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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Decoding Xi Jinping's Idiosyncratic Foreign Policy: Analyzing the Interplay of Centralized Decision-Making, Soft Power Dynamics, and Regional Security Implications</b>
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**ABSTRACT**

Comparative historical analysis will trace the foreign policy orientation of Xi Jinping: the orientation that, by the nature of things, must be different from that of his predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. Xi's ideological motivations and strategic objectives will be analyzed qualitatively using a systematic review of scholarly articles and policy documents. It describes the shift from a narrative of peaceful rise to a more assertive foreign policy that aims to change the international order according to the vision of realizing national rejuvenation in China. The focus is on two critical components of Xi's policy: the soft power, on the one hand, and military modernization, on the other. Together, they reflect his dual playing of economic cooperation and territorial aspirations. This paper also explores how evolving domestic politics and the increasing competition between the United States and China shape the impact of China's soft power campaigns and its broader security strategies in the region. Findings indicate that under Xi, centralized decision-making and assertive diplomacy are redefining China's role in global governance and transforming international relations in the fast-changing multipolar world. These policies are compared with those of previous leaders to bring forth valuable insights into the dynamic change experienced by the foreign policy of China and its consequences on the international political configurations.

**Key Words:** Idiosyncrasy, Xi Jinping, Soft power, Military modernization, Decision making

## **Introduction**

The world is changing very fast compared to past years, and among the most spectacular changes witnessed within the last few decades has been the rise of China as a great power that is dramatically redefining international relations. Not only is the change a reflection of this state, but it also implies the leadership style of Xi Jinping, who presented an idiosyncratic approach to foreign policy, opposite to the cautious strategies pursued by the previous leaders. This has redefined China's role and raises important questions about Xi Jinping's foreign policy's underlying motivations, strategies, and implications. Understanding Xi Jinping's independent approach is necessary for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike and gives insight into the future trajectory of global politics and the evolving dynamics of international relations. Xi Jinping's ascendancy in 2012 marked a turning point in Chinese foreign policy history. Xi Jinping, it is fashionable to say, turned Chinese foreign policy from a "low-profile" strategy to an assertive and ambitious "striving for achievement" policy (Vuong, 2023). This shift is embodied in articulating the "Chinese Dream," (CFR editors, 2017) which focuses on national rejuvenation and reasserting China's traditional position as a world leader throughout history (Mazuelos, 2022).

On the other hand, the practical implications of this ideological framework remain unexplored, notably in how it has been translated into concrete diplomatic practice and strategy. Perhaps most importantly, Xi's foreign policy is characterized by the centralization of decision-making processes. Whereas his predecessors more frequently relied on collective leadership and consensus-building, Xi has centralized power at the Communist Party and the state apparatus resulting in a rather very top-down and personalized approach toward foreign policy (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016). This centralization raises several questions about the roles of different bureaucratic agencies, non-state actors, and regional stakeholders in making China's foreign policy. Understanding these dynamics is critical to assessing the efficacy and coherence of Xi's initiatives, especially within contested areas of China's influence, such as Southeast Asia and the South China Sea (Zhao, 2020). A twin focus on soft power and military diplomacy also marks his foreign policy. The Belt and Road Initiative, also known as the New Silk Road, was introduced in 2013 and symbolizes China's effort to increase influence by exercising economic partnerships and infrastructure development. Such an economic strategy is usually encased with a more aggressive military posture, especially towards maritime disputes, making it hard to explain through the single case of peaceful rise and soft power (Usman, 2023).

The two parts work in concert: one, the soft power through economic means, and another, the military has expressed explicit reliance on military diplomacy. Such a scenario presents fertile ground for study, particularly how they correlate with regional security dynamics and China's relations with neighboring countries (Sinaga, 2021). Despite the glaring progress in the literature regarding Xi Jinping's foreign policy, research gaps exist. For instance, while the ideational components of Xi's approach have been vastly explored and researched, very little empirical work exists that tracks and details the actual results of his policies in different geopolitical contexts (Mazuelos, 2022). Besides, the centralization of the country's foreign policy-making power under Xi has not been scrutinized sufficiently regarding its impacts on the roles of bureaucratic agencies and non-state actors (Lee, 2021). Finally, the soft power projects of China may or may not prove to be effective, which is particularly true at present, given rising skepticism over China's aspirations worldwide (Kobierecka, 2022).

Thirdly, the implications of Xi's military diplomacy for regional security architectures, especially in the context of the South China Sea, remain under-explored (Liao, 2016). To fill the research gaps above, this paper elaborates on a comprehensive analysis of Xi Jinping's idiosyncratic approach to foreign policy. Therefore, focusing on these three hybrid features of Xi Jinping's foreign policy across the interconnected themes, the research explores how central decision-making interferes with soft power dynamics and military diplomacy regarding implications for regional security and China's international status in order to contribute toward a more nuanced understanding of his foreign policy and its implications for the future of international relations.

This research has significant implications beyond the academic sphere; it affects policymakers and practitioners regarding international diplomacy and security as China continues expanding its presence on the world stage. How Xi's foreign policy is motivated and strategically initiated will be critical to the steps taken through international relations in the 21st century. In contrast, these results will help to grasp the challenges and opportunities produced by the rise of China's power, which will be interpreted through a critical reading of the emerging dynamics of global politics.

### **Theoretical framework**

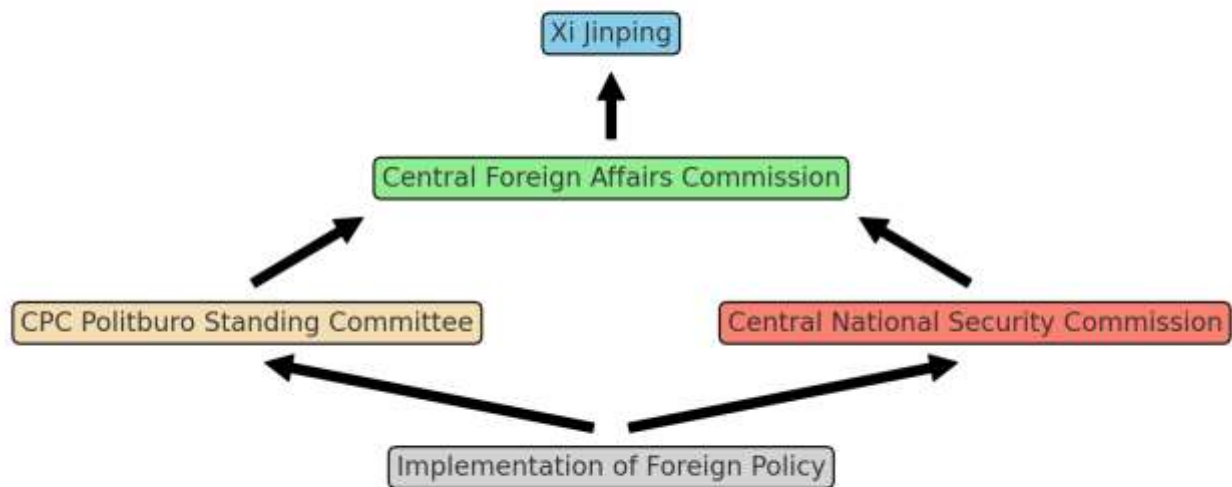
Xi Jinping's foreign policy change can be best explained by integrating leadership and decision-making theories that highlight centralization of power, soft power strategies, and military diplomacy. At its core lies transformational leadership that rallies the Chinese people toward the vision of the "Chinese Dream" for national rejuvenation and global pre-eminence. His strong leadership means that he consolidates his authority, wherein he derives a significant influence abroad and has tight control at home. From a collective leadership model (Noshir, et al., 2012), decision-making under Xi has evolved into a highly centralized system, and the pivotal decision-maker under this system is Xi himself. There has been ample explanation by the bureaucratic politics theory (Krylova, 2019) on why this happened. The rational choice theory further clarifies how Xi has made the calculation of strategic moves to maximize China's influence in the world without increasing risks.

Soft power (Nye, 2017) is a cornerstone of Xi's foreign policy, utilizing tools such as cultural diplomacy, the Belt and Road, and international partnerships to bolster China's global standing without resorting to coercion. Military diplomacy complements this approach, with Xi leveraging China's military to safeguard regional interests and support diplomatic initiatives, a blend of hard and soft power strategies. Constructivist theories (Cristol, 2011) underscore the importance of China's historiography and national identity in shaping policies, particularly in the context of restoring China's historical "golden age" status in global geopolitics under Xi. This comprehensive theoretical framework demonstrates how centralized decision-making mechanisms, in conjunction with soft and hard power strategies, redefine the dynamics of Chinese influence and security in global geopolitics.

### **Centralized Decision-Making in China's Foreign Policy**

The identification characteristic of China's foreign policy under Xi Jinping is centralized decision-making. It has been quite different from those designed earlier by his predecessors, who were much more collective and consensus oriented. **Fig. 1** illustrates how the centralized decision making in China foreign policy works under the Xi Jinping.

## Centralized Decision-Making in China's Foreign Policy



**Fig: 1.** Centralized Decision Making in China's Foreign Policy. Source: Authors self-representations through a flow chart.

Furthermore, following headings will elaborate on the mechanisms, implications, and outcomes involved in such centralization and present how leadership style by Xi has transformed the foreign-policy terrain in China.

### A. Historical Context of Decision-Making in Chinese Foreign Policy

Historically, the formation of China's foreign policy decisions has been shaped by the interaction of several actors: the Communist Party, the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the military. Under Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, foreign policy was decidedly a product of collective leadership—where decisions were made, as a rule, through consensus among senior party officials and bureaucratic institutions. This often resulted in a highly fragmented policy landscape, where competing interests among different ministries and agencies could prove myopic and inefficient in executing foreign policy (Cabestan, 2020). However, with Xi Jinping at the helm, all this has changed fundamentally. Since ascending to power in 2012, Xi has further consolidated power within the Communist Party and state machinery and, accordingly, has taken on the role of paramount leader with unprecedented authority to guide foreign policy choices. Centralization is also illustrated by establishing new institutions, such as the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) (Kejin, 2015), **Fig 2**, which has become essential in coordinating national security and foreign policy undertakings (Wuthnow, 2017). The CNSC is one such expression of Xi: streamlining the decision-making process to be more synergistic, thus a better way of tackling domestic and international issues.

### B. Mechanisms of Centralized Decision-Making

As such, the centralized decision-making process of Xi Jinping has been characterized by several mechanisms that facilitate the integration of various policy domains and enhance the coherence of China's foreign policy. In this regard, the increased role of the Central Committee

of the Communist Party has, over time, become the primary forum through which major foreign policy initiatives are discussed and approved. This has helped Xi control the foreign policy agenda better and align it with the holistic approach towards national rejuvenation and the "Chinese Dream" (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016). During the same time, Xi has sought a holistic approach to decision-making on foreign policy to increase the coordination of central and local governments and state and non-state actors (Cabestan, 2020). This acknowledges a need for a more integrated policy, considering stakeholders' differing interests and capabilities in foreign relations. Xi aims to reduce the bureaucratic fragmentation of previous administrations through greater collaboration amongst different ministries and agencies, thus attempting a stronger common front in diplomatic matters abroad. Another salient characteristic of Xi's centralized decision-making is the reliance on informal channels and personal networks to facilitate communication and coordination among key decision-makers. The Leadership of Xi is sometimes described as "personalistic", where he depends on close relationships with trusted advisors and officials to influence policy outcomes (Lai & Kang, 2013). This personalistic approach allows Xi to bypass traditional bureaucratic hurdles and quicken the process of decision-making, helping him respond faster to new challenges and opportunities arising in the international arena. The concept of this mechanism is illustrated in Fig 2.

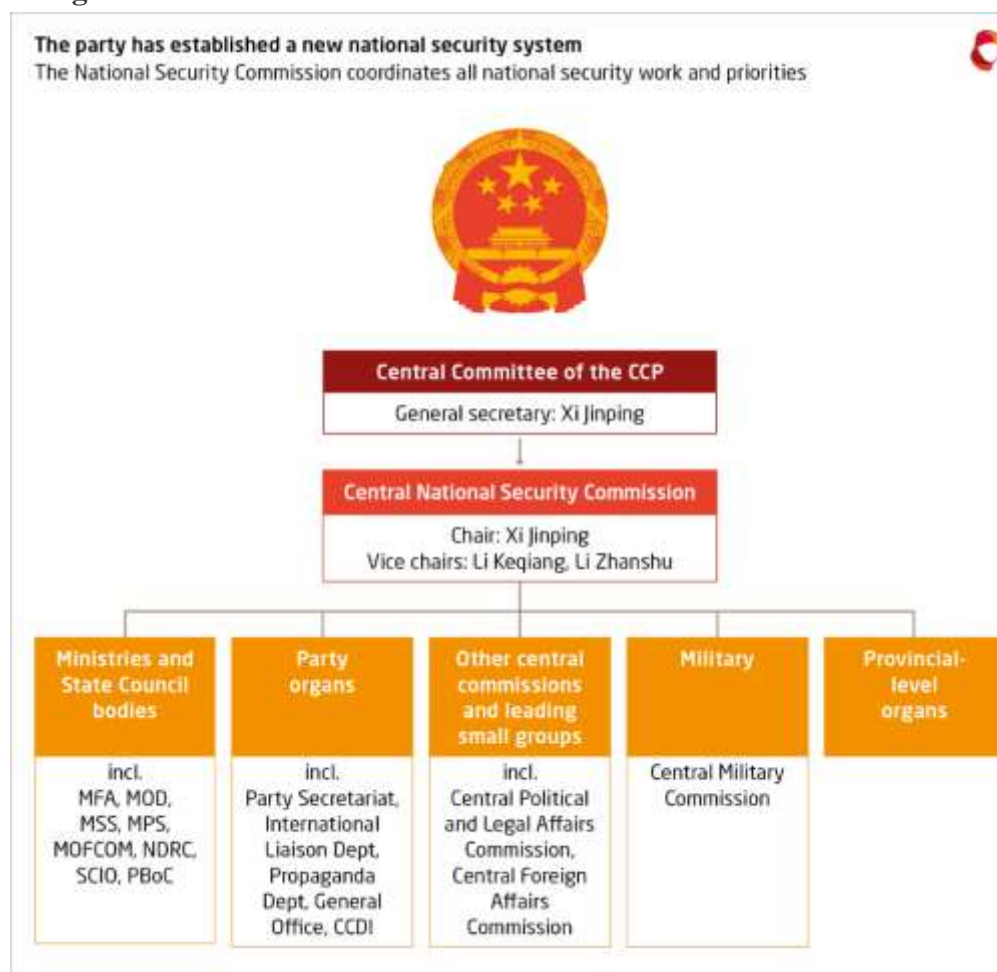


Fig 2: The hierarchy of National Security System. Source: <https://merics.org/en/chinas-new-international-paradigm-security-first>

### C. Implications of Centralized Decision-Making

The decision-making of Xi Jinping's centralization has drastic implications for China's foreign policy. Probably the most direct outcome has been that China now takes a more assertive international posture in foreign policy. Under Xi, China has undoubtedly become more assertive and aggressive with its foreign policy, particularly concerning sensitive areas, such as the South China Sea and relationships with the United States (Raman & Mukherjee, 2021). This assertiveness has typically been couched in terms of perceived threats to China's sovereignty and national interests; on a broader level, however, it speaks to the narrative of national rejuvenation and the restoration of China's historical status as a global power. Such assertiveness does not come without difficulties: the centralized decision-making process can leave the state inflexible and unyielding in adapting to rapidly changing international dynamics. Xi's leadership has made foreign policy a relatively more coherent policy at this point. However, it has also created the tendency to take more ideological stances than focusing strictly on pragmatics with other countries. For instance, China's stance on human rights and territorial disputes has strained many countries' relations with Beijing, as a result of which many have been locked into diplomatic confrontations and economic fallout (Zhu & Lü, 2015). The centralization of decisions has other implications for domestic politics and elite cohesion within the Communist Party. There goes a campaign of fighting corruption and dissent, further solidifying Xi's authority and legitimacy in practice (Cabestan, 2020). Thus, while it sealed elite cohesion for the short term, one wonders about Xi's leadership's long-term viability. This reliance on personalistic decision-making may lead to vulnerabilities because it allows power only in the hands of a single leader. That can result in policy miscalculations and only one view in foreign policy formations (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016).

#### **D. Case Studies of Centralized Decision-Making in Action**

To demonstrate the scenario of centralized decision-making within the foreign policy of China, this section looks at two case studies: the South China Sea disputes and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). *1. South China Sea Disputes:* The South China Sea has become the focal point of China's assertive foreign policy under Xi Jinping. This has allowed Xi to take more aggressive posturing on territorial disputes against neighbors who stand in rivalry, including Vietnam and the Philippines. This aggression can be reflected in island-building and increased military activities, which are crucial steps for safeguarding national sovereignty (Raman & Mukherjee, 2021). This has been a top-down process of deciding on these actions. Xi's directions are quickly implemented by the military and the appropriate government agencies, often with little input from other stakeholders. *2. Belt and Road Initiative:* The BRI is another essential aspect of Xi's foreign policy, pointing towards centralizing decision-making processes. BRI was launched in 2013 as an infrastructure development project to improve connectivity between China and countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa through economic partnerships. This project has also been closely linked to Xi's thoughts on national rejuvenation and strongly supported by the central government (Cabestan, 2020). The BRI decision-making process is characterized by a very centralized approach, which the author connotes because Xi himself monitors the implementation of BRI and ensures its commensurability with strategic objectives at greater levels. The high level of centralization has made it relatively fast-paced for the BRI projects; however, this has also resulted in many criticisms, including, but not limited to, unsustainability of debt and neocolonial practice in partner countries (Zhu & Lü, 2015).

## **Soft Power Dynamics under Xi Jinping**

From the onset of Xi Jinping, China's soft power approach has changed fundamentally and reflects strategic emphasis on cultural diplomacy, economic influence, and a positive national image projection. The section that follows analyzes the dynamics of soft power in the context of Xi Jinping's foreign policy: mechanisms of enhancing China's global standing and influence and challenges in this endeavor.

### **A. Understanding Soft Power in the Chinese Context**

Soft power means the capacity of one country to influence other countries through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Joseph Nye first called it and nurtured recently by Erbach in 2021. For China, the hard-earned soft power is not only an adjunct to its foreign policy but also plays a central role in changing the world order in its favor. Xi Jinping has portrayed a vision of China as a responsible global leader who narrates a story of peaceful development and mutual benefit. An idea that has been shaped is that of a "community with a shared future for mankind," which embodies cooperation, inclusion, and shared prosperity. Beyond hard power, there is also an emphasis on soft power and several initiatives highlighting efforts to enhance the cultural influence of China overseas. This strategy is mostly about the promotion of Chinese language and culture through Confucius Institutes, cultural exchange programs, and media outreach. By propagating the positive image of China and its culture, the government aims to erase the abovementioned negative images and gain goodwill among foreign audiences (Klimeš, 2018). However, such measures are often undone through China's domestic policies on human rights and political freedom that frustrate other nations' ability to appreciate or embrace the efforts of China.

### **B. The Belt and Road Initiative as a Soft Power Tool**

One of the most emblematic manifestations of China's soft power strategy in the Xi Jinping era is the Belt and Road Initiative, initiated in 2013. The BRI is a concept that aims at constructing infrastructure and economic cooperation between Asia, Europe, and Africa. While being an economic project above all, it also represents one of the tools for projecting Chinese soft power around the world (Klimeš & Marinelli, 2018). The BRI has been sold as a win-win proposition based on development and prosperity. Through infrastructure investments and financial support, China establishes a network of interdependence that raises its influence and general positive opinion of its role in world affairs (Xiao, 2024). It has also been criticized for establishing debt dependency among partner countries and because it is secretive in its implementation. This kind of criticism may counter the soft power goals of the program because it may, in reality, appear to be neocolonialism rather than a partnership (Creemers, 2020). **Fig 3** illustrates the areas where BRI projects the soft power.

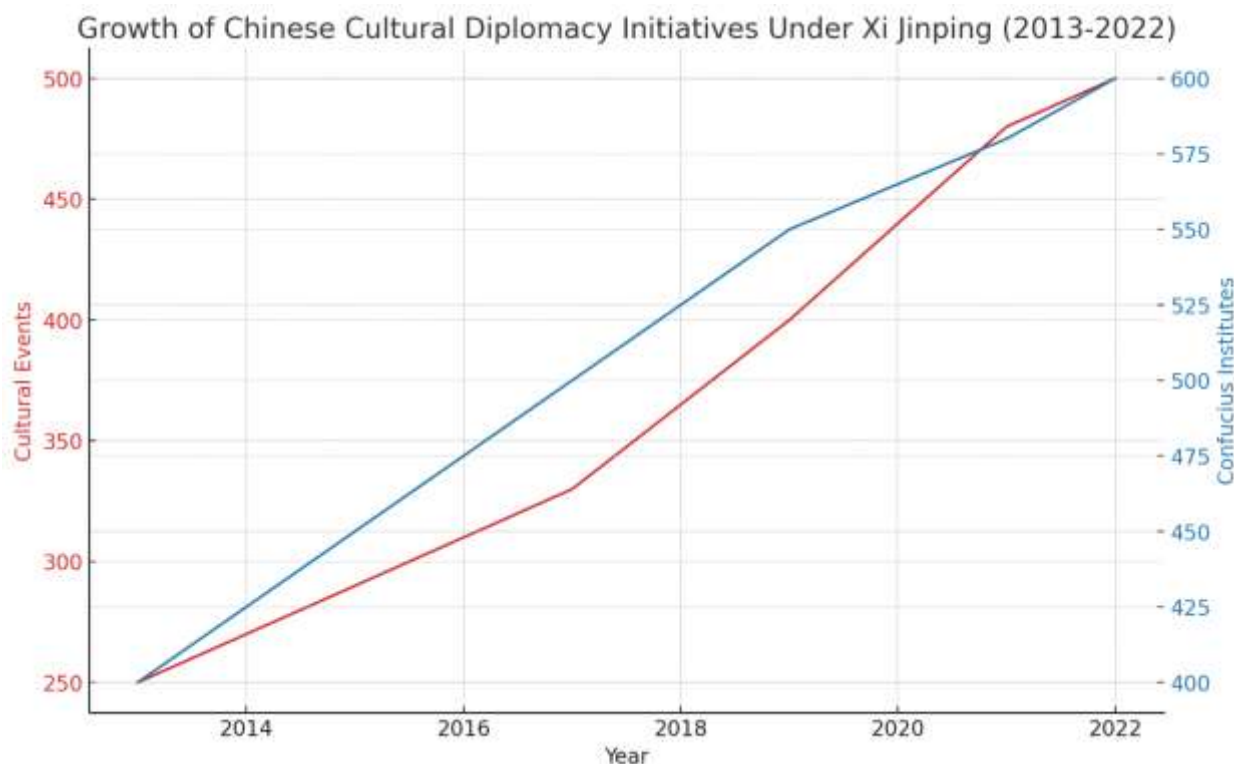




**Fig 3:** China Soft power and the Belt and Road Initiative. Source: (Islam, 2023)

### C. Cultural Diplomacy and the Promotion of Chinese Values

Cultural diplomacy has turned out to be at the very heart of Xi Jinping's soft power strategy. The Chinese government invested in various forms of cultural, language, and values promotion abroad, partly because experience showed that cultural engagement does facilitate mutual understanding and goodwill. For instance, the Confucius Institutes run across the entire world-instruction in Chinese language and culture are well-known examples of efforts to boost the cultural footprint of China. For example, the Xi administration emphasized cultural confidence: encouraging people to take pride in what they have, identify with and value their own rich heritage. Emphasis on cultural identity is against a Western narrative, and it is a way of changing the China image to become more positive about an emerging world power (Brown, 2018). However, China's authoritarian governance and human rights record still put a challenge to the effectiveness of its cultural diplomacy, with barriers to cultural engagement and acceptance, as Khan asserts (2024). **Fig. 4** portrays a data set analyzed from the year 2010-2022, that showcases that the Chinese soft power as seen rising vis-à-vis the cultural events and Confucius institutes. This has been only more successful and possible under the prominent vision and actions of the XI's administration who as previously mentioned consider soft power as prominent tool of influencing the global environment.



**Fig 4:** Authors self-representation of the Growth in Chinese cultural initiatives by using R. The red line represents the number of the cultural events hosted by China, meanwhile the blue line shows the expansion of the Confucius institutes. sources: (Fan, 2024; Wang, 2014a; Wang, 2014b; Liu, 2019).

#### **D. The Role of Media and Information in Soft Power**

Media has a critical role in opinion-forming about China and soft power efforts. During the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Chinese administration aimed to become more influential in the international level by investing in state-owned media, including CGTN (China Global Television Network) and Xinhua News Agency. These media intend to offer an alternative reporting narrative different from Western media reporting and to pursue China's vision on international issues (Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2020). Despite this, the pressure of censorship and propaganda usually becomes detrimental to this media strategy's success. Most international audiences are critical of Chinese state media, believing that it is aimed at promoting the government's message instead of merely reporting what has happened. This perception may hinder China's soft power initiatives because credibility remains an integral aspect of communication and influence (Xu & Yu, 2022). Added into this complexity is "wolf warrior diplomacy," (Iqbal, 2024) which includes the aggressive and confrontational rhetoric of Chinese diplomats, using various countries as a battleground to win over hearts and minds in an effort to push back at the "wolf warriors" (Poh & Li, 2017).

#### **E. Challenges to China's Soft Power Strategy**

Several challenges persist even in the mega plans of Xi Jinping's soft power policy. More specifically, several discrepancies are seen between China's soft power intentions and its domestic policies. These include China's internal authoritarian practices of suppressing freedom of speech as well as human rights abuses perpetrated by the government that keeps a credibility gap which goes against foreign effort to promulgate a great image abroad (Loh,

2018). As audiences abroad increasingly come to realize such contradictions, they will be less likely to succumb to the initiatives in soft power that China is calling for. Aggressive foreign policy, especially over territories and in the face of international criticism, also complicates China's ability to attract potential partners and make soft power less appealing. China's image as an emerging hegemon to advance values and interests can upset the balance among various countries, particularly nations with historical grievances and geopolitical tensions (Brazys & Dukalskis, 2020). The delicate balance would be critical for a mix of assertiveness and diplomacy in shaping an amiable external environment.

### **Military Diplomacy and Regional Security Implications**

Xi Jinping leadership transformed Chinese military diplomacy into a concept which underlined integration into other objectives within foreign policy. On the Central Military Commission's front, these efforts have been designed to increase China's international presence and influence using the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA role in military diplomacy cuts across several levels, which include hosting high-level international military dialogues as well as encouraging increased participation in international defense forums, such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) (Saunders, 2023). China's military diplomacy under Xi has defined the increasing number of joint exercises, naval port calls, and senior-level military interactions - in tune with a strategic focus on building China's influence in international relations. Thus, the pivot involves an order to focus on tasks not against war, and this would further relate to how the military must protect the nation's sovereignty and development concerns as part of grand Chinese strategy. China has also tried to expand its reach through initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and international cooperation institutions and organizations, like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank, to the point where it becomes the axis of global governance (Kuhn, 2022).

More fundamentally, building a "world-class" military is the central premise of China's military diplomacy. This would imply the enhancement of the PLA to be an equal force to the best militaries in the world, based on the development of advanced operational theories, personnel training, and technological improvement (Fravel, 2020). These are complemented by the defense-related dialogues and contacts China has been attending, which under Xi have become much more frequent and strategically important (Nouwens, 2021). The development of China's military activities, especially in the South China Sea and strategic areas, exhibits a trend of assertive foreign policy in pursuit of its national interests while engaging in co-operation at the international level (Garamone, 2022). This dual approach tries to reconcile the local ambitions with a responsible great power role by building relations that serve both the security and economic interests. These changes only illustrate how difficult it is for China's military diplomacy to combine projecting power with diplomatic engagement as it reshapes its international influence and image. **Fig 5.** Showcases that PLA has its own version of the equipment donations in the shape of new defense diplomacy tools.

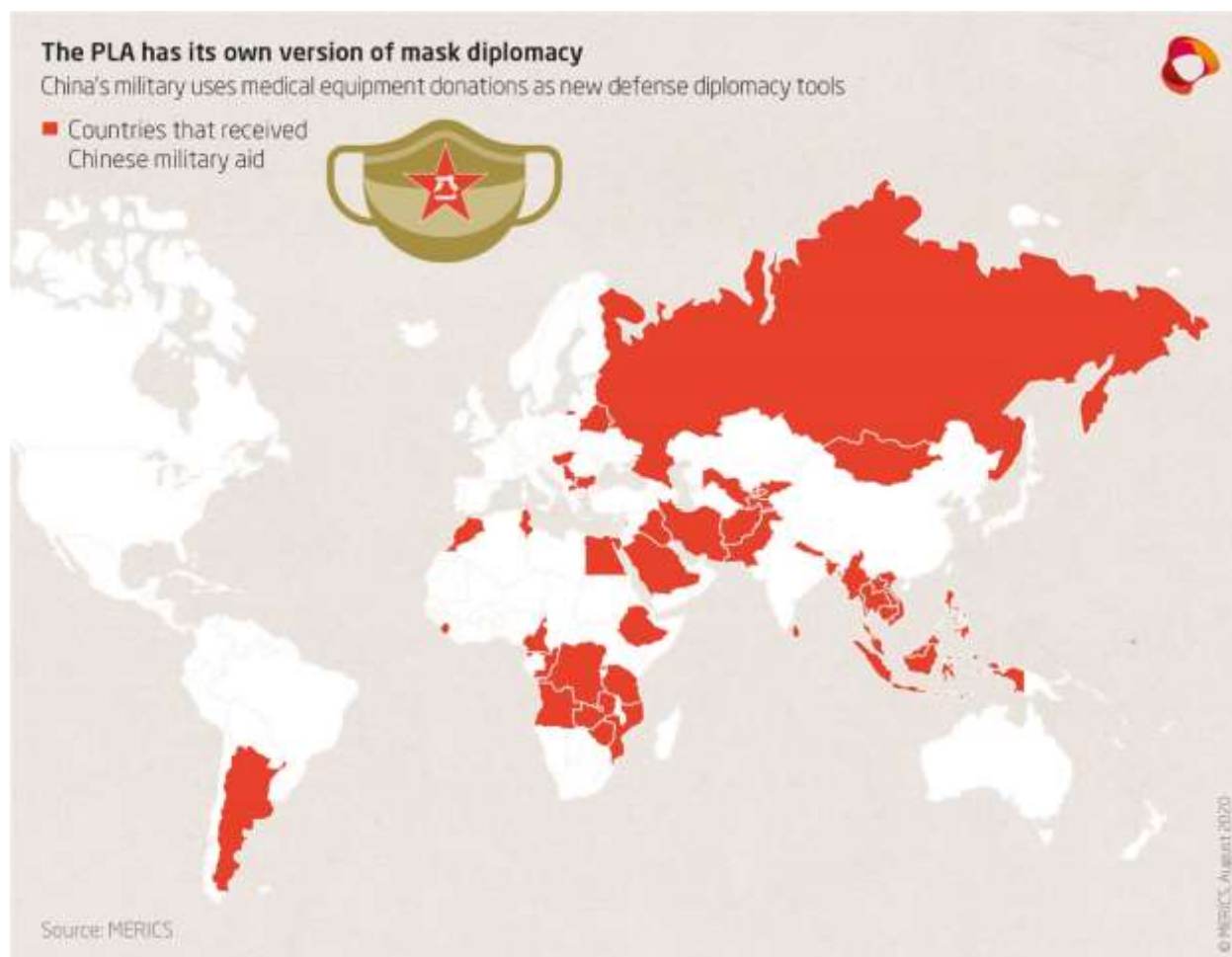


Fig 5. Countries with using China's Military equipment and donations. Source: <https://merics.org/en/tracker/plas-mask-diplomacy>

### Comparative Analysis of Xi Jinping's Foreign Policy with Previous Leaders

Xi Jinping's foreign policy stands out as a sharp contrast to that of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, who laid out China's "peaceful rise" based on high-growth economics and integration with the rest of the world but without changing the status quo of international relations. Here, Xi reiterates the practice of China's foreign policy by putting forward more assertive ideology and strategic expansionism, as expressed in the "Chinese Dream" and in the BRI. This change aims to regain China's position as a world power and reshape the international order to align with Chinese values and interests (Broz et al., 2020). From Hu's low-profile economic diplomacy, which put more emphasis on the integration of the global economy and stability, under Xi, China evolved into bold expansive foreign policy. The whole process is presented by the BRI, whose flagship ideas of infrastructure and connectivity projects are bringing China's influence across Asia, Europe, and Africa. This project not only aims for economic involvement but also acts as a tool and strategic alliance in soft power to counter-strategy Western hegemony (Boyarkina et al., 2021). Xi's strategy on military modernization and muscle flexing, particularly on territorial disputes such as the South China Sea, is different from the approach adopted by Hu, who primarily focused on defensive capabilities and economic priorities. Xi's administration has not hesitated to use military power to press its territorial claims, which happens in the context of the broader strategy of

enhancing Chinese regional influence and protecting its interests against perceived threats (Gravelle et al., 2017).

Diplomatically, Xi has changed from the cautious engagement of his predecessors to an assertive and often unilateral approach. While still a participant in multilateral forums like the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Xi has also taken the initiative in helping to establish alternative institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), with intent on building forums responsive to the needs of China, thereby challenging the West-centric global governance model. This strategic realignment is coupled with the rhetoric of "win-win" cooperation, which, appealing though it sounds, more often than not hides the power play at work as China uses its economic clout to bargain for political influence and reestablish international norms (Boyarkina et al., 2021; Ramadhani, 2019). On top of this, Xi has concentrated power in his hands by creating a centralized authority within China. Unlike Hu, the consensus-driven approach balanced different party perspectives, Xi's style underlines ideological conformity and loyalty in a way that has reduced the breadth of input into foreign policy decisions and tends to increase the risk of rigid or miscalculated policies. Centralization also establishes a tight connection of foreign policy to domestic politics such that foreign policy achievements are framed as essential to national pride and the legitimacy of the Communist Party. This has made the story of the "Chinese Dream" and the rejuvenation of the nation play a significant role in maintaining stability at home, as well as strengthening the power of the party (Sposito, 2023).

Xi Jinping's term thus represents a critical juncture of China's foreign policy, marked by ideological assertiveness, strategic expansion, and a new vision of global governance. These developments reflect Xi's broader ambitions for transforming China as a leader in the international system; one that can indeed exercise influence over the international relations in keeping with its rejuvenated national identity and global ambitions.

### **Conclusion**

This study comprehensively analyses Xi Jinping's idiosyncratic approach to China's global foreign policy and compares his leading influence on contemporary China's international relations with that of his predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. This has been achieved by a comprehensive review that illuminates the implications and complexities of Xi's foreign policy via centralized decision-making, soft power dynamics, military diplomacy, and comparative analysis of leadership styles. In essence, significant findings from this study indicate a marked departure from the pragmatic and cautious approaches that characterized the previous administrations under Xi Jinping. While Jiang and Hu were primarily focused on economic development and stability, Xi's strategy has been more assertive and intellectually driven, emphasizing national rejuvenation and the return of China to its role as a historical global power. It can be coined by critical concepts in the "Chinese Dream," "New Type of Great Power Relations," and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which all embody the wish of Xi to remold the order of the international system according to Chinese values and interests. Centralized decision-making is another hallmark of Xi's foreign policy- the changes it brings, thus producing a more integrated and assertive foreign policy. The China's National Security Commission (CNSC) as an institution has allowed for even closer co-ordination among various state actors in helping Xi achieve his vision. However, this level of centralization brings out more awareness of the possibility of rigidity and less diversification in policy

formulation, which may lead to miscalculations in an increasingly complex world context. The study further elaborates on soft power dynamics under Xi Jinping, revealing the dualistic nature of China's engagement with the world. Propelled by initiatives like BRI and cultural diplomacy, China urges positive involvement through this international image-building; however, a strategic suite of domestic policies and even the perception of China's assertiveness mitigate and threaten these approaches. Such a strategy undermines the soft power of China since its authoritarian governance and questionable human rights record create scepticism in foreign public opinion. Military diplomacy has become an essential tenet in Xi's policy toward the country's external affairs, particularly in the context of regional security dynamics. This assertive military posturing by China, especially in the South China Sea, indicates using military power to protect national interests and strategic territorial claims. This has many implications for regional security, mainly because it has contributed to a security dilemma in that nations around China have reacted by increasing their military capabilities and reaching for closer relations with the United States. The nature of his transformational leadership is vividly portrayed in the comparative analysis of Xi's foreign policy vis-à-vis his predecessors. Jiang and Hu emphasized stability and economic integration over the same thing - the principle that China has been increasingly assertive, especially after the 2008 great depression. Such a shift may take the above forms: military diplomacy, the pursuit of alternative multilateral frameworks, and the consideration for legitimacy at the national level within foreign policy choices.

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