National Peoples' Congress promulgated the so-called Anti-Secession Law (ASL) (in March 2005), and PRC officials began pressing (or warning) the U.S. and other countries to reject Chen's efforts and to recognize China's vital interests on the issue.<sup>19</sup> As indicated above, it is precisely at this time that Chinese officials began to emphasize China's core interests, and to specify Taiwan as a primary example.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, for some unofficial Chinese observers, Beijing's "core interests" are primarily about sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>21</sup>

### **Used as a Warning and for Diplomatic Leverage**

As suggested above, China's relatively recent and repeated invocation of the phrase "core interests" generate concern among both foreigners and some Chinese in large part because of: 1) Beijing's efforts to pressure foreign governments (and especially the U.S.) to officially acknowledge acceptance of the general concept and the specific policy issues to which it applies (such as Taiwan---discussed below); and, more importantly, 2) its apparent association with a rigid, uncompromising diplomatic or military stance. In other words, the appearance of the term appears to signal a more vigorous attempt to lay down a marker, or type of warning, regarding the need for the U.S. and other countries to respect (indeed, accept with little if any negotiation) China's position on certain issues.

Regarding the first point, beginning in the early 2000s, Chinese officials increasingly pressed the U.S. not only to issue formal statements indicating a willingness to respect one another's core interests (as indicated above), but, in recent years, to explicitly and formally recognize the category of "core interests and major concerns" in general, as a necessary basis for the advancement of the bilateral relationship.<sup>22</sup> This pressure campaign culminated in the inclusion of the term in the November 2009 U.S.-China Joint Statement. This was the first time that it had been used in an official, high-level Sino-American statement or communiqué. In fact, even in past meetings where senior Chinese officials were pressing their U.S. counterparts to respect China's "core interests," U.S. officials never repeated the phrase, but instead merely conveyed support for various long-standing U.S. policies, such as the One-China policy and the three joint communiqués.<sup>23</sup>

The 1972 and 1982 Sino-U.S. joint communiqués do affirm "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states" and "respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity" (respectively), which Beijing has since identified as one of its core interests.<sup>24</sup> However, by November 2009, Beijing had significantly expanded its definition of core interests to include several other general categories, as indicated in the July 2009 statement by Dai Bingguo, discussed above. Therefore, such past U.S. acknowledgments (of respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity) could not be viewed as a precedent for the U.S. acceptance of Beijing's "core interests" in the Hu-Obama joint statement.

Since the signing of the November 2009 Joint Statement, Beijing has repeatedly and emphatically cited the mutual commitment to respect one another's "core interests" contained in that document as a basis for its demands that Washington must alter its behavior in a variety of areas, from arms sales to Taiwan to presidential meetings with the Dalai Lama. Indeed, the Chinese have branded the joint statement as an "important consensus" that is a major step in the development of a "new era" (新时期) in U.S.-China relations. It is often mentioned in official Chinese sources alongside the three Sino-U.S. joint communiqués.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the association of "core interests" with an uncompromising official PRC stance, the historical record suggests that, although Chinese officials have not to our knowledge used the phrase "non-negotiable" (不能谈判, 非流通, 不可转让, 免谈的) to describe China's stance toward its "core interests," they have certainly employed similar terms on many occasions. For example, officials have stated that China will "never waver, compromise or yield" (决不动摇, 决不妥协, 绝不会让步), will not haggle or bargain (付价 还价), and "must stand firm, be clear-cut, have courage to fight, and never trade away principles" (必须立场坚定, 旗帜鲜明, 敢于斗争, 善于斗争, 决不拿原则作交易), when dealing with its core interests, and issues involving sovereignty and territorial integrity in particular.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Chinese officials and official media sources have at times separately used the term "non-negotiable" to refer to issues that Beijing has described as a "core interest," notably, sovereignty and territorial integrity, involving, e.g., Hong Kong, Taiwan and Tibet.<sup>27</sup> And in some cases, Chinese officials have explicitly connected the defense of specific core interests (again, most notably sovereignty and territorial integrity) with the possible use of force. Such language has been used quite consistently for years.<sup>28</sup> Of course, even official (and unofficial) statements of strong resolve and a refusal to compromise do not necessarily guarantee that Beijing would in reality in every instance employ such a rigid approach (including, perhaps the use of force) to defend what it has defined as its core interests. Yet, at least with regard to sovereignty and territorial issues, the historical record of China's behavior suggests that such a possibility would be extremely high, and certainly cannot be dismissed.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, what China labels as its "core interest" is certainly significant. And so, perhaps the most important issue becomes, what specific policy areas does Beijing include among its core interests?

### **Territorial Issues (and Especially Taiwan) are at the Core**

A large number of unofficial Chinese and foreign observers have identified a range of issues as being among China's "core interests." These include, Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang-related issues, territories in the South China Seas, the defense of the Yellow Sea, the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, bilateral trade, and the value of China's currency. Some of these issues (such as Taiwan and access to international waters near China) directly concern critical U.S. security interests.<sup>30</sup> In truth, much of the unofficial commentary contains inaccuracies, distortions, and misconceptions.

A close examination of the historical record, along with personal conversations with knowledgeable senior U.S. officials, confirm that thus far, the Chinese government has officially, and repeatedly, identified only three closely related issues as specific core interests: the defense of China's sovereignty claims regarding Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

As indicated above, the Taiwan issue probably originally triggered official use of the term "core interests" in the realm of foreign affairs and has clearly been most often associated with its official use.<sup>31</sup> On the subject of Tibet, Chinese officials have of course for many years referred to Tibet's status as part of China as an important or fundamental sovereignty issue. For example, the 1992 PRC white paper on Tibet stated that "there is no room for haggling" (讨价还价) on the fundamental principle (根本原则) that "Tibet is an inalienable part of China."<sup>32</sup> However, perhaps the first (or at least an early) occurrence of an official, explicit reference to Tibet as a Chinese "core interest" occurred in April 2006, in a meeting between former PRC Vice President Zeng Qinghong and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Chinese officials have often referred to Xinjiang's sovereign status as an important Chinese interest. The earliest use of the term "core interest" in reference to that Chinese region apparently also dates from 2006. In November of that year, in a speech in Pakistan, Hu Jintao first identified "the fight against East Turkestan" terrorist forces as a Chinese "core interest," alongside Taiwan, Tibet, and human rights. This clearly implies that the defense of China's sovereignty over Xinjiang (which the East Turkestan terrorist forces violently contest) is a PRC core interest.<sup>34</sup> On subsequent occasions (beginning largely in 2009 it seems), Chinese officials have referred simply to "Xinjiang" as being among China's core interests.<sup>35</sup>

As far as we can surmise from the official PRC sources used in this study, references to the defense of the Yellow Sea, Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, bilateral trade, and the value of China's currency as Chinese core interests are entirely unofficial. In other words, we can find no official source stating that such concepts are among China's "core interests."<sup>36</sup>

The reference to the South China Sea as a Chinese core interest is a more complex matter. The *New York Times* apparently first reported that Chinese officials had identified the defense of China's territorial claims to the South China Sea as a "core interest" in a private meeting held in Beijing in March 2010 with two senior U.S. officials: NSC Asia Director Jeffrey Bader and Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg.<sup>37</sup> Many other media sources (and other *New York Times* reporters) subsequently repeated this initial *New York Times* story, often without citing it as the original source (or perhaps in some cases merely duplicated the story by interviewing the same U.S. official paraphrased in the *New York Times* story),<sup>38</sup> thus creating the impression that the report came from multiple sources. At least one media source subsequently asserted that Dai Bingguo had also identified the South China Sea in this manner to Hillary Clinton, at the May 2010 meeting of the S&ED in Washington.<sup>39</sup> Clinton herself repeated this during a recent press interview in Australia.<sup>40</sup>



However, a close examination of the official Chinese sources consulted for this study failed to unearth a single example of a PRC official or an official PRC document or media source that publicly and explicitly identifies the South China Sea as a PRC “core interest.” In fact, when given the opportunity to clarify the official record on this issue, Chinese officials have avoided doing so.<sup>41</sup> During their October 11, 2010, meeting in Hanoi, moreover, Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie apparently did not mention the issue of the South China Seas to U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, personal communications with very knowledgeable U.S. officials confirm that Chinese officials did **not** explicitly identify China’s territorial claims to the South China Sea as a “core interest” in the March 2010 meeting with Steinberg and Bader. In that meeting, the PRC officials listed the issue as one among several about which they were attempting to elicit U.S. understanding and deference for Beijing’s position. Although this effort was viewed as a clear attempt to raise the importance of the South China Sea issue in China’s overall hierarchy of concerns, it did not explicitly constitute an effort to brand it as a “core interest.”<sup>43</sup>

Regarding Dai Bingguo’s comment to Clinton at the May 2010 S&ED, a review of Dai’s remarks at the opening and closing sessions reveal no reference to the South China Sea issue as a PRC “core interest.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, one very well-placed U.S. official confirmed to the author in a personal correspondence (conveyed prior to Clinton’s recent remark in Australia) that Dai indeed did not describe the South China Sea issue in this manner. In fact, all Chinese remarks regarding the South China Sea made at the S&ED were presented by a lower-level official, were spontaneous, and thus should not be regarded as authoritative, according to the U.S. official.<sup>45</sup>

What then about Clinton’s recent remark, noted above? It is possible that Dai actually made the remark to Clinton in a private, offline and unofficial conversation, or that Clinton: a) did not accurately recall what Dai said; b) mistook the above-mentioned lower-level official for Dai Bingguo; or c) made the remark, knowing it was not true, to add to existing U.S. efforts to deter China from attempting to add the South China Sea to its list of core interests.

In any event, the above information strongly suggests three conclusions: first, at the very least, Beijing has not unambiguously identified the South China Sea issue as one of its core interests, as it has done with Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Second, even if Beijing did identify the issue as a core interest on one occasion (at the May 2010 S&ED), this was done in a decidedly unofficial manner. Third, although Beijing originally attempted in the March 2010 Steinberg/Bader meeting to raise the importance of the South China Sea issue as a Chinese interest in U.S. eyes, it has deliberately avoided clarifying its stance on the matter since that time, thus creating the impression that it is backing away from the controversy.

Perhaps for some observers, the issue of whether or not Beijing has identified the South China Sea as a core interest is a purely semantic one, of little real significance, especially given China’s apparent attempt to raise its relevance in March 2010. However, as noted above, the Chinese

application of the term “core interest” to an issue is intended to convey a very high level of commitment to managing or resolving that issue on Chinese terms, without much if any discussion or negotiation (at least regarding basic questions such as China’s ultimate sovereign authority, as in the case of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang). In other words, it conveys a high level of resolve, and to some extent a warning of sorts to other powers. In this particular instance, labeling China’s claims to the South China Sea as a core interest would have signaled a significant, and alarming, shift in China’s historical stance toward the issue. That stance not only recognizes the multinational nature of the South China Sea issue as a sovereignty dispute among several countries (albeit one that Beijing wishes to handle on a bilateral basis, with each claimant), but also seeks to convey Beijing’s willingness to negotiate the ultimate nature and extent of Chinese sovereignty over the region. In contrast, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang are described as purely Chinese internal affairs not subject to dispute or negotiation.<sup>46</sup>

But if the use of the term “core interests” has such significance, why has Beijing avoided clarifying whether or not it applies to the South China Sea issue? Although it is impossible to say with certainty, it is probably because confirming the association would signal a clear shift in position that would likely provoke an even stronger international reaction than has occurred thus far (as indicated above), while an official denial of the association might convey an impression of weakness and retreat from China’s basic stance on sovereignty and territorial issues, thus inviting domestic attack.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in reality, Beijing has not clearly confirmed the precise nature and extent of its sovereignty claims to the South China Sea; hence, clarifying its stance on whether or not the issue constitutes a core interest could generate confusion and thereby force China to make such a clarification.<sup>48</sup>

Some unofficial Chinese observers have also argued that Beijing should not officially confirm that the South China Sea is a core interest because to do so would not only sow confusion among other nations, but also “...be used by unfriendly forces in the international community in a bid to contain China.”<sup>49</sup> Some Chinese academics even suggest that the United States was falsely accusing China of elevating the South China Sea to the level of a “core interest” in order to hype the China threat among China’s neighbors, culminating in Secretary Clinton’s orchestrated pushback against the Chinese at the ASEAN Regional Forum in late July 2010.<sup>50</sup> Other Chinese observers more broadly argue that China should be extremely cautious in describing any specific issues (including the South China Sea) as a “core interest,” given the potentially provocative nature of the term to other nations.<sup>51</sup> However, as suggested in footnote 30 above, many unofficial Chinese observers argue that the South China Sea issue is or should be declared a core Chinese interest.

The above unofficial differences in viewpoint, along with the likely dilemma involved in confirming whether the South China Sea is a core interest, together suggest the possibility of disagreement among the Chinese leadership on this matter. If such a disagreement exists, it is probably not along civil-military lines, however, since some PLA officers (such as Han Xudong

and Yin Zhuo) oppose declaring the South China Sea a core interest, while others (such as Luo Yuan) support such a move.<sup>52</sup>

## **Conclusion**

As the above analysis shows, Beijing's use of the term "core interest" with regard to issues involving the international community, and the United States in particular, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Its usage probably derives from growing Chinese concerns over the Taiwan issue in the early 2000s. However, the term has since been unambiguously applied to two other sovereignty-related issues (Tibet and Xinjiang), and its general coverage has been expanded to include three other general sets of state interests: the Chinese political system, national security, and socioeconomic development. Despite much reporting to the contrary, Beijing's territorial claims with regard to the South China Sea have not been clearly identified officially and publicly as a "core interest." Moreover, the application of the term by senior PRC officials to other general issues such as "independence," "human rights" and "national unity" or "reunification" seem intended to reinforce the existing primary emphasis placed on sovereignty and territorial issues as core Chinese interests.

The term "core interests" has its precursors and draws on long-held stances toward sovereignty and territorial issues. However, its increasing use in official statements and diplomatic documents, and its explicit application to specific contentious policy issues (most notably Taiwan) arguably signals an attempt by a stronger, more assertive Chinese leadership to elicit greater respect and deference from other nations for China's position on those issues. Equally important, as suggested in CLM 32, this effort is perhaps also motivated by a belief that the United States and other powers are increasingly challenging some of China's core interests, thus requiring a more assertive PRC response. In addition, Beijing's apparent refusal to "haggle" or compromise, and its stated willingness to employ extreme measures---including force---to defend its position with regard to China's core interests, arguably constitute a warning to other nations that should not be ignored.

Of course, every nation has its national interests, many of which are described as "vital" or "core."<sup>53</sup> China is obviously no exception. Nonetheless, Beijing's explicit and growing emphasis on the term, its application to contentious issues such as Taiwan, its adoption of a seemingly rigid negotiating stance, and, perhaps most importantly, the possibility that a stronger China might expand the scope and sharpen the definition of its core interests further to include other issues of contention, together pose a significant challenge to U.S. (and Chinese) efforts to maintain a stable and mutually productive bilateral relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> The Joint Statement included the following phrase: “The two sides agreed that respecting each other’s core interests is extremely important to ensure steady progress in China-US relations. . . .” See U.S.-China Joint Statement,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 17, 2009, Beijing, China, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>, accessed November 8, 2010; and “China-US Joint Statement,” November 17, 2009, Beijing, China, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/bmdyzs/xwlb/t629497.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The major primary sources employed in this study to chart the official use of the concept of “core interests” and related terms include: The official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国外交部) – Chinese version ([www.fmprc.gov.cn](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn)) and English version ([www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng)); the archives of the *People’s Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*, *人民日报*) at PeopleData ([data.people.com.cn](http://data.people.com.cn)) (人民数据库: 中国政府文献信息); the archives of the *PLA Daily* (*Jiefangjun Bao*, *解放军报*) at East View Information Services ([www.eastview.com](http://www.eastview.com)); The Database of the Chinese Government at PeopleData ([data.people.com.cn](http://data.people.com.cn)) (人民数据库 >> 中国政府文献信息); and The Database of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at PeopleData ([data.people.com.cn](http://data.people.com.cn)) (人民数据库 >> 中国共产党文献信息). We are also grateful to Professor Alastair Iain Johnston of Harvard University for providing his unpublished data on the PRC usage of the term “core interests.”

<sup>3</sup> For example, the *People’s Daily* apparently first employed the term “core interests” (核心利益) in June 1980, in discussing how the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Soviet support of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia threatened the “core interests” of the West (西方). See 象乾;肖西, “不容漠视的绥靖暗流,” *人民日报* (Xiang Qian and Xiao Xi, “Critical Appeasement Undercurrent,” *People’s Daily*, June 21, 1980, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData , available at <http://data.people.com.cn>: “苏联入侵阿富汗, 越南在苏联支持下对柬埔寨的侵略, 威胁了邻接西方核心利益的地区, 曾经引起美国、西欧和日本的强烈反应.” (“The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia with Soviet support threatened the core interests of the neighboring Western region, provoking strong reactions from the United States, Western Europe, and Japan.”)

The second reference to “core interests” in the *People’s Daily* database discusses Vice President Al Gore’s five-part formulation of America’s core national interests and describes how Gore explained that a technology policy would serve the U.S. “core interests.” See 徐勇, “美政府发表科技政策声明, 发展重点由军事技术转向民用技术,” *人民日报* (Xu Yong, “U.S. government declaration of scientific policy states the transfer of military technology to civilian use,” *People’s Daily*, August 6, 1994, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from 人民数据库 (PeopleData), available at <http://data.people.com.cn>.) “戈尔副总统在报告公之于世之际发表讲话指出, “技术是经济发展的动力来源, 是增加就业机会、开创新的工业部门、提高生活水平的促进因素; 而科学又是技术发展的能源。”他认为, 新政策的重点在于加强科学的作用, 以服务于美国的“核心利益”. (U.S. Vice President Al Gore stated in his public speech: “Technology is the driving force of economic development because it creates jobs, encourages development of new industrial sectors, and increases the standard of living; on the other hand, science is the driving force behind technological development.” Al Gore believes that the new policy must focus on strengthening the role of science to serve the U.S. “core interests.”)

For similar usages, see 黄泽全, “科技生财,” *人民日报* (Huang Zequan, “Technology Creates Wealth,” *People’s Daily*, July 14, 1995, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from 人民数据库 (PeopleData), available at <http://data.people.com.cn>); “美财长发表讲话指出, 美中关系事关全球经济繁荣,” *人民日报* (“U.S. Treasury Secretary indicates in his speech that U.S.-China relations are critical to global economic prosperity,” *People’s Daily*, October 14, 1999, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from 人民数据库 (PeopleData), available at

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<http://data.people.com.cn>); and 欧灿,“警告李登辉不要抱任何幻想,” 解放军报 (Ou Can, “Warning Lee Teng-hui not to have any illusions,” *PLA Daily*), August 29, 1999, available at <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14557759>, accessed October 22, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see “驻美国大使馆召开胡锦涛总书记重要讲话座谈,” 中华人民共和国外交部, (“U.S. Embassy held important talks with General Secretary Hu Jintao,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*), January 11, 2009, available at <http://test1.fmprc.gov.cn/chnnew/gxh/cgb/zwbd/jghd/t531443.htm> (broken link, clipped results drawn from MFA website search, November 3, 2010): “周大使...指出...把握民族根本利益和国家核心利益, 体现了尊重历史、尊重现实、尊重人民愿望的实事求是精神...” (“Ambassador Zhou... stated that... grasping fundamental interests and core national interests reflects the truth-seeking spirit of respect for history, respect for reality, and respect for the wishes of the people...”)

A 1995 article from the *PLA Daily* specifically discusses the adjustment from a focus on “fundamental interests” to “core interests” in the process of economic and social reform. However, it does not clearly define the difference between the two terms. Based on a reading of the article, it is possible that the former referred to the basic interest of promoting overall national economic development while the latter was intended to focus on the attainment of greater economic and social equality and common prosperity. Nonetheless, both concepts were at the time applied to domestic issues. See “图片/照片/其它,” 解放军报 (“Picture/Photo/Other,” *PLA Daily*), February 17, 1995, available at <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14466790>, accessed October 22, 2010. For a similar usage, also see “《求是》杂志发表署名文章《划清“四个重大界限”的有关理论与实践问题》,” 解放军报 (“*Qiushi* published a signed article by Hua Qing: ‘Four Major Boundaries of Theoretical and Practical Issues,’” *PLA Daily*), August 17, 2001, available at <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/22327893>, accessed October 22, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Apparently, the first time the two terms were used together (重大关切和核心利益) was in 2007, in a report on a meeting between Hu Jintao and German President Angela Merkel. See “胡锦涛会见德国总理默克尔,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Hu Jintao meets German Prime Minister Merkel,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), August 27, 2007, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t355870.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010: “胡锦涛表示, 中方愿同德方共同努力, 从三个方面继续推进中德具有全球责任的伙伴关系: 一是双方高层保持密切交往。及时就共同关心的问题交换意见, 加强沟通、扩大共识、增进互信, 尊重和照顾彼此重大关切和核心利益。” (“Hu Jintao indicated that China is willing to cooperate with Germany to continue to advance the globally responsible China-German partnership in three areas: 1) maintain the high-level official dialogue and exchange; 2) exchange views on common issues, enhance bilateral communication, expand common understanding, promote mutual trust, respect and pay attention to each other’s major concerns and core interests. ...”)

<sup>6</sup> The first reference to “major concerns” on the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs website is from 2000, in a report on a meeting between Jiang Zemin and President Chirac of France. See “江泽民主席与希拉克总统举行正式会,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Chairman Jiang Zemin and French President Chirac held meeting,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*), November 7, 2000, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t7275.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. “中法之间有许多共同利益, 合作前景十分广阔。只要双方从战略的高度和两国关系长远发展的大局出发, 坚持相互尊重、平等互利, 特别是相互尊重对方的重大关切, 中法关系在 21 世纪里必将会提高到一个新的水平。” (“China and France share many common interests; the prospect for bilateral cooperation is strong. As long as the two countries start from the strategic perspective and the pattern of long-term development of the bilateral relationship, maintain mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefits, especially respecting each other’s major concerns, Sino-French relations can be raised to a new level in the 21st century.”) In a 2003 Policy Paper on the

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European Union, “major concerns” is used to directly refer to the Taiwan issue in a paragraph on the one-China policy. See “中国对欧盟政策文件,” 中华人民共和国外交部, 二〇〇三年十月 (“White Paper on Chinese policy toward the EU,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, October 2003), available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/tytj/zcwj/t27700.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. “一个中国原则是中欧关系政治基础的重要组成部分。妥善处理台湾问题关系到中欧关系的稳定发展。中方赞赏欧盟及其成员国恪守一个中国的原则，希望欧方始终尊重中方在台湾问题上的重大关切...” (“The one-China policy is an important political foundation of China-EU relations. Handling the Taiwan issue can encourage a stable development of China-EU relations. China appreciates the fact that the EU and its member states respect the one-China policy and hopes that the EU will continue to respect China’s major concern over the Taiwan issue...”)

<sup>7</sup> Wang Jisi, a well-known scholar of U.S.-China relations, wrote an article in *People’s Daily* in February 2002 suggesting that both sides seek common ground in order to prevent differences from developing into serious crises or conflicts that would damage the “core interests” (核心利益) of either party. This is the first time that a *People’s Daily* article referred to the “core interests” of China (in a foreign policy context) and not only the “core interests” of other countries. See 王缉思, “求同存异 稳定大局 (专论) ——纪念中美《上海公报》发表 30 周年,” 人民日报 (Wang Jisi, “Seek common ground and stability (monograph) – celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the China-U.S. ‘Shanghai Communiqué’,” People’s Daily), February 28, 2002, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData (人民数据库), available at <http://data.people.com.cn>).

A second similar reference in the same source occurred in December 2002. See 尹承德, “大国关系的改善与演变,” 人民日报 (Yin Chengde, “Progress and Transformation of Great Power Relations,” People’s Daily), November 19, 2002, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData (人民数据库), available at <http://data.people.com.cn>, accessed October 22, 2010. This article by Yin Chengde (尹承德), a regular contributor to *People’s Daily* and possibly a Foreign Ministry official, referred to China in discussing the “core interests” of great powers.

<sup>8</sup> See 丁刚, “唐家璇会见美国务卿,” 人民日报 (Ding Gang, “Tang Jiaxuan Meets U.S. Secretary of State,” *People’s Daily*), January 21, 2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData, available at <http://data.people.com.cn>. At that time, “Tang Jiaxuan said, the Taiwan issue concerns China’s core interests...” (“唐家璇说, 台湾问题事关中国的核心利益.”) A month later, Colin Powell visited China and again held talks with Tang Jiaxuan, who again reiterated the point. See “Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan Held Talks With Powell,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 25, 2003, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t19583.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> See “外交部发言人孔泉就美决定向台湾出售远程预警雷达系统答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kong Quan warns the U.S. for its decision to sell Taiwan the long-range radar system at a press conference), January 1, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/dhdw/t82122.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010.

“台湾问题始终是中美关系中最重要、最敏感的核心问题。在事关中国主权和领土完整的台湾问题上，我们绝不容忍任何外部势力损害中方核心利益的行径。我们强烈敦促美方取消有关错误决定，以免损害台海地区的和平稳定和中美合作。” (“The Taiwan problem is ultimately the most important element in China-U.S. relations as well as the most sensitive core issue. Regarding the Taiwan issue related to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, we will not tolerate any damage to China’s core interests from external parties. We strongly urge that the U.S. avoid a misinformed decision, so as not to undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and Sino-US cooperation.”)

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<sup>10</sup> Most notably, on the official level, such usage occurred at several press conferences held by Foreign Ministry spokespersons Zhang Qiyue and Kong Quan, in speeches by senior PRC-diplomats such as Yang Jiechi, Zhang Yesui, and Zhong Jianhua, in a meeting between Tang Jiaxuan and then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in July 2004, in meetings between Li Zhaoxing and Colin Powell in October 2004, by Wen Jiabao in a speech at the October 2004 Asia-Europe Meeting and in remarks to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan in December 2004, and in remarks by Hu Jintao at meetings with President Bush and Australian Prime Minister John Howard in November 2004. “2004年2月19日外交部发言人章启月向记者招待会上答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhang Qiyue’s Regular Press Conference on February 19, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), February 19, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/dhdw/t66764.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “2004年4月1日外交部发言人孔泉在例行记者会上答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Kong Quan’s Regular Press Conference on February 19, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), April 1, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/fyrbt/jzhsl/t82128.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “杨洁篪大使访问洛杉矶并接受杰出外交官奖,” 驻洛杉矶总领馆供稿 (“Ambassador Yang Jiechi visits Los Angeles and receives the award for Distinguished Diplomat,” Los Angeles General Consulate Press Release), April 5, 2004, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t441607.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t441607.htm), accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “2004年4月8日外交部发言人孔泉在记者招待会上答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Kong Quan’s Regular Press Conference on April 8, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), April 8, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/dhdw/t83827.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “2004年4月27日外交部发言人孔泉在记者招待会上答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Kong Quan’s Regular Press Conference on April 27, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), April 27, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/t93544.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “杨洁篪大使赴美阿肯色州就当前中美关系发表演讲(10/05/04),” 驻美国使馆供稿 (“Yang Jiechi, Ambassador to the United States, delivered a speech on current Sino-US relations in Arkansas,” Press Release of the Chinese Embassy to the United States), May 10, 2004, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t431003.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t431003.htm), accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “唐家璇会见赖斯,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Tang Jiaxuan Meets with Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 9, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/zxxx/t142558.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “张业遂副部长在第五届中美军控、裁军与防扩散研讨会上的讲话,” 二〇〇四年七月二十日, 北京 (“Vice Minister Zhang Yesui’s speech at the Fifth China-US arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation conference,” July 20, 2004, Beijing), available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/wjbxw/t143524.htm>, accessed November 8, 2010; “外交部长李肇星会晤美国国务卿鲍威尔,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing meets with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), October 11, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t163077.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; 温家宝, 中华人民共和国国务院总理, “加强对话合作, 深化伙伴关系,” 在第五届亚欧首脑会议上的讲话, 二〇〇四年十月八日, 河内, (“Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, ‘Strengthen dialogue and cooperation, deepen the partnership,’ speech at the fifth ASEM summit, Hanoi, October 8, 2004), available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t163675.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “胡锦涛主席会见美国总统布什,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao meets U.S. President Bush,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), November 21, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/ywzt/zt2004/hjlatinamerica/t171122.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “胡锦

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涛主席会见澳大利亚总理霍华德,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao Meets with Australian Prime Minister John Howard,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), November 22, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/dyz/1206/xgxw/t171174.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “驻洛杉矶总领事钟建华在青岛-长滩友协发表演讲,” 驻洛杉矶总领馆供稿 (“Zhong Jianhua, Los Angeles Consul General Gives Speech to Long Beach-China Friendship Association in Qingdao,” Los Angeles Consulate General Press Release), December 3, 2004,, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t443959.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t443959.htm), accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “温家宝总理与巴基斯坦总理阿齐兹举行会谈,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Premier Wen Jiabao Holds Meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), December 16, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/gjldrhd/t175152.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010.

In that same year, China also highlighted its “core interests” in several press conferences and speeches vis-à-vis Singapore, reacting against Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s visit to Taiwan in July 2004. “外交部发言人章启月就新加坡副总理李显龙访台发表谈话,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhang Qiyue’s Remarks on the visit of Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 11, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/fyrbt/t142666.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “2004年7月13日外交部发言人章启月在例行记者会上答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhang Qiyue’s Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 13, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/fyrbt/jzhs/t142922.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “外交部发言人孔泉就新加坡副总理李显龙近日就其访台一事接受新加坡媒体书面采访答记者问,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesman Kong Quan’s Statement on Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s recent visit to Taiwan with the Singapore media,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 20, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/fyrbt/t143616.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “外交部部长助理沈国放 2004年7月22日网上答公众问全文,” 括号内为网友登录“中国外交论坛”时注册的呢称, 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang puts the full text answer online on ‘Chinese Foreign Ministry Forum,’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 22, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t143741.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “胡锦涛主席会见新加坡总理李显龙,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao Meets Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), November 20, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/ywzt/2005year/hjtzt/hjt2004apcc/t170958.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “驻新加坡大使张云谈孙中山精神,” 驻新加坡使馆 (“Ambassador to Singapore Zhang Yun discusses the spirit of Sun Yat-sen,” Embassy in Singapore), November 28, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwbd/t172364.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010. The term was also used by Wu Hongbo, ambassador to the Philippines: “吴红波大使出席让德吴氏宗亲总会全菲联谊大会,” 驻菲律宾使馆 (“Ambassador Wu Hongbo Attends the Filipino-Chinese Grand Family Association sponsored by Rang Dewu,” Embassy in the Philippines, October 19, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwbd/t166879.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010. Such references to core interests continued in 2005 and beyond.

<sup>11</sup> Li stated in a speech that sovereignty and security are Chinese core interests “涉及国家主权、安全等核心利益”. See 李肇星, “新时期外交工作的宝贵精神财富——学习江泽民同志外交思想的体会,” 人民日报(Li Zhaoxing, “Valuable spiritual wealth of new China’s diplomatic work - studying Jiang Zemin’s diplomatic thought,”



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People's Daily), September 30, 2006, 2nd edition, accessed November 10, 2010 from PeopleData (人民数据库), available at <http://data.people.com.cn>.

The first reference on the *PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs* website to “security” (安全) as a “core interest” was in a December 2008 Xinhua interview with Chinese Ambassador to the EU Song Zhe. See “驻欧盟使团团长宋哲大使接受新华社《参考消息》年终专访,” 驻欧盟使团供稿. (“Mission to the EU, Ambassador Song Zhe, accepts Xinhua News Agency’s ‘Reference News’ year-end interview,” Mission to the EU Press Release), December 26, 2008, 2008/12/26, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zwbw/wshd/t529299.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010: “在很多欧洲人眼中, 中国是一个坚不可摧的国家, 一个文明开放的国家, 一个进步现代的国家, 一个充满仁爱精神的国家, 和一个坚定捍卫自己国家主权、安全和领土完整等核心利益的国家.” (“In the eyes of many Europeans, China is an indestructible, civilized and open country, a progressive modern country, a country full of good will and a staunch defender of her sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, and other important national core interests.”)

Hu Jintao also referred to “national security” (国家安全) as a “core interest” in a statement commenting on Sino-Russian bilateral relations, in June 2009: “国家主席胡锦涛接受中外媒体联合采访,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao accepts the joint interview from foreign media,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 18, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t568406.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010: “在回答记者关于中俄关系及其发展前景的提问时, 胡锦涛指出, 中俄战略协作伙伴关系建立 13 年来, 一直健康稳定发展。双方高层交往频繁, 政治互信持续增强, 在涉及对方主权、独立、领土完整、国家安全等核心利益问题上双方始终相互坚定支持。” (“When asked about the prospects of Sino-Russian relations, Hu Jintao noted that, since the formation of the China-Russia strategic and cooperative partnership 13 years ago, the relationship has been healthy and stable. High-level official exchanges have become more frequent, political mutual trust has continued to improve, and the support for each other’s core interests in issues involving sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national security has been strengthening.”)

<sup>12</sup> The first reference on the PRC Foreign Ministry website to respecting each other’s core interests is in a speech Yang Jiechi gave as ambassador to the U.S. in May 2004 in Arkansas. See “杨洁篪大使赴美阿肯色州就当前中美关系发表演讲(10/05/04),” 驻美国使馆供稿 (“Yang Jiechi, Ambassador to the United States, delivered a speech on current Sino-US relations in Arkansas,” Press Release of the Chinese Embassy to the United States), May 10, 2004, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t431003.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t431003.htm), accessed Nov. 8, 2010. The next reference occurred later that same year in remarks from Hu Jintao during a November 2004 meeting with Australian Prime Minister John Howard. See “胡锦涛主席会见澳大利亚总理霍华德,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao Meets with Australian Prime Minister John Howard,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), November 22, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/dyz/1206/xgxw/t171174.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010. Also see the record of a Sino-Peruvian meeting between Wen Jiabao and Peru’s President Alejandro Toledo in June 2005 (“吴邦国、温家宝分别会见秘鲁总统托莱多,” 中华人民共和国外交部 [“Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao each met with Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China], June 3, 2005, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t198568.htm>, accessed November 8, 2010), and remarks given by Hu Jintao in a meeting with Vladimir Putin of Russia in March 2006 (“胡锦涛与俄罗斯联邦总统普京举行会谈,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Hu Jintao holds talk with Russian President Vladimir Putin,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), March 21, 2006, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/oz/1206\\_13/xgxw/t241482.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/oz/1206_13/xgxw/t241482.htm), accessed November 8, 2010).

For more recent examples see “Chinese President Hu Jintao Meets with His U.S. Counterpart Obama,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, April 2, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/wshd/t555783.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010; “首轮中美经济对话: 除上月球

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外主要问题均已谈及,” 中国新闻网 (“First round of the Sino-US Economic Dialogue: In addition to the main discussion of the Moon,” China News Online), July 29, 2009, available at <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/news/2009/07-29/1794984.shtml>, accessed August 26, 2010; “U.S. Defense Secretary Invited To Visit China Early Next Year,” *Xinhua*, October 11, 2010, OSC CPP20101011968207; President Hu Jintao, Remarks at Strategic and Economic Dialogue Opening Session, May 23, 2010 (China date: May 24, 2010), available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/142134.htm>, accessed August 23, 2010; and State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Remarks at Strategic and Economic Dialogue, “Concluding Joint Statements by Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan, Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (as released by the State Department),” Federal News Service, May 25, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> See “首轮中美经济对话: 除上月球外主要问题均已谈及,” 中国新闻网 (“First round of the Sino-US Economic Dialogue: In addition to the main discussion of the Moon,” China News Online), July 29, 2009, available at <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/news/2009/07-29/1794984.shtml>, accessed August 26, 2010. Also see State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Closing Remarks for U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, Washington, D.C., July 28, 2009, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126599.htm>, accessed August 26, 2010.

Specifically, Dai stated: “To ensure that our bilateral relationship will move forward on the track of long-term and sound development, a very important thing is that we need to support, respect, and understand each other, and to maintain our core interests. And for China, our concern is we must uphold our basic systems, our national security; and secondly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity; and thirdly, economic and social sustained development.” (“确保中美关系长期健康稳定地向前发展, 很重要一条是相互理解、尊重支持对方, 维护自己的核心利益。”戴秉国接着说, 中国的核心利益第一是维护基本制度和国家安全, 其次是国家主权和领土完整, 第三是经济社会的持续稳定发展。”)

Dai’s remarks were to some extent presaged (though not explicitly spelled out) by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, in remarks delivered in Washington DC on March 12, 2009. At that time, Yang stated: “Mutual respect means that we should respect international law and norms governing international relations, view each other in an objective and sensible way, respect each other’s choice of development path and *core interests*, and refrain from doing anything that may harm each other’s *sovereignty, security or development interests*.”

<sup>14</sup> For example, see “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang’s Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2010,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 14, 2010, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t716745.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010.

“Q: Recently, there are lots of reports on China’s core interests in the Yellow Sea. Could you outline China’s core interests? And in what way will the US-ROK joint naval exercise compromise China’s core interests?”

A: China’s core interests refer to national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and development interests.”

Da Wei, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations [CICIR], cited Dai Bingguo’s definition in his discussion of how China should strategically utilize the term “core interests”; see Da Wei, “Why Should China Declare Its Core Interests?” *Huanqiu Shibao*, July 28, 2010, OSC CPP20100729788013.

Jin Canrong, vice director of the School of International Studies at China’s Renmin University, also discussed Dai’s definition, explaining that the phrase “basic system” referred to the system “of multiparty cooperation and political

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consultation led by the Communist Party of China.” See “China Denies Taking Tough Stance on International Affairs,” Global Times Online, March 8, 2010, OSC CPP20100308722006:

For other unofficial references to Dai Bingguo’s multi-part definition, see Wu Zhong, “China Cut To the Core,” Asia Times, August 19, 2009, OSC CPP20090819715002; and Cary Huang, “A Bolder China Asserts ‘Core’ Interests But Will It Act?” South China Morning Post, August 12, 2010, OSC CPP20100812715004.

<sup>15</sup> See “驻新加坡大使张云谈孙中山精神,” 驻新加坡使馆 (“Ambassador to Singapore Zhang Yun discusses the spirit of Sun Yat-sen,” Embassy in Singapore), November 28, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwbd/t172364.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010: “在谈到国家统一时, 张大使强调, 两岸统一是全中国人民和全世界华人的最大愿望, 也是中国的根本与核心利益, 中国愿以最大的诚意争取和平统一。” (“When discussing national unity, Ambassador Zhang stressed that the *reunification of China* is the greatest wish of Chinese citizens in China and overseas, as well as the fundamental and core interest of China; China has the greatest desire and willingness to achieve peaceful reunification.”)

This is the earliest reference to “national unity” (国家统一) or “reunification” (两岸统一) as core interests of China found on the PRC Foreign Ministry website. For similar later references, see “曾庆红会见匈牙利总理久尔查尼,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Zeng Qinghong Meets with Hungarian Prime Minister Gyurcsany, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), September 8, 2005, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t210951.htm>, accessed November 3, 2010; “中国驻洛杉矶总领事张云出席南加州侨界反对台湾‘入联公投’大会,” 驻洛杉矶总领馆 (“Consul General Zhang Yun in Los Angeles attends Southern California Overseas Chinese Bridge and opposes Taiwan’s ‘referendum to join the UN General Assembly’,” Consulate General in Los Angeles), September 16, 2007, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwbd/t441207.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010; and “Getting to Know the Real China,” Statement by H.E. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, At the General Debate of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 23, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/wenjibaochuxi65jieUNdh/t761353.htm>, accessed October 21, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> See “纳米比亚议会和政府支持我通过《反分裂国家法》,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Namibian Parliament and Government to support the implementation of the ‘Anti-Secession Law,’” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), March 18, 2005, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/ywzt/2005year/fflgjf/t442120.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010. This is the first reference to the phrase “independence” (独立) in the context of “core interests.” Also see “国家主席胡锦涛接受中外媒体联合采访,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao accepts joint interview from foreign media,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 18, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t568406.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010; here Hu Jintao referred to “independence” (独立) as a “core interest” in an interview commenting on Sino-Russian bilateral relations.

<sup>17</sup> “Hu Jintao Holds Talks with General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (PRP) and Lao President Choummaly,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Lithuania, November 19, 2006, available at <http://lt.china-embassy.org/eng/xwtd/t281353.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010; “Carry On Traditional Friendship And Deepen All-round Cooperation,” Address by Hu Jintao President of the People’s Republic of China At Islamabad Convention Center, SRC-406, November 24, 2006, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2757/2758/t285917.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. See also, “Hu Jintao Holds Talks with US President Obama,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 17, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/bmdyys/xwlb/t628187.htm>, accessed

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October 25, 2010, where Hu mentions “human rights” in the context of “core interests,” but does not explicitly label them in that category.

<sup>18</sup> “杨洁篪会见马尔代夫外长沙希德,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Maldives Foreign Minister Shahid Meets with Yang Jiechi,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), May 26, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t458721.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010; “杨洁篪部长接受巴基斯坦联合通讯社书面采访,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi Accepts a Written Interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), April 25, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/wjbxw/t429027.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010; “和谐相处 合作共赢--周文重大使就中美建交 30 周年为《人民日报》撰稿,” 驻美国使馆供稿 (“Harmonious and Win-win Cooperation - Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong at the 30th Anniversary of Sino-U.S. relations, writes ‘People’s Daily.’” U.S. Embassy Press Release, January 1, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/zwb/wshd/t530030.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010; “驻欧盟使团团长宋哲大使接受新华社《参考消息》年终专访,” 驻欧盟使团供稿 (“Mission to the EU, Ambassador Song Zhe, head of the Xinhua News Agency Accepts the End-of-Year Interview with ‘Cankao Xiaoxi,’” Mission to the EU Press Release), December 26, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zwb/wshd/t529299.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010; “巴基斯坦成立首个巴中研究所,” 驻巴基斯坦使馆供稿,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Pakistan Establishes the first China-Pakistan Research Institute,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), October 2, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/cgb/zwb/wshd/t617868.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010; “驻巴基斯坦大使罗照辉在伊斯兰堡发表演讲,” 驻巴基斯坦使馆供稿 (“Ambassador to Pakistan Luo Zhaohui Gives Speech at the World Affairs Council in Islamabad,” Embassy in Pakistan Press Release), May 23, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/cgb/zwb/wshd/t564112.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010; “中国驻尼泊尔大使孙和平出席尼副首相兼 外交大臣奥利饯行晚宴,” 驻尼泊尔使馆供稿 (“Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Sun Heping Attends the Farewell Dinner of Nepalese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Oli,” Embassy in Nepal Press Release), March 7, 2007, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/yzt/1206\\_24/1206x2/t301747.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/yzt/1206_24/1206x2/t301747.htm), accessed November 1, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> See “外交部发言人章启月就美国务院表示陈水扁“十点讲话”有积极内容答记者问 [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhang Qiyue’s remarks on the positive elements in the U.S. State Department comments on Chen Shui-bian’s “ten-point statement”],” 中华人民共和国外交部 [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China], November 16, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/t170288.htm>, accessed November 10, 2010; “李肇星与美国务卿举行会谈 [Li Zhaoxing held talks with U.S. Secretary of State],” 中华人民共和国外交部 [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China], October 25, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t166903.htm>, accessed November 10, 2010; “驻新加坡大使张云谈孙中山精神 [Ambassador to Singapore Zhang Yun discusses the spirit of Sun Yat-sen]” 驻新加坡使馆 [Embassy in Singapore], November 28, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwb/t172364.htm>, accessed November 10, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> The ASL does not explicitly use the term “core interests.” However, it does state that “China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity “brook no division” (不容分割). And “sovereignty and territorial integrity” (主权和领土完整) had been officially identified as Chinese core interests as early as April 2004, as indicated above. See Anti-Secession Law, Adopted at the Third Session of the Tenth National People’s Congress on March 14, 2005, available at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005lh/122724.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010. For the original Chinese text, see 《反分裂国家法》 (“Anti-Secession Law”), 新华网 (Xinhua Net), March 14, 2005, available at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-03/14/content\\_2694168.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-03/14/content_2694168.htm), accessed October 25, 2010.

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Moreover, Hu Jintao delivered a speech in the run-up to the passage of the Anti-Secession Law wherein he spelled out “Four Nevers” vis-à-vis Taiwan and declared that “Safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity is where a country's core interest lies.” “President Hu sets forth guidelines on Taiwan,” Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Hungary, March 5, 2005, available at <http://www.chinaembassy.hu/hu/xwdt/t185890.htm>, accessed October 21, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> See Cary Huang, “A Bolder China Asserts ‘Core’ Interests But Will It Act?” *South China Morning Post*, August 12, 2010, OSC CPP20100812715004. This article cites Professor Jin Canrong, associate dean of Renmin University's School of International Relations, as stating: “There is consensus within Chinese diplomatic circles and think-tank scholars that the term [core interests] will apply to only two categories - territorial integrity and sovereignty - at least for the moment.”

<sup>22</sup> For recent examples, see Liao Lei and Hou Lijun, “(Foreign Affairs) Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zou Gang: We Expect More Positive Results from Obama's China Visit,” *Xinhua*, November 10, 2009, OSC CPP20091110062018. This article states: “In response to a question about whether a specific statement will be made during this visit about meddling in Taiwan and Tibet, [Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson] Qin Gang said that clear stipulations and promises are set out to address these issues in the three Sino-US joint communiques and this is also an important political foundation for forward development of the Sino-US relationship. *To allow the Sino-US relations to move forward in a healthy and stable manner*, [my emphasis] the United States must abide by the three joint communiques and respect the core interests and major areas of concern on both sides. ...” Also see “Hu Jintao Holds Talks with US President Obama,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, November 17, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/bmdyzs/xwlb/t628187.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010. This official PRC report on the Obama-Hu talks in November 2009 reports that Hu stated that “to respect the core interest and major concern of each other” was necessary for strategic mutual trust.

For similar statements by senior Chinese officials made during the George W. Bush era, see “杨洁篪大使赴美阿肯色州就当前中美关系发表演讲 (10/05/04),” 驻美国使馆供稿 (“Yang Jiechi, Ambassador to the United States, delivered a speech on current Sino-US relations in Arkansas,” Press Release of the Chinese Embassy to the United States), May 10, 2004, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t431003.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t431003.htm), accessed November 8, 2010; “杨洁篪外长同美国国务卿赖斯会谈,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi talks with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), September 24, 2007, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjb/wjbz/zyhd/t365879.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “中国驻洛杉矶总领事张云出席“中美关系与中国和平统一论坛”开幕式,” 驻洛杉矶总领馆供稿 (“Consul General Zhang Yun attends the opening ceremony of the Forum on China-U.S. relations and on China's Peaceful Reunification,” Consulate General in Los Angeles), November 25, 2007, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t434377.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t434377.htm), accessed Nov. 8, 2010; and “国务委员戴秉国会见美国国务卿赖斯,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“State Councilor Dai Bingguo meets U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), June 30, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t470540.htm>, accessed November 8, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> For examples, see “国务委员戴秉国会见美国国务卿赖斯,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“State Councilor Dai Bingguo meets U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), June 30, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t470540.htm>, accessed November 8, 2010; “杨洁篪外长同美国国务卿赖斯会谈,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi talks with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's

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Republic of China), September 24, 2007, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjb/wjbz/zyhd/t365879.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “胡锦涛主席会见美国总统布什,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“President Hu Jintao meets U.S. President Bush,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), November 21, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/ywzt/zt2004/hjlatinamerica/t171122.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “外交部长李肇星会晤美国务卿鲍威尔,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing meets U.S. Secretary of State Powell,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), October 1, 2004, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t163077.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; “唐家璇会见赖斯,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Tang Jiaxuan Meets with Condoleezza Rice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), July 9, 2004, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/zxxx/t142558.htm>, accessed Nov. 8, 2010; 丁刚, “唐家璇会见美国务卿,” 人民日报 (Ding Gang, “Tang Jiaxuan Meets U.S. Secretary of State,” *People’s Daily*), January 21, 2003, 3rd edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData , available at <http://data.people.com.cn>; and “Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan Held Talks With Powell,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 25, 2003, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t19583.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010.

A PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs report states that Obama “urged both sides to respect each other’s core interests” during the Hu-Obama meeting of April 2009 on the sidelines of the G20 Financial Summit in London. However, this report was not an official statement, and the official U.S. statement on the meeting found on the White House website does not mention any reference by Obama to “core interests.” For the Chinese Foreign Ministry report, see “Chinese President Hu Jintao Meets with His U.S. Counterpart Obama,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, April 2, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/wshd/t555783.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010. The Chinese version is available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/dnzt/hjtxdecfhsg/t555457.htm>. For the White House report, see “Statement On Bilateral Meeting With President Hu Of China,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, April 1, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-bilateral-meeting-with-president-hu-china>, accessed November 8, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> See Joint Communiqué of the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America, Issued in Shanghai, February 28, 1972, available at [http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/uploads/images/yJIG2IXkWU8gk1uq4Cx1tw/1972\\_Joint\\_Communique.pdf](http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/uploads/images/yJIG2IXkWU8gk1uq4Cx1tw/1972_Joint_Communique.pdf), accessed Nov. 9, 2010; and U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqué, August 17, 1982, available at [http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/uploads/images/QjyEUD4z2TG3AW9PIy5tRA/1982\\_Joint\\_Communique.pdf](http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/uploads/images/QjyEUD4z2TG3AW9PIy5tRA/1982_Joint_Communique.pdf), accessed Nov. 9, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> See “外交部副部长何亚非就美国售台武器问题接受专访,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei answers questions on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan in an interview,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), January 9, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjb/zygy/t650637.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; “U.S. Arms Sales To Taiwan Detrimental To Sino-U.S. Relations,” Commentary, *Xinhua*, January 11, 2010, OSC CPP20100111968162; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu’s Regular Press Conference on January 26, 2010,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, January 27, 2010, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t654019.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu’s Regular Press Conference on February 4, 2010,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 5, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t656333.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; “常驻联合国代表团与驻纽约总领馆联合举行新春招待会,” 驻纽约总领馆供稿 (“Permanent Mission to the United Nations and New York Consulate General held a joint spring conference,” Consulate General in New York Press Release), February 4, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/zwbd/jghd/t655935.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010;

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“The Embassy Hosted Farewell Reception for Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong And Mme. Xie Shumin,” Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, February 19, 2010, available at <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmgx/t659074.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; “FM: China Firmly Opposed To U.S. Moves That Undermine Ties,” *Xinhua*, March 7, 2010, OSC CPP20100307968053; “Premier Puts Forward Proposals for Closer China-U.S. Ties,” *Xinhua*, September 23, 2010, OSC CPP20100923968145; “Foreign Ministry urges U.S. to respect China's core interests with credible steps,” *Xinhua*, March 7, 2010, available at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6911113.html>, accessed November 1, 2010; and “China, U.S. agree to respect “core interests”: diplomat,” *Reuters*, April 6, 2010, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6360FT20100407>, accessed November 1, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> China uses the following terms and phrases to describe core interests and issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, and “sovereignty and territorial integrity” (主权和领土完整) that it defines as its core interests:

- 必须立场坚定，旗帜鲜明，敢于斗争，善于斗争，决不拿原则作交易 (must stand firm, be clear-cut, have courage to fight, and never trade away principles)
- 决不会妥协 (never compromise)
- 绝不会让步 (never yield)
- 决不退让 (not yield)
- 绝不会容忍 (never tolerate)
- 决不答应 (never agree)
- 绝不允许 (never allow) – In Anti-Secession Law
- 决不动摇 (never waver) – #1 of Hu’s “Four Nevers”
- 决不放弃 (never give up) – #2 of Hu’s “Four Nevers”
- 决不改变 (never change) – #3 of Hu’s “Four Nevers”
- 决不妥协 (never compromise) – #4 of Hu’s “Four Nevers”
- 没有任何回旋余地 (no room for maneuver)
- 没有任何妥协余地 (no room for compromise)
- 没有任何妥协和让步的余地 (no room for compromise or concession)
- 没有任何付价还价的余地 (no room for haggling)
- 决不会有丝毫犹豫、含糊和退让 (will never have the slightest hesitation, faltering, or concession)
- 在任何时候都决不会拿自己的主权和原则做交易 (will never at any time trade off its sovereignty and principles)
- 不容分割 (brooks no division).

For the most notable (among many) examples of official statements, See “President Hu sets forth guidelines on Taiwan,” Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Hungary, March 5, 2005, available at <http://www.chinaembassy.hu/hu/xwdt/t185890.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010. This is Hu Jintao’s so-called “Four Nevers” speech. The Chinese version is: “胡锦涛就新形势下发展两岸关系提四点意见,” 中华人民共和国外交部, March 4, 2005, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t186259.htm>, accessed October 25, 2010. Also see, “Speech at a Meeting Marking the 60th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War,” September 3, 2005, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t211664.htm>, accessed October 21, 2010; “Getting to Know the Real China,” Statement by H.E. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, At the General Debate of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 23, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/wenjibaochuxi65jieUNdh/t761353.htm>, accessed October 21, 2010 (Chinese version: 中华人民共和国国务院总理 温家宝, “认识一个真实的中国,” 在第 65 届联大一般性辩论上的讲话,

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2010年9月23日 纽约, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/gjldrhd/t755356.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010); and "Xu Caihou's Visit To Promote Sino-U.S. Military Relationship," *Jiefangjun Bao*, October 28, 2009, OSC CPP20091029705005 (in this article, Qian Lihua, director general of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Ministry of National Defense of the PRC stated that "China will never compromise on issues involving such core interests as territorial sovereignty and national security.")

<sup>27</sup> See Deng Xiaoping, "Speech at the Third Plenary Session of the Central Advisory Commission of the Communist Party of China," October 22, 1984, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume III (1982-1992), ed. People's Daily Online, available at <http://web.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/c1280.html>, accessed November 1, 2010. In this source, Deng Xiaoping states that he told Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in their 1984 meeting on the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule that "sovereignty was not negotiable" ("主权问题是不能够谈判的"). This was said in the context of Hong Kong (and later in these remarks he compares Hong Kong to Taiwan). However, the comment is often taken to refer to sovereignty issues in general. Jiang Zemin also used the exact same phrase as Deng Xiaoping – "the sovereignty issue is non-negotiable" ("主权问题是不能够谈判的"), on this occasion in direct reference to Taiwan. See "江泽民主席会见美总统国家安全事务助理伯杰," 中华人民共和国外交部 ("President Jiang Zemin Meets with U.S. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Samuel Berger," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), November 7, 2000, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t7531.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010. However, a 2008 article by current Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi is perhaps the most direct statement of the fundamental non-negotiability of China's "core interests." See 杨洁篪 [Yang Jiechi], "改革开放以来的中国外交," [China's Diplomacy Since Reform and Opening] September 16, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/wzb/zxxx/t512782.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010. Yang states: "In major issues involving core national interests, stand firm and clear-cut, dare to struggle, put up a good fight, and never trade principles. At the same time pay attention to strategy, adhere to a flexible and pragmatic approach, reasonable, beneficial, and restrained, maintaining the long-term and fundamental interests of our country." ("在涉及国家核心利益的重大问题上, 必须立场坚定, 旗帜鲜明, 敢于斗争, 善于斗争, 决不拿原则作交易。同时讲究策略, 灵活务实, 坚持有理、有利、有节, 维护我国的长远和根本利益。")

<sup>28</sup> For example, in a speech to the NPC on the draft Anti-Secession Law, Wang Zhaoguo asserts that "safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity" is China's core interest, and China has never forsworn the use of force to defend its "sovereignty and territorial integrity." See Wang Zhaoguo, "Draft Anti-Secession Law explained," speech at National People's Congress session, *China Daily*, March 8, 2005, available at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/08/content\\_422875.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/08/content_422875.htm), accessed September 9, 2010. Chinese ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong implied in 2007 that China would use non-peaceful means if necessary to prevent Taiwan independence in order to safeguard China's "core interest" of "national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

"中国驻美国大使周文重在'全球促进中国和平统一高峰论坛'开幕式上发表讲话," 驻美国使馆供稿 ("Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong Gives Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 'Forum on the Global Promotion of the peaceful reunification of China,'" Press Release of the Chinese Embassy to the United States, November 17, 2007, available at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206\\_22/1206x2/t441126.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/bmz/1206_22/1206x2/t441126.htm), accessed November 1, 2010.

A large number of unofficial Chinese media sources and personages convey a similar (and in some cases even more militant) resolve. See "American Shadow over South China Sea," Editorial, *Global Times*, July 26, 2010, OSC CPP20100726722003; "Major General Luo Yuan Discusses the US-ROK Joint Military Exercise in the Yellow



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Sea," Renmin Wang, July 13, 2010, OSC CPP20100713787008; Li Yu-chi, "Vigorously Oppose US Meddling in South China Sea Issue," Hsiang Kang Shang Pao, August 11, 2010, OSC CPP20100811716003; Huang Xiangyang, "Commentary: Get Back When Attacked," China Daily, January 31, 2010, OSC CPP20100131968022; Yu Keli, director of the CASS Institute of Taiwan Studies, "The Two Sides of the Strait Should Look Squarely at the Issue of Ending the State of Hostility and Signing a Peace Agreement," Zhongguo Pinglun, August 2009, no. 140, pp. 4-9, OSC CPP20090805710007; and Zhou Zhihui, deputy director of the CASS Institute of Taiwan Studies, "A Programmatic Document for Advancing Peaceful Reunification," Renmin Ribao (Overseas Edition, Internet Version), October 19, 2007, p. 5, OSC CPP20071019704022.

<sup>29</sup> Recently, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made the same observation regarding China's core interests, stating: "China has announced a number of "core interests" which are, in essence, non-negotiable and for which China is prepared to fight, if necessary." See "Henry A. Kissinger, "Power Shifts and Security," Keynote Address, 8th IISS Global Strategic Review, September 10, 2010, available at <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/global-strategic-review/global-strategic-review-2010/plenary-sessions-and-speeches-2010/keynote-address/henry-kissinger/>, accessed October 23, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Adam Entous, "Tensions Ease in Asia, U.S. Says," Wall Street Journal, October 12, 2010; Abe Denmark, "China's Navy Gets Its Act Together, and Gets Aggressive," Wired, Danger Room, April 26, 2010, available at <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/04/chinas-navy-gets-its-act-together-and-gets-aggressive/#ixzz0yO6DNodl>, accessed September 10, 2010; Jiang Lifeng, "Some advice for Japan," China Daily, November 4, 2010, [http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2010-11/04/content\\_21269982.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2010-11/04/content_21269982.htm), accessed November 10, 2010; Phoenix TV: China, Japan 'Likely To Engage in Fierce Confrontations Over Diaoyus', Feng Huang Wei Shih Chung Wen Tai, interview with staff commentator Ho Liang-liang, October 22, 2010, OSC CPP20101025715031; "Disputed Island Tests Chinese Diplomacy," Caijing, September 29, 2010, OSC CPP20100929715030; Liu Huan, Meng Na, and Li Huizi, "Japan's Illegal Detention of Chinese Boat Captain Seriously Undermines People's Trust in Japan" (China Focus), Xinhua Asia-Pacific Service, September 20, 2010, OSC CPP20100920005007; Major General Luo Yuan, "US engaging in gunboat diplomacy," People's Daily, August 13, 2010, OSC CPP20100813787009; Cary Huang, "A Bolder China Asserts 'Core' Interests But Will It Act?" South China Morning Post, August 12, 2010, OSC CPP20100812715004; Wu Zhong, "A Daring Departure from Deng," Asia Times, August 6, 2010, available at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/LH06Ad02.html>; John Pomfret, "U.S. takes a tougher tone with China," Washington Post, July 30, 2010, A01; Cary Huang, "War of Words Heats up With US Over South China Sea Disputes," South China Morning Post, July 29, 2010, OSC CPP20100729715012; "American Shadow over South China Sea," Editorial, Global Times, July 26, 2010, OSC CPP20100726722003; "We Would Like To Advise the United States Not To Make the South China Sea Troubled Waters," Ta Kung Pao, July 26, 2010, OSC CPP20100726788010; "Major General Luo Yuan Discusses the US-ROK Joint Military Exercise in the Yellow Sea," Renmin Wang, July 13, 2010, OSC CPP20100713787008; Wu Ting and Zhou Yun, "Sino-US-Japanese Sea Power Games in West Pacific," Dongfang Zaobao, July 12, 2010, OSC CPP20100718138002; "China tells U.S. that S. China Sea is 'core interest' in new policy," Kyodo News, July 3, 2010, OSC JPP20100703969016; Michael Wines, "Behind a Military Chill: A More Forceful China," New York Times, June 8, 2010; Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend Its Naval Power," New York Times, April 23, 2010; and Wang Te-chun, "Strategic Changes Are Currently Taking Place in China-US Relations," Ta Kung Pao, November 10, 2009, OSC CPP20091110710002.

<sup>31</sup> Some of the most significant official sources, as also cited above, include (in reverse chronological order): 丁刚, "唐家璇会见美国务卿," 人民日报 (Ding Gang, "Tang Jiaxuan Meets U.S. Secretary of State," People's Daily), January 21, 2003, 3rd edition, accessed October 22, 2010 from PeopleData , available at <http://data.people.com.cn>; "Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan Held Talks With Powell," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of

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China, February 25, 2003, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t19583.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010; “President Hu sets forth guidelines on Taiwan,” Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Hungary, March 5, 2005, available at <http://www.chinaembassy.hu/hu/xwdt/t185890.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on 27 November, 2007,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, November 28, 2007, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t385091.htm>, accessed November 2, 2010; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on June 22, 2010,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, June 23, 2010, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t711047.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Information Office of the State Council of The People's Republic of China, “Tibet -- Its Ownership And Human Rights Situation,” Government White Paper, September 1992, Beijing, China, available in English at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/3711/t18996.htm#4>, available in Chinese at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/zt/ywzt/wztt/2296/t10532.htm>, accessed October 21, 2010. The white paper also refers to Tibet as a “fundamental issue” (根本问题).

<sup>33</sup> At the meeting, Zeng stated: “The Chinese government appreciates the government of Sri Lanka for adhering to the one-China policy for a long period of time and offering precious support to China on Taiwan, Tibet and other questions involving China's core interest.” See “Zeng Qinghong Meets with Wickremanayake,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, April 22, 2006, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2782/2784/t248856.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. For the Chinese version, see “曾庆红会见维克拉马纳亚克,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Zeng Qinghong Meets with Wickremanayake,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), April 22, 2006, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gjhdqzz/mzblwelm/xgxw/t248035.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. Also see “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on November 27, 2008,” Permanent Mission of the People's Republic Of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, November 28, 2008, available at <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/fyrth/t524172.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> “Carry On Traditional Friendship And Deepen All-round Cooperation,” Address by Hu Jintao President of the People's Republic of China At Islamabad Convention Center, SRC-406, November 24, 2006, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2757/2758/t285917.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> For example, see “驻密克罗尼西亚大使张卫东拜会密 外长罗伯特,” 驻密克罗尼西亚联邦使馆 (“Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia Zhang Weidong Holds a Secret Meeting with Foreign Minister Robert [Luobote],” Embassy in Federated States of Micronesia), August 19, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/zwbd/t579464.htm>, accessed Nov. 9, 2010; “杨洁篪外长会见美国常务副国务卿 斯坦伯格,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi Meets with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), September 30, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/mtb/bldhd/t616704.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; “习近平会见美国常务副国务卿斯坦 伯格,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Xi Jinping Meets with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), September 29, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjdt/gjldrhd/t615959.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010; and Australia-China Joint Statement, 30 October 2009, available at <http://www.china.embassy.gov.au/bjng/statement.html>, accessed November 9, 2010. The Chinese version is found here: “外交部副部长何亚非谈《中澳联合 声明》,” 中华人民共和国外交部 (“Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei Talks about ‘China-Australia Joint Statement’,” Ministry of

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Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), September 31, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/zyxw/t623887.htm>, accessed Nov. 9, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> On the subject of the Yellow Sea, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang neither confirmed nor denied their "core interest" status in response to direct questioning in a press conference. See "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2010," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, July 14, 2010, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t716745.htm>, accessed September 9, 2010.

"Q: Recently, there are lots of reports on China's core interests in the Yellow Sea. Could you outline China's core interests? And in what way will the US-ROK joint naval exercise compromise China's core interests?"

A: China's core interests refer to national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and development interests."

As for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, in response to a direct question on their "core interest" status, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei neither confirmed nor denied that the disputed islands were part of China's core interest. See "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on November 2, 2010," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, November 3, 2010, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t766610.htm>, accessed November 10, 2010.

"Q: ... China once said that issues such as Taiwan and Tibet bear on China's core interest. Is the Diaoyu island issue also part of China's core interest?"

A: The Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands have been China's inherent territory since ancient times."

<sup>37</sup> Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend Its Naval Power," *New York Times*, April 23, 2010. Wong cites "an American official involved in China policy," as follows: "In March, Chinese officials told two visiting senior Obama administration officials, Jeffrey A. Bader and James B. Steinberg, that China would not tolerate any interference in the South China Sea, now part of China's "core interest" of sovereignty, said an American official involved in China policy. It was the first time the Chinese labeled the South China Sea a core interest, on par with Taiwan and Tibet, the official said."

<sup>38</sup> For example, see "China tells U.S. that S. China Sea is 'core interest' in new policy," *Kyodo News*, July 3, 2010, OSC JPP20100703969016.

<sup>39</sup> "China Retracts Policy on S. China Sea, Tells U.S.," *Kyodo*, October 22, 2010, OSC JPP20101022969102.

<sup>40</sup> See Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, Interview With Greg Sheridan of The Australian, Melbourne, Australia, November 8, 2010, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/11/150671.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010. The transcript of the interview quotes Clinton as stating: "...And when China first told us at a meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue that they viewed the South China Sea as a core interest, I immediately responded and said we don't agree with that." The reporter then asked, "Was that Dai Bingguo that said that to you?" And Clinton replied, "Yes, yeah."

<sup>41</sup> For example, see "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Regular Press Conference on September 21, 2010," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, September 21, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t756092.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010. In response to a specific question ("US officials said China once expressed that the South China Sea is its core interest. Please confirm."), Jiang replied: "Each country has its own core interests. Issues concerning state sovereignty, territorial integrity and

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major development interests are significant to all countries. China believes the South China Sea issue is only the dispute of territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests between relevant countries rather than an issue between China and ASEAN, let alone a regional or international issue. It can only and must be settled through friendly consultations between both parties in a peaceful manner. Adhering to "putting aside disputes and seeking common development", we are always committed to proper settlement through bilateral consultations with relevant countries. The channel of communication is smooth. ...”

<sup>42</sup> John D. Banusiewicz, “Gates Receives, Accepts Invitation to Visit China,” American Forces Press Service, October 11, 2010, available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=61218>, accessed November 9, 2010; “China Retracts Policy on S. China Sea, Tells U.S.,” Kyodo News, October 22, 2010, OSC JPP20101022969102.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication with senior U.S. official. One should add that Beijing probably emphasized the importance of the South China Sea territorial issue to Chinese interests at the March 2010 meeting with Steinberg and Bader in order to deter Washington from raising the issue at the Hanoi meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), scheduled for the following July. If so, the Chinese clearly failed in that attempt, since the ARF meeting witnessed a largely U.S.-orchestrated discussion of the issue, and a clear U.S. attempt to increase its overall involvement in the controversy. This event will be discussed in greater detail in an upcoming CLM, as part of an analysis of Chinese behavior regarding maritime issues.

<sup>44</sup> State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Remarks at Strategic and Economic Dialogue, “Concluding Joint Statements by Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan, Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (as released by the State Department),” Federal News Service, May 25, 2010; and Strategic and Economic Dialogue Opening Session, Remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; President Hu Jintao; Vice-Premier Wang Qishan; Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner; State Councilor Dai, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China, May 23, 2010, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/142134.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication, senior U.S. official.

<sup>46</sup> For example, in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea,” signed by all the claimants to South China Sea territories and waters (including China), the parties concerned undertook “...to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea...” See “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea,” November 4, 2002, available at <http://www.aseansec.org/13163.htm>. A similar commitment to “negotiation [of the South China Sea dispute] according to international law” is also contained in the joint statement between China and Vietnam signed in 2008. See China-Viet Nam Joint Statement, Beijing, China, October 25, 2008, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzjg/yzs/gjlb/2792/2793/t520438.htm>, accessed November 9, 2010.

For additional official affirmations of China’s desire to employ peaceful negotiations, talks, and consultations in addressing this issue, see “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu’s Regular Press Conference on September 21, 2010,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, September 21, 2010, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t756092.htm>, accessed October 23, 2010; Yi Ling, “People’s Liberation Army Deputy Chief of General Staff Ma Xiaotian Reiterates China’s Stand on the South Sea Issue; China Protects Legitimate Navigation Freedom in the South Sea,” Xinhua, October 22, 2010, OSC CPP20101022163018;

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and “Chinese FM refutes fallacies on the South China Sea issue,” *China Daily*, July 25, 2010, available at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/25/content\\_11046054.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/25/content_11046054.htm) accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> An October 2010 article in the *South China Morning Post* reported that the Chinese government had indeed privately included the Diaoyu Islands and South China Sea in its category of “core interests,” citing “diplomats familiar with the process.” PRC leaders allegedly “agreed in a meeting late last year to classify major foreign relations issues into two categories”: “core national interest” and “national interest.” See Cary Huang, “Diaoyu Row Marks Shift in Beijing’s Diplomatic Posture,” *South China Morning Post Online*, October 3, 2010, OSC CPP20101004715017. However, such a formulation, if it truly exists, has never been publicly articulated. More importantly, as explained in this CLM article, the specific issues of the Diaoyu Islands and the South China Sea have never been publicly identified by Chinese officials as core interests.

<sup>48</sup> This issue will be discussed in greater detail in an upcoming CLM.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Wang Haiyun, [vice president of Chinese Society for Study of the History of Sino-Russian relations] “China Does Not have an ‘Anti-Intervention Strategy,’” *Dongfang Zaobao*, October 12, 2010, OSC CPP20101018038001. Major General Wang (a former military attache to Russia) largely agrees with the above analysis, stating: “The idea that “the South China Sea issue is a core interest for China” has only been mentioned by individual Chinese scholars and has not been formally stated by high-level leaders; still less has it been written into national strategic reports or legal documents.” However, he then confuses the situation by adding: “The best explicit formulation is that ‘the question of South China Sea sovereignty involves China’s core interests,’ and to declare that even though it is an issue involving China’s core interests, China advocates resolving it through peaceful and friendly consultation. . . .” This seems like a distinction without much of a difference! In any event, Wang states that such a formulation “. . . will not give the United States a pretext for attacking China, and [will] . . . reduce suspicion of China among countries around the South China Sea, and curb their irrational impulse to bring in external forces to put pressure on China.” In contrast, at least one other Chinese military officer has made a distinction between “core interests” and “important maritime interests,” placing Taiwan in the former category and the South China Sea in the latter. See “Major General Yin Zhuo, a Noted Military Expert, Comments on US-South Korean Military Exercises,” *Renmin Wang*, July 29, 2010, OSC CPP20100730787001.

<sup>50</sup> See Chen Chenchen, “East Asian Unity Will Survive Rocky Waters,” Interview with Su Hao, director of the Asia-Pacific Research Center, China Foreign Affairs University, *Global Times Online*, October 25, 2010, OSC CPP20101026722011. Su Hao states, “China has never said publicly that sovereignty in the South China Sea is one of China’s core interests. The concept has been hyped by the US to alienate China from its surrounding partners.” See also Wang Haiyun, [vice president of Chinese Society for Study of the History of Sino-Russian relations] “China Does Not have an ‘Anti-Intervention Strategy,’” *Dongfang Zaobao*, October 12, 2010, OSC CPP20101018038001. Wang accuses the United States of promoting a “false proposition” about China’s categorization of the South China Sea in order to “stir up anti-China feelings in the area and build a containment zone against China.”

<sup>51</sup> For example, see Da Wei [deputy director, Department of American Studies, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations], “Why Should China Declare Its Core Interests?” *Huanqiu Shibao*, July 28, 2010, OSC CPP20100729788013. Da warns against overasserting “core interests” or misinterpreting the meaning of the term, especially since every state has core interests and asserting them can not only be defensive (when other countries are infringing on one’s interests) but also offensive (when national strength is rising). Colonel Han Xudong of NDU argues that China should not declare its specific “core interests” at the present time because: a) China does not have the capability to militarily defend all of them; and b) it detracts from a focus on other non-core but still important interests. Han argues that China’s core interests should be announced in “batches” as China’s strength grows---

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hardly a reassuring thought to many foreign observers. See Han Xudong [associate professor, National Defense University], “Prudent To Use Core National Interests,” Liaowang, no. 30, July 26, 2010, p. 64, OSC CPP20100729788017.

<sup>52</sup> See footnotes 29, 48, and 50.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see “A National Security Strategy for A New Century,” The White House, December 1999, pp. 1-2, available at <http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nssr-1299.pdf>, accessed November 10, 2010. This Clinton administration document identified three levels of “national interest”: “vital interests,” “important national interests,” and “humanitarian and other interests.”