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INTRODUCTION TO THE “CHINESE DREAM” NARRATIVE

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INTRODUCTION:

New faces bring new policy. In the 21st century, when the "hard power" loses its positions in international relations, the utilization of "soft power" is only due to increase. Political speeches, talk shows, calls and tele-radio broadcasting became the cornerstone of a new type of policy. The US President Donald Trump's Twitter campaign is sufficient example of that. More importantly, the analysis of political messages and slogans and their narrative analysis gained quite a popularity. The special interest towards the "Chinese dream" from the international relations theory and political science standpoint only grew after China initiated "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) strategy. The reason for that is economic strategy of the new Silk Road may fully alter the balance of power and geopolitics in Central Asia and the Caucasus region, including Georgia. "One Belt One Road" is a part of Xi Jinping's "China Dream" policy. 5 years have passed from the start of the project, during which China has changed the foreign policy course from the isolation to maximally revisionist type. Investments of billions of dollars have been made in 6 economic corridors adjacent to 5 new routes of the "New Silk Road". Some countries as Pakistan have met this initiative with open arms, some - with doubt, and in some countries the opposition confronted the government blaming it for the sale of national interests (Singapore). Most of the countries, including Georgia, where the One Belt One Road investments has not reached 56 billion, are still watching this initiative with anticipation. They still have a vague idea of the Xi Jinping's Chinese dreams, a part of which is a new Silk Road project. The new Silk Road (same as "One Belt One Road") is a global project and its implementation is in the interests of Central Asia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Trans-Caucasian countries (including Georgia). Some countries are already fully involved in this project, and the majority are at its initial stage. Economic and political entities in Georgia are at alpha phase in this project. 12 international scientific conferences were held since the start of the initiative. This year, the 13th conference is scheduled for May 23. The text of the speech delivered in the Pekin National Museum by Xi Jinping on November 29, 2012 is the first presentation of the new policy of the "Chinese Dream" and the September 2013 statement is the first presentation of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" program. These two concepts are connected to each other as the author projects of China's political leader.

Research Question:

This study aims to answer and understand the following question:

- 1- Is there difference between "China's dream" and default slogan on structural level?
- 2- What's the level of impact of "China's dream" political narrative on current China foreign policy?

Research Objectives:

- 1- To estimate the difference between "China's dream" and default slogan on structure level?
- 2- To identify the narrative of "China's dream"

Research Methodology:

Research primarily depends on analysis of transcripts of Xi Jinping speeches.

Data Collection:

I analyzed Xi Jinping's speeches that span from September 2012 to February 2018. I collected the speeches and addresses from an online database called China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), China Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website and OBOR official website. From audio recordings, the site owners transcribed the textual versions, which I downloaded and printed. These texts helped me answer my research questions because they encompassed a crucial timeframe when the Xi Jinping announced "China Dream" and all consecutive sub-policies such as "National Rejuvenation" and "One Belt One Road". In addition, they all included political, economic, and constitutive stories. Furthermore, they had some notable consistency in having "Chinese Dream" as main encompassing thematic narrative. Speech analysis is applied in first 3 chapters of full-research paper. Current section is just an introduction to full research paper.

Importance of Research:

China policy has become the main focus of interest in Georgian academic circles. The importance of Xi Jinping's policy affecting "One Belt One Road" economic initiative can't be underestimated.

The factor of "China's Dream" narrative influencing economic project on global regional scale can be worrying considering the fact that mentioned project is at alpha and beta stages on global regional scale. The new Silk Road project and "Chinese Dream" are two of the most important factor in studying modern China politics. Taking into consideration the fact that Xi Jinping occupied the post of General Secretary of Communist Party on November 21. While the speech about Chinese Dream was mere 8 days later. The Chinese dream has become a kind of action program for the Chinese government elite and is also an ideological basis for the One Belt One Road. In China itself the "Chinese dream" policy is used in the extreme broader context. However, within the scope of this study, I uncover the Chinese Dream narrative in context of foreign policy and a new Silk Road.

Sample of "Chinese Dream" political narrative (excerpt from the speech)

On October 18, 2017, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Full text transcript consists of 66 pages.

Remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind, hold high the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects,

strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, and work tirelessly to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. Never forget why you started, and you can accomplish your mission. The original aspiration and the mission of Chinese Communists is to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. This original aspiration, this mission, is what inspires Chinese Communists to advance. In our Party, each and every one of us must always breathe the same breath as the people, share the same future, and stay truly connected to them. The aspirations of the people to live a better life must always be the focus of our efforts. We must keep on striving with endless energy toward the great goal of national rejuvenation.

Analysis

The speech was made in Beijing on Wednesday. The speech coincides with the ending period of the first five years of Xi, which influenced the emotional tone of the speech. China's leader is normally moderate. Here he expresses an extra rhetoric. Take into account that the speech was held before the 2,300 delegates at the podium, where Xi Jinping spoke about 205 minutes. Here we have some kind of Chinese party tradition. The People's Congress sessions are held once in five years and they are opened by the Chinese leader's report, which is always a general political draft, and not a detailed plan. Thus, we can explain the fact that Xi Jinping did not mention Donald Trump or North Korea or other specific political threats. This speech is built on the essence of maintaining ideological control. Xi Jinping regularly repeats the main element of Chinese Dream - "National Rejuvenation" and its Conceptual Framework - "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics".

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics - a revised narrative about the Communist legacy from Xi Jinping. The term first appeared with Mao Zedong. However, in the collective memory of the Chinese nation it was established by Deng Xiaoping. This notion was meant to borrow some elements of the capitalist economy and implement them for the Chinese market economy reforms. In the party's official narrative, Socialism with Chinese characteristics is Marxism–Leninism adapted to Chinese conditions and a product of scientific socialism. The theory stipulated that China was in the 'primary stage of socialism' due to its relatively low level of material wealth and needed to engage in economic growth before it pursued a more egalitarian form of socialism, which in turn would lead to a communist society described in Marxist orthodoxy. The post-Deng party has appended the theories of Three Represents, Scientific Outlook on Development, and Xi Jinping's thought on Socialism with Characteristic in a New Era to the family of successor ideologies built upon the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics framework. These theories have in some ways revised Dengist interpretations of the term, and in other ways have expanded them." "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics." This term has been modified for the purpose of Chinese Dream propaganda. In the era of the Xi Jinping, "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" first appeared at the 19th Party National Congress, and after that it was present on all party speeches. The Chinese leader has set up its 14-point version of the concept in his speeches in 2012.

National Rejuvenation - There are two versions of this term: the old one and new (Xi Jinping's version). Initially "national rejuvenation" appeared in the 1970s and meant to unite Chinese and Taiwanese nations. The term means that the two nationalities must be turned into one nation as a result of "national rejuvenation". The issue is extremely intrusive and is a part of political discourse developed by Official Beijing towards Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The term first appeared in the 1970s meetings of congress of the China's Communist Party in Beijing but was not put into everyday use before Xi Jinping. In Xi's era, the term is used with the Chinese Dream. According to the excerpt, "the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation" is "the original aspiration and the mission of Chinese Communists". This notion consists of a lot of internal layers, including the regime's security dilemma. In this particular speech, the Chinese leader tells us that they (China's Communist Party) should build a moderately wealthy society - "moderately prosperous society in all respects." This idea also comes from the ideology of Chinese communism. No one in the society should be distinguished by the material status.

Chinese Communist Party and Chinese people — At the same time, the theme of the Chinese people identity equalizing with the Chinese Communist Party takes place, when Xi Jinping points out that the party and the people have the same future and thus are related. This dilemma of equalizing Chinese people with Chinese Communist party shows itself again in the discourse of "soft power of traditional Chinese culture". It is discussed in other chapters of research not present here.

The Narrative of Chinese Dream

Why is "Chinese dream" a narrative and not a slogan? The slogan is more like a reference that points to the only one specific narrative and calls on the public on the basis of this instruction to cause some behavior. In this case, Chinese dream is much more than a simple attributing plugin. The concept includes many internal components from Chinese collective memory. It's not just a message, it's an action program that is heavily utilized in every aspect of Chinese life (from party policy to working class directives). The Chinese dream ultimately defines the current Chinese foreign and domestic policies. That is unimaginable for the simple political slogan. We can say that Chinese dream is a story about future China, about better China than it is now, and it will definitely be if the Chinese people (sometimes other nations too) will take into consideration what Xi Jinping has to say. The analysis of the Chinese Dream's narrative will give us access to the Xi Jinping's and China Communist Party policy and its influence on Chinese audience.

The following points show why the Chinese dream differs from typical slogan-like structure.

1. The "Chinese dream" is not a electoral type construction like most political campaign slogans that aim to establish trust to voters. Xi Jinping did not use it before coming to leadership, even though his speeches suggest that he had long worked on this theme.
2. The Chinese dream is passive. Its emotional tone is neutral. Most slogans have a sharp, emotional vector.
3. Chinese dream is quite vague and general. Political campaign slogans have a clear narrow significance.
4. Chinese Dream includes many messages. On the contrary, the typical political slogans are built on one theme. In this case, Xi Jinping's invention gives us the impression of multilayered narrative rather than a short message of one particular idea.
5. Political slogans are usually chosen carefully to satisfy their audience. They address only part of the population of the nation, ethnicity, religious group or residence. In this regard, Chinese dream is meant for the whole Chinese nation, but it does not end on it. The Chinese dream can also be shared by other nations, they have the right to create their own "dream" and China can facilitate it.

Narrative and Political Narrative

What is the narrative? According to Kristen Monroe narrative mainly means storytelling. Nowadays narrative theory enjoys wide popularity. Narrative can also mean "all the ways in which we distinguish facts and create our own worlds." The narrative helps us to perceive ourselves as a political being. This is an indispensable tool to explain all the events and facts that we have in existence. We may recall here Rikoeur's view that to some extent "the narrative reflects life." Shennav explains political narrative as the narrative that arises from the format of the political forum such as Parliament, Cabinet, Party Conferences or Political Demonstration, or narrative, which is created by politicians and public servants during their duties. The political narrative is influencing the political reality and shapes our expectations to the new environment, but at the same time it should be based on the existing expectations and cultural values to fulfill its function. "Chinese dream" matches this formula. The political narrative also carries a certain "referential function" (by playing the role of a linking agent in the social structure). It plays a critical role in shaping political behavior. As a result of the narrative, we act as individuals and we do what we do as collective units, i.e. nations and groups as a result of the narrative. For the sake of simplicity, we can compare narrative to the theatrical play and break it into three main elements. The first is events, actors and backgrounds. This element covers all the entities inside narrative: the main actors, the course of their activities and geographical, social and institutional space where the action takes place. The second element will be sequence of events. That is, the events exist in time sectors. The third element is cause-effect. This element covers the cause and outcome of the main narratives and it also spreads to political setting.

Political discourse

Political discourse is particularly heavily dependent on the type of narrative and the scheme. This is partially caused by human nature to rely on the narrative to understand the world and the importance of it (for example, let's take the storyteller as parent and audience as child in the case of the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood". As in all fairy tales here also a trivial protagonist and an antagonist appear, and consequently the main narrative emerges that is further expanded by listener's imagination). As Barbara Hardy points out, we're dreaming by narrative, we remember, we hope, we feel desperate, we believe, we eat, plan, fix, criticize, build, cuddle, learn, hate, and love by narrative. Political narratives are not created from empty space but emerge from a political act, or from a process that can be observed in the public forums as well as closed ones.

The attributes of narrative and Chinese Dream

Does Chinese Dream have all the necessary attributes for being a narrative? Molly Patterson and Kirsten Monroe give us the following characteristics narrative requires the medium agent. That is to say narrative does not exist in isolated state. It includes both a person as an acting entity and an object. When the narrative implies a human action for the purposes, it at the same time provides understanding to how actors act, learn information and how different people are organized when they are to achieve their goal. In case of Chinese Dream Xi Jinping is a storyteller and Chinese people is a dedicated audience.

- a) The narrative implies the opinion of the speaker / storyteller / writer and the opinion of what is canonical, what is normal and what is outstanding. The commentator of the Manchester United Liverpool match, if he is Liverpool fan, gives us a different impact than a neutral commentator. We can compare this to an audio filter that transforms the signal according to the frequencies limiter. The narrative thus gives us the data for analysis. In case of Chinese Dream, there is a whole complicated system that builds upon Chinese national fears and anticipations and utilizes them.
- b) The narrative itself requires a sequencing of some events, but these events are not required to be necessarily real. The sequence may simply be derived from the nature of human language, which consists of proposals. The order of events is the indicator of the mental organization of the narrator, nothing more. Instead, the sorting of events in their meaning is the disclosure of the narrator's narrative and displays not the mental organization but the opinion of the speaker. Chinese Dream is vague construction in this regard. It contains national rejuvenation, century of humiliation, soft power of Chinese traditional culture, Silk Road and more, but the order is not clear.
- c) The narrative requires the view of speaker. Without it the narrative cannot be a narrative. It does not exist without tone/accents. Narrators give us the content that has been analyzed from their point of view in the context of relevant cultural influences. A Georgian student in South Korea's education system will describe it differently compared to

local figure. Again, Chinese Dream is all about the perspective from Xi Jinping and Chinese Communist Party about leading Chinese people to better future.

There is a more complex typology of narrative. For example, Souris and Gibson give four types of narrative

- a) *[Ontological narrative]* for a social actor function. It helps us to become the ones who we are now. Somers and Gibson think that understanding of ontological narrative is important for all theories. According to them, the relationship between the identity and the agent is connected. Consequently, the question is whether any person is an autonomous individual, who is acting in accordance with some principles, or it is simply an agent of higher institution or power? Chinese Dream is not purely this type of narrative but it bears some traits similar to ontological narrative since it wants to establish identity of its own and connect to the audience/agents
- b) *[Public Narrative]* - This is a narrative of institutions or social formations. Ontological narrative is built on public narrative. What I think of myself, depends on how I understand the institutions that I belong to. For example, the society that I belong to. Do I consider it as voluntary organization from which I can depart at any time or maybe I have a strong chain of responsibility and liabilities with it? In case of Chinese Dream, its ontological value is built upon Chinese audience traditional culture values that play the role of public narrative.
- c) *[Conceptual Narrative]* is a narrative in a narrow sense, used by social researchers. Ideally, social researchers create conceptual narratives such as political institutionalization, economic growth, theory of dependence and so on. Chinese Dream partly falls into this category since it was created artificially by Xi Jinping.
- d) *[Meta-narrative]* - is the final fourth type, sometimes referred to as master narrative, great narrative, grand-narrative. This is narrative in which many entities are embedded as social actors. It may include other narratives such as human rights protection and economic development. Meta-narrative can be distinguished by large-scale dilemmas such as individual vs society or order vs chaos. The meta-narratives are so embedded in general consciousness that they are difficult to read and they are not criticized. Unlike conceptual and ontological narratives, meta-narrative lacks self-awareness. It is more abstract and universal and does not have its own history and uniqueness. If you look at the history of humanity, such narratives are evident. For example, politically significant meta-narrative can be the holy right of the kings in medieval era.

Symbolism in Chinese Dream narrative

Chinese Dream narrative complexity is enriched by national symbolism. A cognitive map of its own is created, which the Xi Jinping as narrator pursues as a relationship with others and in the context of organized behavior. Also, Chinese Dream is heavily influenced from the cultural context. It borrows civil consciousness from the early period — namely “The Century of Humiliation”. According to Adcock Kaufman, he century of humiliation (simplified Chinese: 百年国耻; traditional Chinese: 百年國恥), also known by permutations such as the hundred years of national humiliation, refers to the period of intervention and imperialism by Western powers and Japan in China between 1839 and 1949. Kilpatrick wrote, that “the term arose in 1915, in the atmosphere of rising Chinese nationalism opposing the Twenty-One Demands made by the

Japanese government and their acceptance by Yuan Shikai, with the Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party both subsequently popularizing the characterization” According to Callahan, to this day, China’s unresolved trauma of the 19th century cannot be exorcised. Long after the ‘Century’ itself was meant to have ended in 1949, rhetoric of national humiliation is constantly employed to explain contemporary diplomatic crises such as Beijing’s unsuccessful 1993 bid to host the summer Olympics, the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing, and even the 2001 spy plane collision off the coast of Hainan. Gries states that China’s Century of National Humiliation is not a time frame or a historical period at all—it is a mental space, the boundaries of which are continually re-shifted in order to meet the needs of those in power, as they invent new narratives to meet contemporary crises of legitimacy, astutely following Mao’s dictum to ‘make the past serve the present’.²²

The Xi Jinping’s Chinese-Dream's narrative seems to be medium agent action from the perspective of the socio-cultural analysis. The term "Chinese Dream" and other related allegories and associated metaphors are either cultural instrument or resources. Specifically, the speaker uses this resource or instrument in a unique way. In the hands of non-Chinese speaker, this instrument will lose its unique and exceptional character, as it comes from the autonomous structure of the language and the collective historical memory of Chinese nation. Of course, none of the textual or verbal resources can be fully unique. "Uniqueness" that I mention here as a feature rather than as a comparison criterion. The unique setting of Xi Jinping was built upon former Chinese political administrations, Xi Jinping’s teacher Den Xiao Ping and the influence of the traditional medieval Chinese political ideas.

Kang expressed similar idea in 2007 when he used the historical analysis of relations between China and East Asia from 1300 to the present and observed medieval economic interdependence as a role model for modern China and a positive factor. The “Century of Humiliation” and Chinese victimization narrative was also mentioned before emergence of Chinese Dream. Medeiros in 2009 connected these two events to the Chinese identity and accordingly explained China’s rise in the international system. Medeiros explained China’s ultimate goal as the desire to return the lost status of The Great Power" (‘da guo’ 大国). He also presented the dualistic nature of China's medieval status: China as a hegemony (the concept known as ‘badao’ - 霸道) and China as a morally strong force (a concept known as ‘wangdao’ - 王道).

Conclusion

In essence, the Chinese Dream differs from the formal structured political campaign slogans. It also demonstrates the traits of being meta-narrative via including several narratives. Also, the Chinese dream does not belong to the purely textual narratives. It is a more of a verbal narrative. The first appearance of the Chinese Dream is a public speech in 2012. Only after that it begins to enjoy wide popularity in front of the international audience or at the communist party meeting, etc. Detailed analysis is made in full research paper.

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Author's Note

This article is developed from my PhD thesis, "Xi Jinping's Policy of Chinese Dream": being undertaken in 2018 at the Free University of Tbilisi. It provides new interpretations of primary source materials, corrects previous mistakes, and covers certain developments since 2012.

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