

THE CHINESE DREAM – A DREAM OR REALITY!?

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ABSTRACT

This article is written to highlight the ways in which China engages in the competition to conquer world supremacy. China is regularly hailed as a potential new superpower. There are views on rapid economic progress, increasing military power, a very large population and increasing its international influence, as signs that it will play an important role in the world in the 21st century. However, other opinions warn that economic chimeras and demographic imbalances could slow or even stop China’s economic growth. The Chinese dream is a concept that has been promoted by the Chinese president Xi Jinping since late 2012 within the Chinese society to describe a set of personal and national paragons for the future of China. It is currently widely used by journalists, governmental officials, and activists to describe the individual’s role in the Chinese society, as well as the Chinese nation’s goals for the future.

KEYWORDS: China, communists, globalization, military challenges, cultural, political opportunities, drawbacks

1. Introduction

The Chinese dream is a concept that has been promoted by the Chinese president Xi Jinping since late 2012 within the Chinese society to describe a set of personal and national paragons for the future of China.

Why did the Chinese president launch the Chinese Dream formula? Because he realized his percussion force. Economic calculations, figures of all kinds become pale in relation to the force of a simple formula that accompanies the ordinary man, which convinces him that it is in his power to

become what he wants. The Chinese dream is associated with a moderately prosperous society, with the achievement of a new national youth, with the collective effort to raise the country, in which the honest, hardworking and respectful individual can find the chance to assert himself.

Xi Jinping has been president of China since 2012. Since then, the main features of the period have been increased assertiveness and authoritarianism. The Chinese president's stated goal has been and continues to be to cement China’s position as a superpower,

while launching crackdowns on corruption and dissent. The cultivated image is that of a strong leader at the head of the Chinese Communist Party, with his ideas mentioned by name in the constitution – an honor that has only been reserved for Mao Zedong so far.

China's reputation is growing and the pandemic and the ensuing crisis could be a catalyst for cooperation with European countries, especially the European Union. Analysts have long been talking about the end of the American-led system and the arrival of an Asian century.

In most situations where the Chinese president addresses the people, especially the youth, he urges them to be steadfast in their faith, to improve their professional skills, to embrace innovation in everything they do, to work hard and to build characters noble. *“Young people should be optimistic and tenacious when facing adversities”* (Xi, 2013).

According to the theoretical newspaper of the Qiushi party, the Chinese dream is about the Chinese people's welfare, collective struggle, socialism, and national glory.

2. Global China

The President Xi Jinping stated on October 22, 2019, when he met the foreign representatives in China during the “Chinese Economic Innovation Forum” that he was fully confident in China's future, while emphasizing that the Chinese dream is to perform the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This is certainly not a “hegemonic dream”, as he puts it himself. Are not prepared to replace anybody, just to restore China to its proper dignity and status. The humiliation of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries in the past will never be repeated.

China's main priority remains development. *“China is the first developing nation to become a great power. From a country where the main attraction for investors was cheap labor, China has*

turned into a consumer economy. It is the second largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, after the USA, and the first in the world if GDP is related to purchasing power” (Cojocaru, 2018). The main stated objectives of China's journey are to focus all resources on improving people's living standards and gradually achieving common prosperity, by increasing the GDP and per capita income of the Chinese. China's long-term strategy is also to complete the construction of a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and modern society by the middle of this century.

Moreover, the president Xi Jinping emphasized that the reason why China has undergone historic changes is because it has chosen the right path in line with China's national conditions, and that such changes are the personal involvement of the current generation of the Chinese people. Xi Jinping that by personal experience and personal construction, the Chinese people has never been as confident as it is today. But we didn't feel that there was anything extraordinary, or that we could look at everything and show our might. We just work hard to do our own thing and we have always maintained this attitude.

The coronavirus epidemic is wreaking havoc on financial markets, with imported effects expected on the world economy as a result of measures taken to manage the medical crisis. However, if China manages to keep the epidemic under control and companies resume global operations at normal levels, the impact on the world economy may be limited.

Fears of the coronavirus epidemic have also shaken global stock markets. China's stock market, which is directly linked to economic growth and expansion, has fallen at a record pace due to the epidemic, increasing the likelihood of a coordinated policy response from central banks to prevent a global recession. The recent cuts and abnormal declines in

the Chinese stock market have caused concern for governments to prevent a massive panic.

The borders of People's Republic of China are between power and force. Its wealth and strength increase every single year compared to the world's. But what do its leaders expect to get by their new approach?

Jonathan D.T. Ward (2019) wrote in his book *China's Vision of Victory* that the answer to the question "What does China want?" (compared to the world...). It is as simple as that: the Chinese want supremacy.

The author considers that the vision of China is shaped despite the way the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party show it to other nations (as having humble and peaceful ambitions): as a matter of fact, it is a hegemonic and expansionist vision focused on acquiring military, economic, technological, and, why not?, ideological supremacy, as such leaders plainly and periodically communicate to the domestic audience. Ward shows how vast the scope of such ambitions is, by guiding his readers through a series of official documents mentioned throughout his book.

3. Understanding China's Wishes

It is essential that in the process of understanding the "Chinese Dream" project, launched during the tenure of President Xi Jinping, we expand the area of interest and understanding of public communication mechanisms, one of the strategic elements in dream construction being the theory of "Four General Themes". As a continuation of the "Three Great Achievements" which aimed at "*building a socialist road with Chinese specificity, forming its own socialist theoretical system and establishing a socialist organization with Chinese specificity*" (Tomozei, 2017).

The Chinese dream has been considered a call for influencing the rising international path of China, Xi Jinping meaning a dream as a form of national

rejuvenation, while also stating that the Chinese youth envies America's cultural influence and hope China can become a cultural exporter.

If this is the case from a cultural perspective, the responsibility of China's rise from a military point of view falls upon the members of the Chinese army, who support the military development of China, claiming that "*the dream of the powerful nations*" as to a great awakening of the Chinese people cannot but result from a dream of a strong army.

In this respect, the former US secretary of state John Kerry promoted the idea of a "US Pacific dream" to adapt China's rise by regional cooperation on joint stakes such as the environment and the economic growth.

Along the other points of view, there is, of course, that of the ordinary Chinese people, who interpreted the Chinese dream through the stereotype of chasing individual dreams. *The New Yorker's* Evan Osnos concludes that "*Xi Jinping sought to inspire his people by raising the flag of the Chinese dream, but the population interpreted it as China's Dreams – in the plural*" (Osnos, 2008). Under such circumstances, the Chinese dream is defined depending on the individuals' aspirations and personal wishes, which might lead to "proliferating 1.3 billion of China dreams".

In recent times, Chinese society in general has gone through difficult times, social, economic turmoil, deprivation or political shocks by virtue of local and domestic dynamics. "*Problems of corruption, social injustice, public unrest, disparity of income and regional development, energy and resource shortages, unemployment, aging population, inadequate social and economic security network, pollution, etc. they overshadow the moral foundation of economic reform. These new problems are a daunting task for the Chinese leadership*" (Guo & Guo, 2008).

One of the main objectives of Chinese state propaganda is therefore to build links

between individual and national aspirations, which means converging the values of the market economy with those of state nationalism.

The app is the latest example of a rethink by the Communist Party when it comes to its propaganda efforts and how best to justify the legitimacy of its one-party rule, extol the virtues of the party, and promote patriotism to an audience of young, tech-savvy Chinese.

For those institutions responsible for the production of effective propaganda, this is a real challenge. After all, propaganda in the 21st century has to go beyond forcing people to sit in study sessions on Friday afternoons, read the People's Daily newspaper, or watch China Central Television (CCTV) in group meetings.

Thanks to a number of developments, the old propaganda messages of previous generations can easily be repackaged for millennials. Like the rest of the world, Chinese millennials are keen adopters of the latest mobile technologies and suffer from short attention spans. They are also just as enthusiastic as their Western counterparts about posting jokes, music videos and short, sharp, attention-grabbing memes on social media.

The Chinese government, meanwhile, is putting more of an emphasis on humanising its approach to leadership. Politicians are keen to be seen as relatable rather than authoritative figures.

From an economic standpoint, some governmental officials and activists consider the Chinese Dream as a need for economic and political reforms. To support China's economic growth, the country needs economic reform encompassing urbanization, reducing governmental bureaucracy, and weakening the weight of special stakes.

The Chinese Liberals defined the Chinese dream as a dream of constitutionalism. *Southern Weekly*, a liberal newspaper based in Guangzhou, tried to publish a column called *The Chinese dream*:

a dream of constitutionalism, pleading for having the powers separated, but it was censured by the authorities. Both Xi Jinping, and the prime-minister Li Keqiang support the economic reform, but they avoided discussing about the political reform.

Premier Li Keqiang appreciates that there is the potential and resilience of the Chinese state to keep the economy growing at a rational pace. "*We should pay more attention to the quality and efficiency of the economy, so as to ensure steady and healthy growth in the long run*" (Li, 2015). According to the official, the Chinese dream is "*the core of socialism with Chinese features*" (Callahan, 2014).

This ambitious project makes China the only country in the world currently pursuing a global vision. With its clever investment policy, China has been increasingly able to translate its economic strength into political influence. The new transport links and economic corridors will definitely play their part in the development of the Chinese Dream, by strengthening Beijing's role as a Eurasian center of gravity and turning it once again into the "Middle Country." Moreover, China struggles under its new leadership to reach more balanced and more sustainable growth – and for you this means quite the opposite. Rebalancing from investments to consumption. This is of Xi's vision to accomplishing "*China's dream*". Rebalancing from investments to consumption, this is of Xi's vision to accomplishing "*China's dream*".

4. The Real China

Opinion is divided in terms of the supposedly truthful intentions behind the powerful Chinese boom, each camp having its own arguments in favour of their ideas.

According to Helen Wang, China's ultimate goal is control the American culture, while the American companies should resist as they try to prevent this phenomenon. The author also considers that if the "*Chinese government is allowed to limit what the American people may say or*

do, if the Americans give up their freedom in exchange of short-term financial gain, they will lose their capacity to create the best products” (Wang, 2019).

The author also believes that Chinese leaders have carefully watched the rise of America to become a global superpower, and I believe that America’s cultural influence is a vital ingredient for China’s success. At the same time, China is willing to imitate America’s success, even with Chinese characteristics, to continue to support the idea of rejuvenating the Chinese nation, but only during the flowering of Chinese culture. *“We will improve our ability to engage in international communication, to tell the stories of China properly, to present a real, multidimensional and panoramic image of China, and to enhance the cultural power of our country”* (Xi, 2017).

China’s dream, according to President Xi, means not only expanding China’s global economic and military influence, but also cultural domination, by influencing and shaping the views of its citizens and by accepting Chinese economic policy and measures.

But the Chinese will not stop buying American products or watching American sports just because the government has suddenly ordered them not to. Hollywood, Apple, NBA and ESPN is the profit – they are interested in the Chinese market and should know that Chinese people love American sports products and teams not because the Chinese government told them, but because American products and teams are the best from the world.

In the military field, the evolutionary trends of the new military revolution in the world as well as the security needs of the country, determined the reform of the defense sector, in accordance with the process of modernization of the country. Measures to modernize the army in terms of theory, organizational structure, personnel and weapons arsenal were promoted. *“We will strive to modernize the national defense and armed forces by 2035, and to*

build a world-class army by all means by the middle of this century. We will continue to deepen national and military defense reform. Let’s crystallize our huge force to realize the Chinese Dream, the dream of a powerful army” (Xi, 2017).

In his interview “Understanding China’s vision of victory”, Jonathan Ward describes the conditions that China’s leaders seek to create in the Asia-Pacific by 2049. *“What are today’s Chinese leaders looking for and how was the vision of Beijing on its own evolution changed and adapted? How seriously do the internal objectives of the Chinese Communist Party interact with China’s external politics? Can the United States ultimately support its pioneering in Asia in spite of China’s apparently inexorable growth? To explore those questions and some larger-scope ones, the diplomat Ankit Panda talked to Jonathan Ward, the author of China’s Vision of Victory and founder of Atlas Organisation, a consulting company focusing on the rise of India and China, as well as on the global US-China competition”* (Panda, 2019).

China’s primary goal is to outperform the United States economically and thereby gain an advantage over the United States and other nations. Coronavirus will trigger a restructuring, a transformation of the economic model and after that, will trigger a sharp transformation of the Chinese economic model which was criticized, signaled as exclusively an export machine, will become a machine to absorb, a market much more serious. However, China still depends on its economic commitment to build its technological and industrial advantages. The Chinese technology harvesting program in the developed world over the past 20 years has yielded significant results and helped maintain a competitive advantage over competition in the long run.

These are the most important and the most relevant questions Ward tries to find an answer to. He believes the US – China

competition will be one of a unique and original kind. Unlike the Cold War, which was ideological in nature, the current competition between the two states is likely to be an economic competition with military and ideological dimensions approaching.

Significant comparisons can be made between the US-China competition and the Cold War. First of all, there might be a long-term global competition run during several decades between an authoritarian superpower and a democratic superpower.

The goals of the Chinese Communist Party, as described in Vision of Victory in China, may be even more ambitious in the future. In this regard, China wants to be at the top of all major industries and technologies, where most of the world's continents and markets are linked to China as an economic and strategic center, a future in which China will reform the entire defense system, with an army that can effectively protect China's offshore interests. If fully realized, China's final rise can be compared to the British Empire rather than to the USSR, which is economically weak and involved in a global ideological struggle against the United States.

This economic competition, in which China's goal is primarily to outperform the US in terms of the economy, is based on continuity in producing long-term benefits for the country, compared to what the United States and other countries can do. From this perspective, at certain levels, change is inevitable, especially where it can contribute to maintaining a competitive lead, in technology and in the key points of the industry, for a long-term competition. Although China's program and effort to benefit from the technology of the developed world in the integration period, in addition to the positive results achieved, China still depends on economic involvement to build its technological and industrial superiority. Moreover, the Communist Party carries out most of its global strategy through its companies and financial institutions, which can act as state weapons, unlike American companies. For example, the same state-

owned companies that built the artificial islands in the South China Sea are running other infrastructure projects internationally in the Indo-Pacific.

In addition, overseeing China and its human rights abuses, especially in Xinjiang, poses reputational risks to US investors and corporations seeking opportunities in China. Given the role of Chinese companies in creating oversight status, human rights abuses will have a major impact on economic engagement with China as long-term competition reaches the country.

There are three major strategies supporting the ultimate goal of the "*great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation*".

China tends to become the most influential power in Europe and in the world. China's goal is to become the de facto dominant power of the world, by restoring its power and well-being to other nations before the "Century of Humility". First, the Belt and Road initiative, a long-term infrastructure project in Eurasia, is at the heart of China's global industrial strategy, which shows us its geographical ambitions. China thus becomes an integrated Asian, European, African and Australian mainland superstructure, an economic and strategic center

The Belt and Road initiative has thus become China's most successful soft power policy, attracting several dozen states that have signed memoranda of understanding with China for BIS development and facilitating China's global promotion.

In 2013, while visiting Kazakhstan, Xi Jinping, President of China, launched one of the pillars of the Belt and Road initiative, The Silk Road Economic Belt or the land road of the new Silk Road. A few months later, in Indonesia, Xi announced The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the maritime artery of the new Silk Road, thus integrating the routes of the project that would be called "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) or Yi Dai, Yi Lu.

The second strategy is “Made in China 2025”, which considers the Chinese dominance in several strategic industries, from robotics to next-generation information technology and state-of-the-art transports, and it also means the effort to turn China into the leader of the worldwide manufacturing industry before the 100th anniversary of the creation of the People’s Republic of China, namely 2049. “*Made in China (MIC) 2025, is an initiative which strives to secure China’s position a global powerhouse in high-tech industries*” (Institute for Security & Development Policy, 2018).

As we have already pointed out, “The Chinese Dream” is a project and a path opened by P.C. Chinese, the main leader of the socialist, economic and political system in China.

The “Chinese dream” is based on a constant presence of the working class in continuing the process of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, a political system in which workers take on the “historical mission and responsibility” to do a good job and take into account the interests of the country. For this, the driving force supports the need to respect work and ensure the happiness of all who work, as long as work is the source of wealth and happiness.

5. Conclusions

No power in the world, be it economic, political or military, had a greater influence on shaping the Maoist ideological profile as it had a rapid global consolidation of post-war American influence. Mao’s fascination with American power, coupled with the enormous disappointment created by Soviet policies

about his nation’s future, led all Chinese research laboratories in China to study to understand and then apply the American mechanism. With one remark: the values of communism and Leninist policies are unchanging.

The prism through which China sees the world today, including its supreme leadership, is in fact identical to that of the last century.

That being said, we can conclude that China's greatness lies in the power of its culture, as many historians have called China an important cultural power.

China’s recent development includes three major periods: the first, between 1978 and 1992 (a period of significant success and marked by increasingly active reforms), the liberalization of the Chinese market (from 1992 to 1994) and the third, which continues in -an ever-increasing pace, from 1994 to the present day, when the new China strikes almost daily with new technological, military and IT performance.

China’s evolution will depend on its interdependence with the other great powers, as well as on the projection of American power. What China will become is a question, and the analysis of what will happen in the future is the only way to find out.

The whole planet is dependent on China. We live in 2020, goods move freely and can quickly reach any part of the planet. But what happens when the planet’s factory, China, stops? Most likely, international trade will slow down, as the current crisis has the potential to cause recession and unemployment thousands of miles away from the borders of the Asian state.

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