

The Significance of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" for Chinese Foreign Policy: From "Tao Guang Yang Hui" to "Fen Fa You Wei"

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Abstract: In order to gain a better understanding of the newer and more assertive features of Chinese foreign policy in recent years, this article examines Xi Jinping's "Chinese dream" for clues of how the Chinese leadership sees China's international role evolve. In their speeches and statements on the "Chinese dream", Chinese leaders generally promote it as a continuation of China's peaceful development strategy. However, looking more carefully there are some rather innovative elements, which support analyses from Chinese International Relations scholars that point to a gradual development of new thinking and a new approach in China's foreign policy strategy under Xi that indicate big changes in the way that China engages with the international system.

Introduction

Does Xi Jinping have his own ideas about how China's foreign policy strategy should further develop and is he strong enough to push them through? It appears so. For several years, there has been a fierce debate among Chinese International Relations scholars about the need for – and the content in – a new foreign policy strategy to replace "Tao Guang Yang Hui" (韬光养晦, "hide capabilities and keep a low profile") set in place by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s (Zhu, 2010; Wang, 2011). In China such fierce debate and pragmatic experiments in the conducted policy are often seen when one paradigm is out, but there is still not a new one to replace it. That is, in the search period (Dittmer, 2010). Now it seems the search is coming to a close. Through several speeches given recently, Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders have articulated a new strategic direction for Chinese foreign policy known as "Fen Fa You Wei" (奋发有为, "striving for achievement") (e.g. Xi, 2013g; Xinhua, 2013).² This "Fen Fa You Wei" concept is now also being promoted among Chinese International Relations scholars (e.g. Yan, 2014; Liu, 2013b).³

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² Cf. also the book titled *Interpretation on the New Philosophy of Chinese Diplomacy* published in 2014 by the State Council Information Office.

³ As shown in the analysis below, Chinese leaders and International Relations scholars also use other Chinese phrases to highlight the turn to a more proactive foreign policy strategy, e.g. "Gengjia Jiji" (更加积极, "be more active"), "Gengjia Zhudong" (更加主动, "take greater initiative") and "Jiji Jinqu" (积极进取, "actively go in").

It therefore seems that Xi as the first Chinese leader since Deng is visionary and strong enough to push through a rethinking of China's foreign policy strategy. But what is his vision or "dream" in this regard? What does it actually mean in terms of Chinese foreign policy that China will strive for achievement? Are we to expect a more aggressive Chinese foreign policy behavior with e.g. declarations of more air defense identification zones and introductions of more oil drilling rigs and artificial islands in disputed territorial waters? Or are we to expect China to advance its own diplomatic concepts and initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS-bank and thereby more proactively seek to shape the international system? Related to this, are we to expect China to take more global leadership and responsibility by e.g. continuing to present proposals on how to solve international security crises? This is for example seen in relation to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, where Beijing early on put forward a three-point proposal on a political solution and in Afghanistan, where Beijing has taken up a kind of mediation role between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Are all such newer and more assertive developments in Chinese foreign policy included in or following from the "Fen Fa You Wei" guidelines?

Many interesting and important questions arise. The aim of this article is to provide a more qualified ground from which to answer some of these questions. By analyzing recent speeches and statements from Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders as well as articles from Chinese International Relations scholars, the significance – if any – of the "Chinese dream" for Chinese foreign policy is examined especially focusing on how to understand the movement in Chinese foreign policy strategy from "keeping a low profile" to "striving for achievement".

The structure is as follows. The first section gives further details about the background for and the content in Xi Jinping's "Chinese dream". The analytical approach and a few considerations about the methodological challenges of conducting an analysis of speeches and statements from Chinese leaders follow in the second section and then the analysis makes up the third section. In the first part of the analysis, the main task consists of searching for clues in Xi's and other Chinese foreign policy leaders' speeches and statements on the "Chinese dream" of how the Chinese leadership sees China's international role evolve. In the second part of the analysis follows a discussion of the new emerging concept of "Fen Fa You Wei" and what it seems to imply for Chinese foreign policy behavior. The fourth and last part makes up the conclusion, which also points to areas and questions where there is a strong need for further research.

The “Road to Revival”

Xi Jinping has been promoting the “Chinese dream” since he became the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at the 18th CCP Congress held in November 2012. Following the congress, he led the other six members of the newly formed Politburo Standing Committee in a highly publicized visit to the National Museum’s “Road to Revival” exhibition. Tracing modern Chinese history from China’s humiliating defeat by Great Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, Xi highlighted the “Chinese dream” as a unifying theme for the Chinese to achieve a great national revival.⁴ A top-down political campaign followed throughout the party and the country promoting the dream, and the “Chinese dream” has been a main theme in the majority of Xi’s public speeches ever since. It has also been taken up by the Chinese media and scholars where, by mid-2014, 8,249 articles with “China dream” (zhongguo meng, 中国梦) in the title had been published within China according to the CNKI China academic journals database (Wan, 2013: 3; Wang, 2014b: 1; Callahan, 2015). Although it is easy to dismiss such slogans as the “Chinese dream” coming from the Chinese leadership as pure propaganda and empty talk, they play an important role in organizing thought and action in Chinese politics as they often reflect new or changed priorities in the Chinese leadership.⁵ Therefore such slogans have to be taken seriously and examined closely (Callahan, 2015).

The “Chinese dream” is presented as the vision for China’s development over the next decades and the core concept is national “rejuvenation” (fuxing, 复兴) (Wang, 2014b). It is, however, difficult to get at the more specific content. In different speeches, Xi and other Chinese leaders adapt the overall focus of the “Chinese dream” on achieving a great national revival and the ever-present emphasis on unity and party leadership to the specific occasion.

⁴ For Xi’s speech at the exhibition see Xi (2012). The exhibition focuses on China’s national experiences from the First Opium War until today, with particular emphasis on the history of the “century of humiliation” (bainian guochi, 百年国耻) where China was attacked and bullied by foreign imperialists. The period goes from the First Opium War (1839-1842) through the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1945 – for more on the “century of humiliation” see e.g. Nathan & Scobell (2012: 18-27).

⁵ The different generations of Chinese communist leaders have all presented their own theoretical or ideological contribution to the development of Chinese communism – to the development of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” – making it possible to adapt to the changing challenges and demands that the party has been facing, e.g. Jiang Zemin’s “Sange Daibiao” (三个代表, “Three Represents”) that started to allow private business people into the party, and Hu Jintao’s “Kexue Fazhan Guan” (科学发展观, “Scientific Concept of Development”) that was to open for a more sustainable – both in terms of ecological and social costs – economic growth model. However, the “Chinese dream” slogan seems to be on a different level and deliberately kept very broad also referring to longer historical roots. Xi’s other slogan “Sige Quanmian” (四个全面, “Four Comprehensives”) might eventually be further specified and developed into his theoretical or ideological contribution.

Hence, it is always emphasized that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi, 中国特色社会主义) is the only path to realize the “Chinese dream” (e.g. Liu, 2013a). Despite some ambiguity, especially when the Chinese leaders present the “Chinese dream” to an international audience, the core argumentation seems to be that the CCP should lead the Chinese nation in achieving the goal of national revival – “only the CCP can rejuvenate China” – and the Chinese should be patriotic and realize their individual dreams through the realization of the national dream. National identity centered on the party and the state is therefore promoted.⁶ The more concrete agenda is the “two centenary goals” (liangge yibainian mubiao, 两个一百年目标) – that is to establish a “moderate well-off society” (xiaokang shehui, 小康社会) by 2021 when the CCP has existed for 100 years, and a “rich and strong socialist country” (fuqiang de shehuizhuyi guojia, 富强的社会主义国家) by 2049 when the PRC has existed for 100 years.

Why promote the “Chinese dream”? One thing is that Xi – as previous leaders of the party – wants to leave his own mark, but it also seems clear that the “Chinese dream” is part of the current Chinese leadership’s effort to ensure domestic stability and maintain the control and their own legitimacy domestically. Public anger and protests are growing all over the country, and Xi’s response is the anti-corruption and rectification campaigns to show resolve and clean-up the party – get back to “serving the people” – and the “Chinese dream” to rally or unite the Chinese people and get them to focus beyond the immediate challenges they are facing by presenting them with a vision for China’s development over the next decades.⁷ Seeing it this way it could be argued that Xi’s overall aim in launching the “Chinese dream” is to ensure the pre-conditions for the continued, and now even more difficult, economic reforms and China’s further modernization.

⁶ Generally it makes a big difference if the speech is given to an international or a domestic audience. If it is to an international audience, the “Chinese dream” is mainly presented as a project of developing China into a peaceful “rich and powerful country” (guojia fuqiang, 国家富强) that also takes international responsibility, whereas if the audience is domestic, the “Chinese dream” is rather presented as a project of internal development and progress – of nation-building and nation-strengthening under the party. Cf. the comprehensive analysis of 15 of Xi Jinping’s speeches on the “Chinese dream” given from November 2012 until December 2013 in Jensen (2014).

⁷ Zheng Wang (2014b: 8) argues that the “Chinese dream” to some extent is meant to play the role of societal glue to unite people, and along the same lines Callahan (2015) argues that Xi is using the “Chinese dream” as a “broad church” in order to build a coalition of competing interests in China.

The “Chinese dream” as a concept was rarely mentioned before Xi took it up in November 2012.⁸ An exception is Colonel Liu Mingfu’s 2009 bestseller book titled *China Dream: The Great Power Thinking and Strategic Positioning in the Post-American Age*. The central argument in Liu’s book is that China is entitled to lead the world because China is a superior nation tested through history. There is no way of knowing whether Xi was inspired by Liu’s book or whether he agrees with Liu. As the analysis below shows, Xi’s “Chinese dream” is not specific on the extent of the Chinese claims that will satisfy the quest for China’s revival.

In the Western media Xi Jinping’s “Chinese dream” has attracted much attention. It is often seen in a negative light and as carrying dangerous implications for international stability and security. The dominant interpretation thus is that the “Chinese dream” is a nationalistic doctrine, where the focus is on regaining – with military force if necessary – China’s rightful great power status, dignity and respect. China finally stands up after the “century of humiliation” and Chinese leaders will let nothing stand in their way (The Economist, 2013; Wan, 2013: 4). Some even regard it as a dream of increased Chinese military dominance in the East and South China Sea and as a Chinese challenge to American military dominance in the region (e.g. Page, 2013). These interpretations fit into – and further reinforce – the perception growing in the Western academic and political debate and literature of a more assertive Chinese foreign policy since 2008/2009 and, therefore, also support voices that hold that this is only the beginning – as Chinese relative economic and military power continues to grow, China’s foreign policy behavior will become even more assertive.⁹

Chinese Official Discourse Opening Different Paths for Chinese Foreign Policy

The theoretical basis for the analysis below is constructivism in the European variant where focus is on exploring the role of discourses in mediating and constructing social reality. The focus on how state identity, discourses and possible foreign policy behaviors are constitutively linked in an ongoing process is in contrast to the North American variant of

⁸ The core concept of national “rejuvenation” has, however, been used – primarily as a mobilization tool – by many Chinese leaders going all the way back to Sun Yat-sen, and beginning in the early 1990s, Chinese leaders, starting with Jiang Zemin, used the phrase “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (zhongguo minzu de weida fuxing, 中国民族的伟大复兴) as the new mission of the CCP – cf. Wang (2014b: 2).

⁹ For a detailed presentation and critical examination of the “assertive China” perception see Swaine (2010) and Johnston (2013).

constructivism, where focus is on uncovering deductive mechanisms and causal relationships following a positivist research ideal.¹⁰

The social reality explored is the Chinese leadership's thinking on developments in China's international role as it is presented in Xi's "Chinese dream". The content of this thinking, i.e. the main Chinese official discourse on the visions, challenges and opportunities for China in the international system, opens up different paths for Chinese foreign policy.¹¹ The underlying assumption here is that the way in which the Chinese leaders understand, contest and construct their role – their identity – in the international system is crucial for the development in Chinese foreign policy. As Qin Yaqing (2010: 265) argues, "a state's attitudes towards international society and its international behavior are rooted in its identity. States with different identities have different world-views, which, in turn, make different impacts upon its foreign policies and strategies".

Consequently, discourse analysis is the method used for identifying and analyzing the main Chinese official discourse. The material for the discourse analysis consists of speeches and statements from Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders and the analysis of these is supplemented with analyses from Chinese International Relations scholars.¹² Conducting an analysis of speeches and statements from Chinese leaders present some important methodological challenges. One is how to select the speeches and statements to analyze. I have focused on locating and analyzing speeches and statements on the "Chinese dream" from Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders, as I expect these to best present and reflect the thinking of the Chinese leadership on China's international role and foreign policy strategy. It is not possible to get documents and detailed information about the content of internal meetings or debates on these issues in the Chinese leadership. However, combining an analysis of speeches and statements with analyses from Chinese International Relations scholars makes it possible to identify and decode new approaches and concepts. The aim is therefore not to uncover the "real" meaning(s) of the "Chinese dream", which is an impossible task anyway.

¹⁰ For more on the distinction between the European and the North American variant of constructivism see e.g. Checkel (2008: 72-73) and Finnemore & Sikkink (2001: 395).

¹¹ For studies applying constructivism as Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) see e.g. Hansen (2006).

¹² Most speeches and statements or descriptions and transcripts of these have been located through the Chinese official news web (zhongguo wang, 中国网) (<http://www.china.com.cn>).

Understanding “Striving for Achievement” in Light of the “Chinese Dream”

Two overall questions are guiding the analysis. Firstly, in their speeches and statements on the “Chinese dream” what do Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders say about China’s international role and developments herein? And secondly, what does the new emerging concept of “Fen Fa You Wei” seem to imply for Chinese foreign policy behavior?

Dreaming about China’s Role in the International System

State Councilor Yang Jiechi’s article titled “Implementing the Chinese dream” stands as one of very few attempts from Chinese foreign policy leaders to elaborate on the link between the “Chinese dream” and Chinese foreign policy. In this article, Yang stresses that “the “Chinese dream” requires a peaceful and stable international and neighboring environment and China is committed to realizing the dream through peaceful development”. And Yang further points out that “since the “Chinese dream” is closely linked with the dreams of other peoples around the world, China is committed to helping other countries, developing countries and neighboring countries in particular” (Yang, 2013). Such statements indicate how the Chinese leadership seeks to promote the “Chinese dream” internationally as a continuation of China’s peaceful development strategy. However, there are some rather innovative elements as well. One new concept often mentioned in the Chinese leaders’ speeches and statements is “new type of international relations” (xinxing guoji guanxi, 新型国际关系) that China works for and that is based on win-win cooperation and the peaceful resolution of international and regional disputes. Cf. below, this could be seen as part of a growing Chinese effort to present a specific Chinese approach to inter-state relations. Generally there is much highlighting of “new type”, “new approach”, etc. in the speeches and statements from the Chinese leaders, especially in the statement titled “China at a new starting point” by Foreign Minister Wang Yi given at the UN General Assembly in September 2013 (Wang, 2013). Another example here is the concept of “a new model of major-country relationship” (xinxing daguo guanxi, 新型大国关系) seemingly developed to characterize relations between China and the US and presented as “a strategic choice made based on full review of the experience and lessons of history as well as being an inherent requirement of the “two centenary goals” and the overall strategy of peaceful development” (Yang, 2013). In an interview leading up to the summit between Xi and US President Obama in June 2013 in the US, Xi further elaborated on the concept of “a new model of major-country relationship” when he said,

China and the US must walk a new road, different from the past where great powers inevitably displayed antagonism and conflict. We must walk a path where both sides must work hard to build a new kind of great power relationship of mutual respect and profit, in order to benefit the people of both nations and the people of the world. This is something that is important to pay attention to in international relations, because good cooperation between the US and China is the cornerstone of a stable world, and a tool for promoting world peace (Xi, 2013f).

Here Xi presents China as a great power – not a developing country as has previously been the preferred term used by Chinese leaders – and Xi’s vision is clearly to have China stand and be respected as an equal power to the US.

By promoting the “Chinese dream” internationally as a continuation of China’s peaceful development strategy, it also becomes part of the Chinese soft power campaign and hence of Chinese efforts to promote a positive image of itself internationally and thus to counter the “China threat” (zhongguo weixie, 中国威胁) discourse. Wang Yi states directly that “various versions of China threat have surfaced. However, what happened in the past cannot be applied indiscriminately to today’s China. The outdated Cold-War mentality has no place in the new era of globalization”, and he further reassures that “China would never seek hegemony in the world” (Wang, 2013).

In relation to the above mentioned point about the growing Chinese effort to present a specific Chinese approach to inter-state relations, several Chinese International Relations scholars highlight the “Chinese dream” as an effort from the Chinese leadership to increase international recognition of China’s long held ideals and philosophies and, in this way, increase the international respect for China and certain Chinese values and international contributions. It is hence emphasized how the core elements of the “Chinese dream” are peace and harmony, which are ideals pursued by China over thousands of years (cf. e.g. Yue, 2013; Ji et. al., 2013).¹³ Xi has also several times in his speeches on the “Chinese dream” stressed that China as a great power should have a correct view on and approach to upholding “justice” (yi, 义) and seeking “interests” (li, 利). It means that while pursuing one’s own interests, it is important to take into account those of others, which at times might mean giving up one’s own gains for the sake of justice and fairness (e.g. Xi, 2014b). According to Yang Jiechi, this further implies that China will accommodate other countries’ interests rather than seek benefits at their expense, and he stresses that China’s policy towards neighboring states

¹³ See also the analyses by various Chinese International Relations scholars in the book titled *Interpretation on the New Philosophy of Chinese Diplomacy* (State Council Information Office, 2014).

should politically insist on the principles of justice, fairness, and morality rather than economic interests (Yang, 2013). The Chinese International Relations scholar Wang Yizhou (2014a: 8) argues that this increased importance of “correct viewpoint on justice and interests” (zhengque de guandian yi he li, 正确的观点义和利) as a guiding principle of Chinese foreign policy under Xi underlines his emphasis on how China should take increasing great power responsibility by e.g. providing more public goods and foreign aid. At the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2013, Wang Yi also touched on the question of how China wants to provide more public goods in the domain of global security. Wang hence stated that,

China will participate in global affairs more actively and comprehensively, closely cooperating with all other countries, handling complex global challenges jointly with others and solving all kinds of difficult issues facing the human race. We will utter China’s voice, contribute China’s wisdom, put forward China’s proposals, demonstrate China’s role and work hard to provide more public goods for the international community (Wang, 2013).

Wang further stated that “China will become more active and constructive in participating in and in dealing with international and regional hot issues, in negotiating peace and ending conflicts and in safeguarding world’s peace and stability” (Wang, 2013). Along the same lines, Yang Jiechi (2013) highlights innovation, new strategic ideas and new diplomatic initiatives in the development of a “diplomatic theory with Chinese characteristics” (zhongguo tese waijiao lilun, 中国特色外交理论) under Xi. He further states that China’s diplomacy under Xi “display[s] such features as rich ideas, clear priorities, firm positions, flexible approaches and distinctive styles”. Such statements clearly indicate that there is an ongoing movement away from “Tao Guang Yang Hui” as providing the central guidelines for Chinese foreign policy strategy.

In speeches and statements mentioning the “Chinese dream”, Xi and other Chinese foreign policy leaders hence highlight China’s peaceful intentions, stronger Chinese international contributions and Chinese aspirations to be a responsible and constructive power in the international system. The Chinese desire for a stable and peaceful world is emphasized several times as one of the cornerstones for the realization of the “Chinese dream”, because, as Xi often argues, the two centenary goals, which are the primary goals of the “Chinese dream”, cannot be achieved without a stable and peaceful external environment (e.g. Xi, 2013d). Again, there are also hints of how China has something special to offer in referring to long held Chinese ideals and philosophies, and how these, by guiding inter-state relations,

could contribute to ensuring a stable and peaceful development in the international system. Furthermore, strong emphasis is put on obtaining international respect and equality for China. In most if not all of Xi's speeches on the "Chinese dream", there is also a clear wish for increasing China's power internationally – to become a "rich and powerful country" (e.g. Xi, 2013e). According to several Chinese International Relations scholars, Xi expresses a long-held Chinese desire to re-establish China as a nation of admiration and importance as was the case during the Tang dynasty (618-907) when China was a cultural and economic center. China should attract – not force – other countries to follow it (e.g. Qin, 2010; Yue, 2013; Ji et al., 2013).

The "Chinese dream" is, however, not all "peaceful development" and "win-win". A tougher and bolder Chinese approach in relation to safeguarding Chinese sovereignty and core interests is also visible in several of the speeches and statements. This is especially clear in the context of Xi's emphasis on China's rejuvenation presented as China regaining international status, rights and power (e.g. Xi, 2012). Yang Jiechi also stresses that China will always "keep the bottom-line in mind, working for the best, but preparing for the worst". He further highlights how Xi Jinping, while being "firmly committed to peaceful development, will never forsake the legitimate interests or compromise on China's core interests" (Yang, 2013). It is statements like these that lie behind the dominant interpretation in the Western media of Xi's "Chinese dream" as a nationalistic doctrine, and which make especially China's neighbors worry that it implies how China increasingly seeks to resolve disputes in its own way without compromise. The Chinese side, however, seems to consider the process of rejuvenation as a restoration of fairness instead of a gain of advantages over others (Dittmer, 2010; Qin, 2010). Contrary to how the recent Chinese actions in e.g. the South China Sea and in relation to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute in the East China Sea are seen as aggressive by many Western observers, the Chinese leaders thus present these as reactive or defensive ways to try to protect territory that, based on history, are rightfully Chinese. However, there is also support in Xi's speeches and statements for the argument that Xi is a different kind of Chinese leader, and that he to a higher degree also wants to "shape" the international system. Here Beijing's declaration of the air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea in December 2013 could be seen as such more proactive effort from Xi to set China's own rules and hence "shape" the further development in the crisis. Related to this, at the "Asian Dynamics Conference" held in Copenhagen in October 2014, Professor Xin Qiang from Fudan University in Shanghai argued that Chinese behavior in relation to the maritime

territorial disputes in the region has developed from “restrained reactivity” to “assertive reactivity” under Xi. Arguably Xi’s strong promotion of the three sub-regional economic communities – the new silk road with Central Asia, the maritime silk road with South East Asia, and the economic corridor through South Asia – as well as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) initiative could also be seen as Xi’s efforts to try to “shape” the further development or integration in regional economics, politics and security. The same goes for his efforts to promote a “community of common destiny” (*mingyun gontongti*, 命运共同体) with neighboring states to deepen security cooperation in East Asia with China in the lead (e.g. Xi, 2013g). Xi has specifically argued for the establishment of a China-ASEAN community of common destiny. Here it is interesting how recent emphasis from Xi on a common destiny with East Asian states more clearly includes Chinese pressure for exclusion of the US from the region. The way that China under Xi has started to present its own ideas and maybe even alternatives to the established regional economic, political and security structure could be seen as Chinese efforts to counter-balance the American “rebalance to Asia” strategy. Such efforts are new. At a summit of the Conference on Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Shanghai in May 2014, Xi outlined his thoughts on the future of security in Asia. He argued that stronger military alliances, e.g. the US military alliances, would be opposed and new security mechanisms would be established, and that China would play a more proactive role in this.¹⁴ According to Xi, China would lead new regional security practices and mechanisms, including setting up a code of conduct for regional security and an “Asian security partnership program” (*yazhou anquan hezuo huoban jihua*, 亚洲安全合作伙伴计划). Xi also emphasized that Asian security is best dealt with by Asians, which is the first time since the end of the Cold War that a Chinese leader has so clearly criticized and questioned the US role in regional security (Xi, 2014b). This indicates the development of a more self-confident China that under Xi tries to take the initiative and set the rules. This is a new development that also comes with Chinese suggestions on how to solve or manage international security conflicts e.g. in Ukraine.

Besides the soft power and reassuring motive in relation to the international audience, there also seem to be several messages to the domestic audience in many of Xi’s speeches and statements related to how Xi with the “Chinese dream” also seeks to promote pride and patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi*, 爱国主义) in the Chinese population with emphasis on looking to the

¹⁴ Some Western scholars and journalists have highlighted Xi’s speech as a warning to US allies in the region – see e.g. Heath (2014) and Ruwith (2014).

future and not only to the past. Xi's patriotism as presented in the "Chinese dream" is thus not only the narrow, aggressive and anti-foreign version that hinges on the "century of humiliation" discourse. Rather than on foreign invasion and exploitation, focus is on the positive elements and strengths in Chinese history and in Chinese ancient civilization with strong calls to revive and be proud of Chinese cultural values, strengths and achievements. In his speech at the first meeting of the 12th National People's Congress in March 2013, Xi hence stressed that,

To achieve the China Dream, we must foster the Chinese spirit, that is, the national spirit centered on patriotism and the spirit of the times centered on reform and innovation. This spirit is the force that rallies the people and pools their strength and that makes the country prosperous and powerful (Xi, 2013a).¹⁵

In an interview with a BRICS media delegation, Xi also said,

The Chinese people are patriotic. Yet we are also a people with a global vision and an international perspective. As its strength grows, China will assume more international responsibilities and obligations within the scope of its capabilities and make greater contribution to the noble cause of world peace and development (Xi, 2013b).

According to the Chinese International Relations scholar Wang Yizhou (2014a: 14), it is possible for Xi to seek to promote a more positive or "rational" nationalism because "current Chinese leaders are less weighed down by historical memories and more driven by future ambitions".

It therefore seems that the point for Xi is not to present China as a great country suffering from oppression nor as a developing country, but rather as a great power where multifaceted development is rapidly taking place and where ambitions and aspirations are growing. Whether Xi is actually trying to present a new narrative is too early and too difficult to say. As mentioned above, the "century of humiliation" narrative is a key element of the Chinese national identity and therefore any effort to create a new national story or master narrative is a huge and complex task. The "Chinese dream" is also still based on the humiliation narrative, but it does direct focus more on the future and presents a more positive

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis and discussion of the effort to change the national story or master narrative from the "century of humiliation" focus, see e.g. Wang (2012).

attitude to China's relations with the international system.¹⁶ Further in relation to this, Xi, in his speech held at the Moscow University of International Relations in March 2013, declared that,

Because of the sufferings China endured due to foreign invasion and civil war, the Chinese truly know the value of peace, and more than anything need to carry out our national construction in a peaceful environment, so as to constantly improve the lives of the people. China will firmly keep on the path of peaceful development without straying, to devote ourselves to promoting an open development, a cooperative development, and a development of mutual benefit, while at the same time calling on all nations to jointly walk the path of peaceful development. China will from beginning to end pursue a defensive national defense policy, and not engage in arms races, and not pose a military threat towards any nation. What China's developmental expansion provides the world are more opportunities, and not threats of any kind. The "China dream" that we wish to realize not only benefits the Chinese people, but the people of all nations (Xi, 2013c).

To sum up, the main points to take away from Xi's and other Chinese foreign policy leaders' speeches and statements on the "Chinese dream" as they relate it to developments in China's international role and foreign policy strategy are, firstly, that China under Xi aims to take on more international responsibilities, but also to "shape" the international system to a higher degree and increasingly present Chinese ideas and solutions to international conflicts and crises. Secondly, that China wants respect and to be treated on equal footing, and, thirdly, that China will never compromise on China's sovereignty and core interests. In the statements and speeches on the "Chinese dream" new thinking on China's international role is clearly evident. It is, however, still too early to judge the degree to which Xi is actually seeking to reshape China's foreign policy strategy away from the cautious tone and guidelines promoted under Deng Xiaoping, but there is surely a movement away from "Tao Guang Yang Hui" as providing the central guidelines for Chinese foreign policy strategy. This leads to the discussion of the new emerging concept "Fen Fa You Wei".

Striving for What Kind of Achievement in Chinese Foreign Policy and How?

In October 2013 Xi hosted a conference on Chinese regional diplomacy where all members of the Standing Committee of the CCP attended. The goal of the conference was to guide

¹⁶ As Callahan (2015) states, the "Chinese dream" is not just a positive expression of national aspirations, but it is also at the same time a negative remembrance that cultivates an anti-Western and anti-Japanese form of Chinese identity, and it therefore strengthens what he calls a "pessoptimistic nationalism" in China.

China's diplomatic work with neighboring countries in the new situation.¹⁷ This was the highest level conference on foreign policy since the founding of the PRC in 1949. In Xi's speech at the conference, he strongly urged Chinese diplomats to adopt the principles or guidelines of "Fen Fa You Wei" (奋发有为, "strive for achievement"), "Gengjia Jiji" (更加积极, "be more active") and "Gengjia Zhudong" (更加主动, "take greater initiative") (Xi, 2013g; Glaser and Pal, 2014: 1-4). Wang Yi has used other Chinese phrases to highlight the turn to a more proactive foreign policy strategy, e.g. "Zhudong Jinqu" (主动进取, "take initiative"), "Jiji Jinqu" (积极进取, "actively go in"), "Jiji Waijiao" (积极外交, "active foreign policy").¹⁸ Wang Yi has also stated that "last year the most distinctive feature of Chinese diplomacy is being very proactive" (Zhang, 2014; Zhai, 2014). Professor Zhai Kun (2014), the Director of the Institute of World Political Studies at China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) – a think tank in Beijing closely related to the Ministry of State Security – argues that this proactivity is demonstrated in three aspects. Firstly, the establishment of the new national security commission. Secondly, the efforts to jointly use different instruments, e.g. economic, political, military and non-governmental, in a comprehensive and integrated way in Chinese foreign policy. Thirdly the efforts to combine strength and gentleness in relation to major hot spot issues and questions related to China's rights and interests. According to Zhai (2014), the overall purpose is to ensure that China can influence rules and shape developments and events in order to more effectively safeguard Chinese interests and to ensure international status and respect for China as a country that cannot be bullied or ignored.

While it is still not clear whether there have been any official sanctioned new overall guidelines for Chinese foreign policy, it hence seems clear that there is a movement away from Deng Xiaoping's guidelines.¹⁹ Arguably if there is a change underway from "Tao Guang Yang Hui" to "Fen Fa You Wei" then a change in the overall official assessment of China's security environment (shi, 势) away from Deng's assessment of "peace and development"

¹⁷ Specifically, Chinese media reported that the conference aimed to establish the strategic objectives, basic guidelines, and overall set-up of the peripheral diplomatic work in the next five to ten years, and define the line of thinking on work and the implementation plans for resolving major issues facing peripheral diplomacy (Xinhua, 2013).

¹⁸ Professor Wang Yizhou (2014: 10) argues for a shift in China's diplomatic philosophy from "Tao Guang Yang Hui" to "Jiji Zuowei" (积极作为, "actively accomplish"). See also the analyses by various Chinese International Relations scholars in the book titled *Interpretation on the New Philosophy of Chinese Diplomacy* (State Council Information Office, 2014).

¹⁹ For Deng Xiaoping's "28 character guidelines" see e.g. Dittmer (2010: 52).

(heping yu fazhan, 和平与发展) is also underway.²⁰ The question is therefore also if this is the case? Is it no longer “peace and development”? Professor Yan Xuetong (2014) argues that the overall assessment in the Chinese leadership of China’s security environment is changing. Instead of “peace and development”, the dominant overall assessment is that the probability of conflict with other states is increasing, and therefore the general trend implies that China needs to confront rather than avoid the issue of conflict. Glaser & Pal (2014) also argue that Beijing has quietly discarded Deng Xiaoping’s guidelines, and they support this by highlighting how several of their Chinese sources reveal that Deng’s “Tao Guang Yang Hui” directive is no longer referenced in internal meetings and party documents.

So what does the “Fen Fa You Wei” concept imply for Chinese foreign policy strategy and behavior? According to Yan Xuetong, who has written extensively on the concept, it implies that China will begin to treat friends and enemies differently and use more instruments in its diplomacy, e.g. isolation, sanctions and alliances, in order to increase the dependence of China’s neighbors on good relations with China, and in order to ensure that their interests are closely aligned with China’s interests. It further implies that China will gradually move away from its non-alliance principle and start to provide security protection and economic benefits to selected states. Following Yan, the focus of China’s relations with neighboring states will therefore change from ensuring economic relations with – and economic gains for – neighboring states to ensuring political and security relations and to setting up political goals rather than economic goals with the overall aim of increasing China’s strategic credibility and of shaping a favorable international and regional environment for China national rejuvenation (Yan, 2014; Liu, 2013b). In other words, China will begin more actively to use China’s stronger economic and military instruments in a kind of “carrot and stick” or “divide and conquer” diplomacy, where special emphasis is given to China’s neighboring states encouraging them to align their interests with China’s development or “rise”. The states that support and play a constructive role in China’s development will receive economic, security and other benefits, whereas the states that oppose and seek to prevent China’s development will be ignored or punished. Yan (2014: 169) highlights that this is also where Xi’s different silk road initiatives come in as an important part of China’s new foreign policy strategy. These are to cover three strategic areas of focus – the new silk road with Central Asia, the maritime silk road with South East Asia, and the

20 For more on the ancient Chinese concept of “shi”, which best translates into the configuration of power and the general trend/dynamic (in the international system), see Wang (1994) and Zhu (2010: 17-19, 21-37).

economic corridor through South Asia – and the states affected should expect to see much more willingness from China to reward support for China’s development and interests. Yan (2014: 183-184) admits that the biggest risk of a strategy following the “Fen Fa You Wei” concept is misperception, where the strategy could easily be perceived as an aggressive strategy, which could further lead to military confrontation with some of China’s neighbors especially Japan. China therefore needs to implement the strategy very delicately in order to avoid being seen as an aggressive power. Arguably with the growing perception in the Western academic and political debate and literature about a more assertive Chinese foreign policy since 2008/2009, the implementation of the strategy, which, according to Yan, has already started, has not been very successful in this regard so far.

To sum up, the main implications from the “Fen Fa You Wei” concept for Chinese foreign policy strategy are that Chinese foreign policy is no longer to focus on keeping a low profile but rather to start showing – and using – capabilities and claiming or “striving” for leadership, especially in the region. What does all this then say about future developments in Chinese foreign policy behavior? In recent years, China has become more assertive and aggressive on some issues and in some areas, especially in the region. Also, China under Xi has become more confident in promoting China’s own ideals about the development in the international system and in China’s role in this, and also in presenting its own diplomatic concepts and initiatives and more proactively seeking to “shape” events and developments. The analysis above indicates that such developments are to be expected to continue and even to a higher degree. The developments in the international system that China promotes are still within the existing international system, and Xi is not advocating any overthrow of the existing international system. There are, however, stronger Chinese demands under Xi for international respect, dignity and status as well as for treatment on equal footing with the US. Also, Xi seems less afraid than previous Chinese leaders to act on and talk openly about China’s strengths – and the use of these – in the international system. In other areas of Chinese diplomacy and foreign policy there is more continuity and China still seeks to maintain a “low profile”. So a kind of ad hoc approach and learning process or “crossing the river by feeling for the stones” (*mozhe shitou guohe*, 摸着石头过河) approach still seems to best characterize the overall development in Chinese foreign policy behavior rather than a new overall guiding strategy or master plan. However, as the analysis above indicates, this does not mean that such new overall guiding strategy or master plan is not being discussed and worked on in China today.

Conclusion

The above analysis is still very preliminary but it does support a gradual development of new thinking and a new approach in China's foreign policy strategy under Xi that point to big changes in the way that China engages with the international system. Further research is needed and it seems especially important to focus on the implications of the domestic focus in the Chinese leadership – that is their focus on meeting the growing domestic expectations to the role that China will play in the international system in the years to come. The more aggressive features of Chinese foreign policy in recent years clearly also relate to the need for Xi to meet growing domestic criticisms and stronger calls for a tougher foreign policy and for taking more action on sovereignty issues. This is, for example, the case in the South China Sea and in relation to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute in the East China Sea, where Xi in several incidents apparently has yielded to the domestic pressures (Zhao, 2013). Another interesting and important question to look further into is whether there is a developing consensus in China – in the leadership and among Chinese International Relations scholars – on what China's visions and objectives at the international level should and could be (cf. e.g. Shambaugh, 2011). As mentioned above, it seems that Xi, as the first Chinese leader since Deng, is visionary and strong enough to push through a rethinking of China's foreign policy strategy – the increased use of concepts such as “Fen Fa You Wei” supports this. However, whether this is the case and what his visions and objective then might be and how they presently evolve require more research.

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