



**Shenme shi Zhongguo meng? (什么是中国梦?): Memory,
Foreglimpse and Propaganda in the Chinese Dream**

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Shenme shi Zhongguo meng? (什么是中国梦?): Memory, Foreglimpse and Propaganda in the Chinese Dream

Abstract

The Chinese Dream has become the signature formulation (提法) of the Xi Jinping era, dominating every aspect of propaganda in contemporary China. Official discourse defines the Chinese Dream as encompassing three broad goals: Prosperous and strong country, National rejuvenation, and People's happiness. However, a look at visual propaganda, and particularly posters, reveal the multi-layered and multifaceted nature of the concept, traversing both past and future. This paper seeks to understand the Chinese Dream through a detailed investigation of textual discourse and thematic visual analysis of State-released propaganda posters using a Cultural Semiotic approach. The paper concludes that the Chinese Dream can be understood as a dynamic set of responses that the leadership under Xi Jinping envisages to counter the emerging challenges to the Party's legitimacy. The abstractness of the three defined goals does not just bind the Chinese collective together as the success of the nation is directly linked to that of the individuals but also presents a latitude wide enough to leave much space for new ideas favourable to the regime to be accommodated, assimilated and enforced on the citizens. This way, the visual propaganda of the Chinese Dream reflects how the Communist Party of China understands China's history and perceives its future role while simultaneously building individual subjectivities to attain the aforementioned goals.

Keywords: Chinese Dream, Xi Jinping, Socialism, Propaganda, Cultural Semiotics, Propaganda posters

Introduction

Since Xi Jinping ascended to China's highest political position in 2012, the Chinese Dream (*zhongguo meng* 中国梦) has been at the centre of the public discourse and become the signature ideology of Xi's term (Wang 2013:1; Li 2015:507). No other national policy furthered by the Party State since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) had attained such centrality till date. Described in broad and vague terms as “a Prosperous and strong country (*fuqiang guojia* 富强国家), National rejuvenation (*minzu zhenxing* 民族振兴), and People's happiness (*renmin xingfu* 人民幸福)” at the “Road to Rejuvenation” Exhibition by Xi (2013b), the Chinese Dream has not only been portrayed as being mutually beneficial to both China and the world but, over the years, its contours have been considerably broadened (Xi 2013a). From historical experiences to aspirations, the Chinese Dream has become the centripetal force around which novel visions of China's potential, future trajectory, and international role now revolve. Hailed as the “Party and the nation's future political manifesto” (*dang he guojia mianxiang weilai de zhengzhi xuanyan* 党和国家面向未来的政治宣言) and an “important strategic thought for the sustenance and development of Socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*jianchi he fazhan zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi tichu de zhongyao zhanlüe sixiang* 坚持和发展中国特色社会主义提出的重要战略思想) (Liu 2013), the Chinese Dream dominates propaganda, particularly visual propaganda produced by Zhongnanhai (Hart:2016,4). Thus, understanding it is significant for understanding contemporary China's perspectives and concerns.

One begs the question also found in numerous Chinese articles dealing with the concept- *shenme shi zhongguo meng?* (什么是中国梦?) — what, after all, is the Chinese Dream? Is it, as many argue, an irredentist attempt to resurrect the Middle Kingdom lost under the deadweight of history? Is it a plan for attaining global supremacy? Defined as the dream of one-sixth of humanity which inhabits the Chinese nation, and those beyond it, is the Chinese Dream a mere rhetorical tool for attaining regime legitimacy? With these questions in sight, this paper seeks to understand the Chinese Dream through a detailed investigation of textual discourse and thematic visual analysis of State released propaganda posters using a Cultural Semiotic approach. The paper is divided into six sections. The first section looks at the origins and development of the Chinese Dream, the second section discusses the role of collective memory in Chinese political discourse, the third section discusses the international outlook of the Chinese Dream as perceived in the official discourse, the fourth section presents a nuanced analysis of the Chinese Dream vis a vis the American Dream as understood by official Party sources and scholarly analysis and the fifth section discusses how the propaganda of the Chinese Dream shapes individual subjectivities among the populace. The sixth section presents a detailed analysis of Chinese Dream posters

released between 2012-2021. The posters have been thematically divided into Group A (History and Politics), Group B (Economy and Military) and Group C (Society, Culture and Environment) for better clarity.

Cultural Semiotics

Cultural Semiotics is an interdisciplinary study focused on the different representations of the generation, transmission and interpretation of meanings. It owes its development to the works of Yuri Lotman of the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics who defined culture as "non-hereditary collective memory" (Lotman:1990, xi). As culture is not inherited, it must be in line with socialisation and since it is collective, socialisation must be in line with the exchange of information based on symbols. Thus, culture as memory includes not only the content of memory (for instance, defined values about family, country, etc.), but also the process by which memory is built from the information collected, exchanged, and stored. Hence, to a semiotician, "a word, a text, a shirt, a hairstyle, a television image, anything can be treated as a symbol, as a piece of information that needs to be decoded and analysed to find out its meaning. Every cultural activity for a semiotician leaves a trace of meaning..." (Chandler:2021).

In the 1980s, Lotman developed the concept of Semiosphere i.e., a fluid semiotic environment embedded with information through which meanings can be extracted thus arguing that the minimum functional mechanism is not a single symbol, text, or semiotic system, but a complete semiotic space, whose internal organisation is created and maintained by multiple semiotic processes which can be analysed through its denotative and connotative meaning (Lotman:1990,123) (Chandler:2021). Every sign and symbol in an image are hence considered a valuable source of data to extract meaning.

Chinese Dream(s)

The term "Chinese Dream" is not Xi's invention. It has appeared in several patriotic literary texts of the 20th century like *The Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi* 东方杂志) and *Studies on a Solution for China* (*Zhongguo chulu de yanjiu* 中国出路的研究) (Mitchelle 2015; Kopteseva 2015: 377), and also mentioned by former Premier Wen Jiabao in a 2008 interview. The three broad goals it espouses and are described above have been "China's dream for a century", according to Liu Mingfu. He says,

"It's a dream that combines the ideals of three of China's greatest leaders: Sun Yat-sen, the architect of China's republican revolution, Mao Zedong, the founder of the New China, and

Deng Xiaoping, the designer of the Reform and Opening Up of China. The commonality of their struggles is that each aimed to build the Chinese nation into the world's leading nation" (Liu:2015).

The term, however, has been redefined under Xi. The emergence of the Chinese Dream in the contemporary era is seen as a form of "patriotic worrying" urging preparation for unforeseen developments (*youhuan yishi* 忧患意识) by intellectuals spanning China's New Left, Traditionalists, Military intellectuals, and Liberals. They took upon themselves the task of reforming the "value crisis" stemming from unequal development and disparities brought by over three decades of economic Reform and Opening Up (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) (Callahan 2015:2) that challenged Party authority and indicated change. New Confucian Scholar Chen Ming argued in favour of "transcending left and right, uniting the three traditions (*tong san tong* 通三统), and renewing the Party-state" which would inevitably lead to a Western style democracy (Chen 2015). Liberals like Xu Jilin discussed the possibility of Confucianism emerging as China's "civil religion", leading to a more cosmopolitan Chinese foreign policy by proposing a "new Tianxia" (*tianxia zhuyi 2.0*, 天下主义 2.0) or "Chinese universalism" (Xu:2015). In contrast, the New Left scholar Wang Shaoguang introduced a new form of periodisation of Chinese History as periods of "governability" (*zhiguo nengli* 治国能力), "government" (*zhengfu guanli* 政府管理) and "governance" (*zhili* 治理). Describing Chinese governance style as "moral" based "way of politics" (*zhengdao* 政道) as different from Western "political forms mentality" (*zhengti siwei* 整体思维), Wang criticises the proponents of the latter by stating:

"They forget that those countries were once imperialists, colonialists, and that their wealth today might well be connected to their imperialist and colonialist pasts. But what those who have been hoodwinked by the Western form of government ignore is that those same countries from which they take their examples also contain many instances of failure (thus the form of government is not a decisive element" (Wang 2012).

It was these developments that led to a double crisis over the acceptance of Deng's Reform era policies. In the words of the 19th Party Congress Report, "one [crisis] was to repeat the errors of following the "heterodox path of changing banners" (*gai qi yizhi de xie lu* 改旗易帜的邪路) that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the other was to return to the "old path of feudal stagnation" (*fengbi jianghua de laolu* 封闭僵化的老路) from the period before Reform and Opening" (Jiang 2018). It was at this juncture that Xi Jinping assumed Party leadership as the General Secretary, tasked with the major challenge of reinstalling faith in the Party and recrafting its legitimacy (Adlakha 2022). With Xi's ascension to power, the injustices meted out to China in

the past, known as the “Century of Humiliation” (*bainian quru* 百年屈辱), came to be redefined and its role enhanced in crafting collective memory.

Collective Memory

A crucial part of the Chinese Dream is its strong emphasis on Collective Memory. Defined as a "complex social process in which a society or social group constructs and reproduces its relation to the past", Collective Memory encompasses "those cultural practices and social knowledge about the past that influence emergence, transformation, and extinction of social identities" (Ijabs 2014). The concept first appeared in Maurice Halbwachs' 1950 book, *La Memoire Collective*, where he defined it as the “living memory” of one’s social group, in contrast to history described as the “dead frame” of the past, empty of human existence. For Halbwachs, collective memory rests on the cultural frames and is always performed with others, present or imagined (Halbwachs 1952).

In the following decades, the concept of Collective Memory was broadened from Halbwachs' focus on limited sized groups such as family and religion to large groups like nations. The concept was thus expanded to understand the ways in which groups define themselves and interact with others. Studies by James V. Wertsch and James H. Liu and Denis J. Hilton, for instance, highlight how sociocultural groups use a single narrative to explain multiple events thus, turning it into an active political instrument (Verovsek 2016:2; de Saint-Laurent 2018).

Emphasising on the importance of historical periodisation for the Communist Party of China (CPC), Jiang Shigong writes:

“Historical periodisations constitute the most basic principles of Chinese political life. The preface to China’s Constitution begins with an historical narrative, and each time that there are theoretical advances in or revisions to the Party Charter, this requires changes to the preface to the Constitution, which undoubtedly signals the transformation of basic political principles into the basic principles of the nation in terms of the fundamental law. For this reason, all reports to the Party Congress start with the history of the Party and the history of the country...This is the dialectical relationship between inheritance and tradition in the Party’s theoretical tradition” (Jiang 2018).

The 19th Party Congress report broke away from the practice of a generational politics (*dai ji zhengzhi* 代际政治) historical narrative set forth by the 14th Party Congress Report and instead adopted a historical mission narrative (Jiang 2018), by stating:

“The Chinese nation, which since modern times began had endured so much for so long, has achieved a tremendous transformation: it has stood up, grown rich, and is becoming strong; it has come to embrace the brilliant prospects of rejuvenation (*zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi jinru xin shidai. yiweizhe jindai yilai jiu jing monan de zhonghua minzu ying laile cong zhan qilai, fu qilai dao qiang qilai de weida feiyue* 中国特色社会主义进入新时代 意味着近代以来久经磨难的中华民族 迎来了从站起来、富起来到强起来的伟大飞跃)”.

For the Chinese, these painful memories of hardship are characterised by Western incursions of China that began with the first and second Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60) and the following unequal treaties (*bu pingdeng tiaoyue* 不平等条约) which territorially “divided it like a melon” (*guafen* 瓜分) and turned it into the “Sick Man of Asia” (*yazhou bingfu* 亚洲病夫), unleashing a “Century of Humiliation.” Xi not only formulates this as a collective experience but defines the Chinese Dream as its response:

“Realising the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the nation is the long-cherished wish of the Chinese nation since the modern times (*shixian zhonghua minzu weida fuxing de zhongguo meng, shi jindai yilai zhonghua minzu de suyuan* 实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦, 是近代以来中华民族的夙愿). After the Opium Wars of the 1840s, the Chinese nation suffered a century of external invasion and civil war (*1840 nian yapian zhanzheng yihou, zhonghua minzu meng shou liao bainian de waizu ruqin he neibu zhanzheng* 1840 年鸦片战争以后, 中华民族蒙受了百年的外族入侵和内部战争). The Chinese people encountered extreme sufferings and agony, genuine distress and misfortune (*Zhongguo renmin zaoyule ji da de zainan he tongku, zhenzheng shi kunan shenzhong, mingyun duo chuan* 中国人民遭遇了极大的灾难和痛苦, 真正是苦难深重、命运多舛). The Chinese people wholeheartedly support the Chinese Dream (*zhongguo renmin fa zi neixin de yonghu shixian zhongguo meng* 中国人民发自内心地拥护实现中国梦)” (Xi 2013b).

Emphasising on the importance of the Century of Humiliation in Chinese political discourse, Hemant Adlakha notes:

“Under Xi Jinping, “century of humiliation” has acquired the new meaning of “Chinese rejuvenation” or “Chinese dream,”... like most intellectuals in the late Qing and Republican eras, Mao Zedong too was not only deeply disturbed by the Chinese “century of humiliation,” several of his foreign policy decisions in the early to mid-1950s were heavily

influenced by the “victim” mentality such as the two Taiwan Strait crises in 1954-1955 and 1958 respectively ... and as the scholars in the West have firmed up their resolve to force Beijing to “give up” playing “victim” card, one thing is crystal clear in the minds of the party leadership, i.e., riding on the past success of Mao’s playing “victim” mentality, the current Chinese leadership is too aware of how well the victimhood narrative has been serving China in its diplomatic strategies to put it aside anytime soon.” (Adlakha 2022b).

Such a notion for the Chinese is further aggravated by Western suspicions and continued possibility of future external threats, serving as the legitimiser for the CPC which is claimed as the “the only modern Chinese political party that was able to successfully stand up to foreign aggression” (Kaufman 2011:3-4). Zheng Wang explains the Century of Humiliation through Johan Galtung’s Chosenness-Myths-Trauma (CMT) Complex where “chosen trauma and glory” are cherry picked by regimes to further a “master narrative or national story” so as to maintain internal cohesion (Wang 2013:3). Such an approach is actively applied to visual propaganda through which regime legitimacy is crafted and its appeal enhanced, by highlighting how the Chinese Dream is not only beneficial to China, but to the whole world.

A Chinese Dream for the World

The 19th Party Congress report hinted to a greater international role that China sought to play under Xi Jinping as it puts forth the socialist path of modernisation for developing countries by providing them with “Chinese wisdom” (*zhongguo zhihui* 中国智慧) and “Chinese solutions” (*zhongguo fang’an* 中国方案) to attain “speedy development” (*jiakuai fazhan* 加快发展) while “maintaining their independence” (*baochi zishen duli xing* 保持自身独立性), through “a completely new choice to resolve problems of humanity” (*quan xin xuanze, wei jie jue renlei wenti* 全新选择, 为解决人类问题) (Xi 2017).

It is propounded that the Chinese Dream is both “attractive to the world” as well as is “not only concerned with the destiny of China but that of the world” (*zhongguo meng dui shijie juyou xiyin li zhongguo de mengxiang, bujin guanhu zhongguo de mingyun, ye guanxi shijie de mingyun* 中国梦对世界具有吸引力 中国的梦想, 不仅关乎中国的命运, 也关系世界的命运) (Zhao 2018). The suspicions regarding China’s rise within the international community are dubbed in the official discourse as stemming from China being the only country which has “surpassed” all others on four aspects (*si chao guojia* 四超国家) of history and culture (*chao youjiu de lishi wenhua* 超悠久的历史和文化), territory (*chao guangkuo de jiangyu mianji* 超广阔的疆域面积), population (*chao daxing de renkou guimo* 超大型的人口规模), and market potential (*chao juda de shichang qianli*

超巨大的市场潜力); and is defined as a product of ideologies of the “strong preying on the weak” (*ruoruoliangshi* 弱肉强食) and “zero sum game” (*ling he boyi* 零和博弈). The Chinese Dream is both a dream of “peace” (*heping* 和平), “development” (*fazhan* 发展), “cooperation” (*hezuo* 合作), and “win-win scenarios” (*gongying* 共赢), as well as China’s development, particularly in new age industries, agricultural modernisation, and urbanisation, which is a “free ride” (*shufeng che* 顺风车) for other countries to hitch on (Zhonglianbu:2013). China’s targeted poverty alleviation (*jingzhun fupin* 精准扶贫) and people-oriented development (*yi renmin wei zhongxin* 以人民为中心) are particularly highlighted as lessons for other countries. The reformism of capitalist countries is blamed for socioeconomic inequalities, and China is presented as an alternative model. While it is stated that the experiences of other nations are different from China, it is emphasised that a “combination of Marxism with the specific reality of each country” (*makesi zhuyi yu benguo juti shiji xiang jiehe* 马克思主义与本国具体实际相结合) is an alternative worth trying (Zhonglianbu:2013). A case for the acceptance of the Chinese Dream is further built by emphasising on its peaceful orientation. Quoting Xi, it is noted that though the “lion that China is has already woken up, it is peaceful, amiable and civilised” (*zhongguo zhe tou shizi yijing xingle, dan zhe shi yi zhi heping de, keqin de, wenming de shizi* 中国这头狮子已经醒了, 但这是一只和平的 可亲的 文明的狮子) (Zhonglianbu:2013). Such global visions envisaged by the official Party discourse is reflected in propaganda posters that actively seek to emphasise China’s economic success so as to enhance the appeal of its development model among developing and underdeveloped nations.

Zheng Wang highlights the “understanding gap” that exists between China and the rest of the world in terms of the Chinese Dream (Wang:2013,8). While some view it as China’s way of “conquering world supremacy” (Gabor and Neag:2020,181), other scholars have pointed to the use of the Chinese Dream narrative to present a “peaceful” image of China (Sorenson:2015), and others yet present concerns over the possible denigration of relations between Beijing and other nations over the excessive nationalist rhetoric that underscores the Chinese Dream (Tui:2015). BR Deepak argues while Chinese style modernisation might not enjoy great appeal in the West, its emphasis on “modernisation of a huge population (*renkou guimo juda* 人口规模巨大), common prosperity (*gongtong fuyu* 共同富裕), material and cultural-ethical advancement (*wuzhi wenming he jingshen wenming xiang xietiao* 物质文明和精神文明相协调), harmony between humanity and nature (*ren yu ziran hexie gongsheng* 人与自然和谐共生), and modernisation of peaceful development (*heping fazhan daolu* 和平发展道路)” finds acceptance among the developing and underdeveloped countries, many of which look upon China as a successful model of development (Deepak 2022). Such a model is pitted against the American Dream to not only highlight the uniqueness of the Chinese Dream but to also portray it as a better model.

Chinese Dream vs American Dream

While the idea behind the Chinese Dream predates the American Dream, comparisons between the two in both Party documents and scholarly literature have recurrently occurred. Such comparisons not only further reveal the nuances of the Chinese Dream but also help one in understanding how the Party State envisions China's role vis à vis the United States. Shi Yuzhi minutely distinguishes between the two on seven fronts. First, while Chinese dream is described as the dream of “national prosperity and strength” (*guojia de fuqiang* 国家的富强), the American Dream is described as furthering “personal prosperity” (*geren de fuyu* 个人的富裕). Shi claims that such a difference in orientation stems from the United States' comparative geographical advantage over China which made external attacks difficult and defence easier. Second, while the objectives of the Chinese Dream include “national rejuvenation” (*minzu zhenxing* 民族振兴) while that of the American Dream is “personal success” (*geren chenggong* 个人成功). Third, the Chinese Dream is defined as being realised by the efforts of the “Chinese people themselves” (*zhongguo meng bixu you zhongguoren ziji yi lai shixian* 中国梦必须由中国人自己来实现), it is highlighted that the American Dream rests on the “talents and resources of other nations” (*meiguo meng keyi liyong qita guojia de rencai ziyuan dadao* 美国梦可以利用其他国家的人才资源达到). Shi emphasises that China's huge population makes it necessary for the Chinese Dream to rely on the “the development of Chinese spirit” (*shixian zhongguo meng bixu hongyang zhongguo jingshen* 实现中国梦必须弘扬中国精神) i.e. inculcating talent within China and reliance on “collective wisdom and efforts” (*quncequnli* 群策群力). Fourth, the individualistic orientation of the American Dream is further targeted by defining it as pursuing “individual freedom and happiness” (*geren de ziyou he kuaile* 个人的自由和快乐) vis à vis a family-oriented China which seeks to further “group harmony and happiness” (*qunti de hexie xingfu* 群体的和谐幸福) focuses solely on “individual glory” (*geren rongyao* 个人荣耀). Fifth, it is argued that being an immigrant country, the United States lacks a “deep sense of history” (*zongshen de lishi gan* 纵深的历史感) unlike China. Sixth, it is highlighted that the Chinese Dream depends on “collective wisdom and efforts” (*zhongguo meng yilai quncequnli* 中国梦依赖群策群力) while the American Dream depends on “individuality” (*meiguo meng kao de shi gexing zhangyang* 美国梦靠的是个性张). Seventh, it is noted that while the Chinese Dream is for “national glory” (*minzu guangrong* 民族光荣), the American Dream stands for “individual glory” (*meiguo meng shi weile geren rongyao* 美国梦是为了个人荣耀). The “greater sensitivity” of the CPC government with regard to the multi-ethnic nature of the nation is highlighted vis à vis the United States as well as the “lack of attachment” that the Americans have to their homeland (Shi 2013).

William A. Callahan perceives the Chinese Dream as “a composite ideology that integrates equality and hierarchy into a new form of statism that is involved in a global competition of social models: Chinese Dream versus the American Dream” (Callahan 2015,4). Such ideas largely owe their origins to the precedents of the Great Harmony (*datong* 大同) as expressed in the Book of Rites (*Liji* 礼记) and the ideas put forth by Mao Zedong in his Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions (1956), thus representing the Chinese Dream’s qualitative and quantitative facets respectively where while the latter is primarily concerned with countering the United States, the former intends to establish a distinct social order. The Great Harmony is explained as: “When the Great Way prevails, the world will belong to all. They chose people of talent and ability whose words were sincere, and they cultivated harmony. In this way, selfish schemes did not arise. Robbers, thieves, rebels, and traitors had no place” (Callahan 2015: 3).

Mao defined defeating the United States as not just the national goal of the PRC but also its duty to the world, as he noted: “Given fifty or sixty years, we certainly ought to overtake the United States is not only possible, but absolutely necessary and obligatory. If we don't, the Chinese nation will be letting the nations of the world down and we will not be making much of a contribution to humanity” (Mao 1956).

The two, in Callahan’s opinion, represent a strange pair pointing to common futurology (Callahan 2015: 19). However, Callahan fails to note that Mao's emphasis on “overtaking the United States” was purely rooted in ideological considerations, an approach long abandoned by the CPC since the Reform period. Moreover, while distinguishing "Chinese-style democracy" from its American counterpart, Xi has recurrently emphasised that China does not seek to alter the current liberal international world order (MFA 2022). While such a statement can be dismissed at face value as political wordplay to lead the spectators up the garden path, neither can the economic benefits that China reaps out of the current world order nor its military limitations to massively alter it in any reasonable way can be denied.

Comparing the two Dreams, AV Shalak’s 2013 book *The Chinese Dream and the World* notes that China’s cultural appeal is weaker vis à vis the United States (Kopsteva 2015: 384). Contrasting views however prevail. David S Pena notes that while the socialist Chinese Dream promotes common prosperity, peaceful and sustainable development; the unbridled capitalist nature of the American Dream furthers unsustainable development and imperialist wars (Pena 2015). Such differences are further reflected in the visual propaganda used to promote the Chinese Dream.

Realising the Chinese Dream: Individual Subjectivities and Propaganda

Xi closely associates the realisation of the Chinese Dream to individual prosperity, thus transplanting the historical mission at the individual level, “History shows that the future and destiny of each and every one of us are closely linked to those of our country and nation” (*lishi gaosu women, mei ge ren de qiantu mingyun dou yu guojia he minzu de qiantu mingyun jinmi xiang* 历史告诉我们, 每个人的前途命运都与国家和民族的前途命运紧密相). Only when the country does well, and the nation does well, can everyone do well (*guojia hao, minzu hao, dajia cai hui hao* 国家好, 民族好, 大家才会好)” (Xi 2013b).

A crucial part of the Chinese Dream is building individual subjectivities. Michel Foucault defines three forms through which individuals are created into subjects/citizens namely, the subjectivity accorded through the status of sciences such as linguistic, economics or biology; objectivising through “dividing practices” such as the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’; and lastly, how humans define themselves such as in the domain of sexuality (Foucault 1982: 777-78). Subjectivities are hence products of a struggle emerging from power assertion by one force over another (for instance, the State and citizens). He notes:

“This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1982:781).

Louis Althusser similarly states that all States rely on the dual use of violence and ideology to craft individual subjectivities to sustain their rule. While the dominant use of the first creates a primarily Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), that of the latter creates the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). He defines the ISA as “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions”. For Althusser, while the RSA is unified and functions primarily in the public domain, the ISA exists in a plurality of forms, penetrating to the private domains of individuals as well without controlling which a class cannot hold on to power for long. The ISA thus forms the site for realisation of ideology (Althusser 1970; Althusser et. al. 2014: 27).

Althusser locates the presence and operation of the ruling ideology that holds State power at the juncture between consent and coercion, i.e. in the ISA which acts behind a “shield” provided by the RSA. Every ideology thus “constitutes” individuals as “subjects” (Althusser et al 2014:188). Such an ideological construction of an individual's identity through institutions of authority like State or Religion is called interpellation, which closely works to manufacture consent and conformity in favour of a particular regime through:

- 1) the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects
- 2) their subjection to the Subject (or the dominant institution such as the State and its idea of what a 'good' subject is)
- 3) the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself
- 4) the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognise what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right (Althusser et al 2014: 268).

Thus, with the exception of a few “bad subjects” who refuse to conform to the interpellated identity furthered by the State and who are policed by the RSA, the majority of the subjects work “all by themselves”, i.e. by conforming to the ideological and identity constructions desirable to the State, conditioned to do so through “practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs” (Althusser et al 2014: 268). In China, propaganda (particularly visual propaganda) acts as an indispensable way of forming such individual subjectivities.

Propaganda, defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowell and O'Donnell 2012: 7), plays a major role in such identity formation. Unlike the liberal West, socialist political systems do not understand propaganda as a pejorative term. In his *Party Organisation and Party Literature* (1905), Lenin argued that the purpose of literature must be to further the cause of the Revolution, an idea that was also applied to art. Under Stalin, a new artistic and literary doctrine of political censorship developed which came to be known as Socialist Realism. Defined as “Socialist in content, Nationalist in form,” Socialist Realism came to be defined as a simple, instructive, easily comprehensible literary and art work modelled on the indigenous art form of the nation which would not just further the Party's ideas but would also inspire the proletariat to build the utopian Communist Homeworld.

These ideas inspired Mao Zedong who in his Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (1942) stated that the Party develop two kinds of armies in order to emerge victorious; a national army to fight the war and a "cultural army" to challenge the bourgeois hegemony in literature and art. He advised the artists to expose and criticise the enemies while appreciating allies. Art was thus to reflect the needs and aspirations of the armed forces, peasantry, and the proletariat.

Inspired by the Soviet model, the propaganda architecture of the CPC included various visual, verbal, and performative propaganda techniques. These would be Oral (*koutou xuanchuan* 口头宣传), Written (*wenzi xuanchuan* 文字宣传), Imagistic (*yingxiang xuanchuan* 影响宣传) and Demonstrative (*zhifan xing xuanchuan* 示范性宣传) propaganda. Due to extensive illiteracy and the inability to compose a common language in the early days of the Revolution, Imagistic propaganda in the form of mass and cheaply-produced posters was actively used (Rawnsley 2009: 287). Perhaps a more prominent reason was its psychological strength of persuasion.

The human imagination's preference for limited complexity gives rise to symbolic images which can further be broken down and understood in the categories of "good" and "bad", with images seldomly categorised as "mixed" (Lee1990:143). Images thus become synonymous with a "generalised picture" or a "stereotype", forming the characterisation of people i.e. how they are viewed (Merrill 1962:203-09). Commenting on the strong psychological role that images play in forming public opinion, Walter Lippmann argues, "For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world, we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" (Lippmann 1949:55).

Concurrent to the ability to construct realities, images are efficiently used by States as tools of ideological control (Hall et. al. 1978). Hence, they can be used to not only inspire action but also maintain social control by building subjectivities (Lee 1990:144), as seen in the case of the Chinese Dream. The visual propaganda of the Chinese Dream uses several motifs of historical, political and cultural significance. An analysis of such symbols reveals more details about how the Chinese Dream is perceived. Such symbols thus do not just enrich one's reading of the textual discourse but often bring to the fore the gap between what a regime preaches and what it intends, a discourse which is often deliberately kept hidden to maintain ambiguity.

The Spectacle of the Chinese Dream

Group A: Party, Politics, Leader and History

Xi Jinping himself is a central element of almost all propaganda posters, to the extent that many dub China under Xi as a “Leader State” (Hart:2016,4). Not only has he been conferred the status of the “Supreme Leader” (*lingxiu* 领袖) previously reserved for Mao, and enshrined his Xi Jinping Thought in the Party Constitution, but has also successfully clinched an unprecedented third term as the General Secretary. Hemant Adlakha notes that unlike all post-Mao leaders, Xi is not just the first leader not chosen by revolutionary generation leaders, the first top Chinese leader to be born in New China, the first princeling (*taizi dang* 太子党) to be elevated to the party’s top leadership position but was picked owing to his work in “capitalist” growth centers such as Zhejiang, Fujian and Shanghai as a “safe pair of hands,” “status-quo keeper, and not a boat-rocker”. Thus, given the circumstances that preceded Xi’s ascension, “it was the party which needed Xi more than the other way round” (Adlakha 2022a).

As noted, China’s centuries-long rich civilisational heritage as seen in Image A1 forms another dominant element. Xi regularly quotes verses from Chinese poems such as “Storming an iron wall pass”, “sea becoming mulberry fields” and “forging ahead like a gigantic ship, breaking through strong winds and heavy waves”. Apart from its cultural significance, the Great Wall also symbolises the Chinese people’s historical resilience against foreign incursions and “the spirit of the nation” (Xi 2019), which Xi heavily stresses as a crucial part of the Chinese Dream. Tiananmen Square highlights the historical glory of both the nation and the Party. Political symbols in the form of the shining red badge and the Party emblem symbolise the indispensable role of the CPC in achieving the goal, complemented by the background shades which symbolise the dawn of a new era or “the future” of the Chinese people under CPC rule. The *Huabiao* (华表) indicates that the CPC has its ears to the ground and cares for the citizens.



A1: To realise the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is presently the greatest dream of the Chinese nation. This is the dream of a strong nation, and when we talk of every single Chinese, it is our own dream, 2013/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

Apart from symbolising the harmonious oneness of Heaven and Earth, the Temple of Heaven also stands as a symbol of good governance dedicated to the well-being of the people as seen in Image A2. A rare poster where Xi shares space with other Politburo members, highlighting former premier, Li Keqiang, the image links consolidation of Party Unity as an intrinsic part to the realisation of the Chinese Dream, shown as a collective duty of the decision makers. While the inclusion of Taiwan in the Chinese map coloured in red portrays Taiwan's absorption and complete integration with the PRC as an inevitable task of the Chinese Dream, the two white birds flying above are both traditional symbols of longevity and the universal symbol of peace. A bright sun, as depicted in the poster, does not just stand as a traditional symbol of power but also the symbol of victory in revolutionary iconography (Eberhard:1986, 97,345-47). Democratic Centralism and Party Unity, recurrently emphasised by Xi, have been a crucial part of the Party's understanding of governability linked to its regime legitimacy, as also emphasised by Mao in On Setting Up a System of Reports (1948).



A2: Together and with one heart build the Chinese Dream, 2014/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

Xi's anti-corruption (*fan fubai* 反腐败) campaign (Image A3) which strives to target both “tigers” and “flies” i.e. officials high and low, has been described as a “prerequisite” (*qianti* 前提) to the realisation of the Chinese Dream (Xi 2013c). The “Three Stricts, Three Earnests” Campaign has become a crucial part of tightening Party discipline (Garrick and Bennett 2018:103). In the words of Jiang Shigong, when linked with the theoretical line of the Party, such ideas emphasise that:

“China is not blindly following socialist ideas and institutions produced by the Western experience of socialism, but rather is charting the socialist developmental path on the basis of a greater self-confidence, taking the project of the modernisation of socialist construction to its third phase. For this reason, the report of the Eighteenth National Congress correctly talked about ‘self-confidence in the path on the basis of greater self-confidence in the theory,’ and ‘self-confidence in the institutions’ involved in the construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” (Jiang 2018).

The task hence is not just to recraft the Party’s legitimacy but to also resurrect the relevance of Chinese-style socialism.



A3: Completely settle the question of corruption, flies as well as tigers must be struck, 2014/
Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

Xibaipo (Image A4) stands as a crucial revolutionary site in the CPC history from where the Red Army proceeded towards Beijing in the Revolution of 1949, which Mao dubbed as proceeding to the city “to take the test”, referring to the extremely tough civil services exam of the Imperial era. Xibaipo is also the site where Mao put forth the “two musts” to be followed by the Party members which included a heavy emphasis on simplicity and austerity as well as being staunchly against impetuosity; reemphasised by Xi on a visit in 2013 (China Military 2021). The use of Mao’s poem in his handwriting is an interesting feature and can be read as a part of the larger trend of bringing Mao back to the centre of Chinese politics under Xi (Zhao2016).



A4: Xibaipo. Source: China Civilization Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department

Image A5 depicts the Red Boat in the Nanhu lake aboard which the CPC was founded in 1921. While both the boat and the lake have become an intrinsic part of China’s political culture, Xi re-emphasised its importance when he visited the site in 2017, stating that the Red Boat symbolises the Party’s bravery and dedication to the people which he vowed to uphold (Ma 2021). Its depiction in relation to the Chinese Dream hence underscores sacrifice and dedication as important virtues to be imbibed among the populace as Xi emphasises that one must learn from the Party’s seniors to develop a path to a prosperous future. The poem on the poster “setting sail to the fulfilment of the Dream” by Tie Lin further celebrates this spirit.



A5: The Red Boat. Source: China Civilization Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department

Group B: Of Prosperity and Strength

The Chinese Dream as the dream of a prosperous and powerful country focused on economic and military modernisation is supported through Party documents which frequently use China’s economic strength and its suggested benefits for other countries to build a case for it. Anna Ahlers highlights the importance of “new rural neighbourhood programmes” in making possible the realisation of the Chinese Dream based on the notion of “a socially more acceptable concentration of resources” (Ahlers 2015:121). In the 19th Party Congress Report, Xi noted the goal of attaining a moderately prosperous society requires “innovation-driven development (*chuangxin qudong fazhan zhanlüe* 创新驱动发展战略), “rural vitalisation” (*xiangcun zhenxing zhanlüe* 乡村振兴战略), “coordinated regional” (*quyu xietiao fazhan zhanlüe* 区域协调发展战略) and “sustainable development” (*kechixu fazhan zhanlüe* 可持续发展战略), and a “military-civilian integration strategy” (*junmin ronghe fazhan zhanlüe* 军民融合发展战略). While Xi’s policies such as the “Eight Rules for close contact with the masses” (*miqie lianxi qunzhong de ba xiang guiding* 密切联系群众的八项规定) (Sina News 2012) have focussed on austerity, visual propaganda continues to highlight economic prosperity in terms of glittering high-rise buildings and high-speed trains as seen in Image B1. Thus, highlighting that though the contemporary political discourse criticises Reform era policies for aggravating economic disparities in China with many of Xi’s policies emphasising on austerity, the visual propaganda continues to exploit the capitalist development made possible through those policies.



B1: National soul Dream of a powerful nation, 2014/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

The figure of Peng Liyuan presents an interesting but often overlooked allegory (Image B2). She is probably the most depicted spouse of a Chinese leader post the establishment of the PRC. Peng frequently accompanies Xi, not just providing a personal touch to his political imagery but also as a symbol of changing notions of ideal femininity in contemporary China. Affectionately called “麻麻” (Mother Peng), the first lady is depicted as an ideal to be followed (Renmin Ribao 2014). A renowned singer for a long time associated with the Party in her own right, Peng bid adieu to her glorious career to take care of the couple's daughter residing in Beijing while Xi worked in Fujian to build a successful career for himself as a politician, thus aiding in her husband's successful career. Such expectations from women developed post-economic liberalisation as male employment gained prevalence owing to lay-offs that rendered many women unemployed (Evans 2002). Depicted as an embodiment of ‘motherly care’, Peng not only complements the figure of Xi as a powerful world leader akin to the Yin-Yang concept but also presents a ‘feminine’ face of China as a loving and caring nation. Always shown as smiling, holding hands, and looking out for each other, Peng and Xi are highlighted as the ideal couple– not only parental figures to be loved and respected but also to be followed thus reinstalling fidelity in a ‘degrading’ society characterised by transient relationships.



B2: The Chinese Dream, the dream of a strong nation, 2016/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection.

Source: Chinese Posters.net

Simultaneously, the dream of a strong military is described as “indispensable and strong backing” to the realisation of the Chinese Dream (“*qiang jun meng*” *shi shixian “zhongguo meng” bi buke shao de jianqiang houdun* “强军梦”是实现“中国梦”必不可少的坚强后盾). The dream of a rich and strong country is further defined as the “two cornerstones for developing Socialism with Chinese characteristics and realising national rejuvenation” (*fuguo yu qiang jun, shi fazhan zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi, shixian minzu fuxing de liang da jishi* 富国与强军,是发展中国特色社会主义、实现民族复兴的两大基石). Obeying the Party’s command, battle preparedness, and disciplined army are emphasised to be of utmost importance (Renmin Ribao 2013). While the Party's command over the military has always been important, its relevance has increased under Xi after the Bo Xilai episode which unveiled the military’s fragmented loyalty to the Party, restoring which is a crucial part of Xi’s military modernisation (Wuthnow and Saunders 2017).

As seen in Image B3; while the advanced military implements point to strides in military development, a stern and confident looking Xi clapping in an encouraging manner presents a reassuring picture that the Dream is achievable. The use of architectural elements to denote the Party’s revolutionary history are meant to stress upon the Gutian spirit of the Party commanding the gun.



B3: To resolutely listen to the Party's command is the spirit of a strong army, 2012/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

While the Western media emphasised upon the military display as an act of muscle flexing, Image B4 places visuals of the military parade on the back, giving more space to foreign delegation and hence depicting that while a strong military defence system strengthens China, its real strength lies in its alliances with major partners, and most conspicuously, with Russia. The most celebratory presence is shown to be of United Nations Secretary General Ban-ki Moon, who, as the senior-most figure of the largest international organisation, represents an impartial figure assenting to China's victory parade. The United Nations is also an organisation China constantly calls upon to be strengthened to challenge US hegemony and build a multilateral world. This depiction also allays the fear among countries that China wants to alter the existing international liberal order. Apart from highlighting the contribution of the CPC in the war effort, the anniversary is portrayed as an event to highlight China as a possible leader specifically among victims of Japanese aggression like South Korea. Xi attended the event wearing a Zhongshan suit or Mao suit, though customary of Chinese leaders on commemorative events but not worn by his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao at the parade. The suit does not just symbolise Sun Yat Sen's legacy, the CPC's austerity and revolutionary ideals but its significance extends to the larger Confucian morality and humility which the Chinese Dream heavily emphasises upon as "core values" to be imbibed (Metzger 2014:161-220). The suit makes Xi appear as the torchbearer of the Party's revolutionary tradition. However, in the central photograph, he is shown wearing a western business suit, customary of Chinese leaders post the 1980s. This also symbolises China's integration with the larger international liberal politico-economic order.



B4: 1945-2015 Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the victory of the war of resistance --
 The dream of a strong nation, 2015/ Stefan Landsberger's Collection. Source: Chinese Posters.net

Group C: Society, Culture and Environment

The Chinese Dream is seen by many scholars as inaugurating a “new era” in terms of social changes that the regime seeks to inculcate among the populace, an “umbrella” comprising “several consensus building activities” (Gow 2017: 3). The Chinese Dream is believed by many as setting a new direction in the formulation of a Chinese cultural identity (Koval qtd. Koptseva 2015: 375) which is meant to be as positive as possible (Koptseva and Seredkina qtd. Koptseva 2015: 375). It has been interpreted as decreasing reliance on Western philosophical ideologemes such as Christianity and Marxism while strengthening a foundation on traditional Chinese values like Confucianism (Kondrashova qtd. Koptseva 2015:375). It is also believed to be strengthening socialistic ethos by bringing them to the general practice for the first time in the history of humankind (Zeng and Wei qtd. Koptseva:2015,378). Helen Wang, in her 2010 book *The Chinese Dream: The Rise of the World’s Largest Middle Class And What It Means To You* also observed the heavy use of traditional Chinese values such as the culture of respect, family, creative development, new technologies, etc. (Wang 2010: 52). While Zheng Shiping views the Chinese Dream as a project of raising self-confidence of the Chinese people to prepare them for the enhanced international role that the leadership seeks for the nation (Zheng qtd. Koptseva

2015:377), Chunlong Lu argues that the Chinese Dream is built on the building blocks of traditional Chinese culture: respect to the political power, desire for social order, and strong government support (Lu qtd. Koptseva: 2015, 378). Thus, performing a strong social collectivist function of conjoining national, social, and individual dreams. At the same time, Victoria Tin-bor Hui opined that the elimination of any mention of people's rights in the Chinese Dream modelled on Sun Yat-Sen's concept of national rejuvenation points to "Xi's top-down dream" instead of a "bottom-up dream of the citizens" (Hui 2015:5).

The heavy shade of Confucian ethos in the Chinese Dream has also made many scholars draw parallels with the earlier concept of building a "Harmonious Society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会) put forth by Hu Jintao. This has been efficiently employed to ease socioeconomic tensions created by the market economy (Feng qtd. Koptseva 2015:383). While SY Raspertova claims the adoption of the concept as a way of enhancing China's cultural appeal to the outside world (Raspertova qtd. Koptseva 2015:384), Shi Min and Fu Juwen claim that Harmonious culture aims at installing harmony among different social classes, built through creative power, and development through an ideal management system, order, and stability (Shi and Fu 2015). It thus encompasses striking a harmonious balance among people internally i.e. between individual and collective interests; among the people and the society i.e. between social and economic development as well as between people and the environment; for which Marx's material dialectics, Chinese traditional culture and the realisation of the need to absorb advanced world cultural technologies is put to use.

One of the most popular posters reflecting on the Confucian virtues is of a chubby little girl defining the main tenets of the Core Socialist Values (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi guan* 社会主义核心价值观). The seven maxims mentioned in Image C1 point to the main tenets of the Chinese Dream: "Nation is family" (*guo shi jia* 国是家), "Diligence as foundation" (*qin wei ben* 勤为本), "Filial Piety first" (*xiao dang xian* 孝当先), "Friendliness as soul" (*shan zuo hun* 善作魂), "Frugality as virtue" (*jian yang de* 俭养德), "Integrity as self-conduct" (*chengli shen* 成立身) and "Harmony is precious" (*he wei gui* 和为贵) (Miao 2021). Zhen Sun notes that the portrayal of the Chinese Dream as that of a little girl fixate "sweet and lovely attributes" to it and thus "the masculine ethos of the national dream is subordinated to the girl's feminine ethos" (Zhen 2019:119).



C1: My Dream, The Chinese Dream. Source: Miao, 2021



C2: Filial Piety, Running in the blood of Chinese People. Source: China Civilization Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department

A greater emphasis on Filial piety as “running in the blood of the Chinese” can also be seen as in Image C2 portraying a child feeding his grandfather. Such notions help to maintain social stability, specifically since the notion of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) makes families the main caregiver, with State support being peripheral (Ren et al 2022: 3071). The portrayal of elderly in Image C3 also points to the brimming aspirations related to the Chinese Dream which is shown as catering to the needs of all sections of society. The Chinese Dream’s relation to traditional crafts and symbols such as paper cutting and the characters double Xi in red (喜喜) and Fu (福) (Image C4), as cultural signs of prosperity, do not just highlight China’s rich cultural heritage but also find better acceptance with the masses by arousing positive sentiments (Zhen 2019:115). Environmental Degradation and its ecological and economic cost, as seen in Image C5, is another major challenge faced by the Party State which associates it with the dream of jointly building a “beautiful China”



C3: The Chinese Dream Ahead. Source: China Civilization Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department



C4: The Dream of Common People, Common happiness, Source: China Civilization Office, CCP Central Propaganda Department



C5: You and I participate in the realisation of the beautiful Chinese Dream, 2015, Source: Ministry of Ecology and Environment, PRC

A Dynamic Dream

Describing the Chinese Dream as an “exercise in political hermeneutics”, Joseph Mahoney notes that its vagueness provides a scope wide enough for the CPC to deal with the economic and political difficulties of the Chinese society (Mahoney qtd. Kopesteva:2015, 377). Over the years, the Chinese Dream has been associated with a wide array of concepts, from patriotism to national unity and Sinicisation of religion (Xi 2022a). While Xi did not directly mention the Chinese Dream in his 2023 New Year Address (Xi 2022b), he indirectly referred to it as he stated, “The China of today is the China where dreams come true” (*jintian de zhongguo, shi mengxiang jielian shixian de zhongguo* 今天的中国, 是梦想接连实现的中国), as he enumerated several diplomatic, socioeconomic and scientific achievements. Emphasising China’s ability to “create miracles” (*mingtian de zhongguo, fendou chuangzao qiji*, 明天的中国, 奋斗创造奇迹), Xi pointed to several challenges, foremost of which was the resurgence of the Coronavirus, however he stated that with “hard work, perseverance and unity”, the “long and difficult” task would be achieved (*lu sui yuan, xing ze jiang zhi; shi sui nan, zuo ze bi cheng* 路虽远, 行则将至 ; 事虽难, 做则必成). While the optimism of the Chinese Dream seems to be fading amidst emerging socioeconomic challenges, it continues to be employed as a means of uniting the populace and shaping their individual subjectivities into a mould that favours stability and regime legitimacy of the CPC as well as aligns with the goals set forth by the Party State.

Conclusion

A semiotic study of the textual and visual discourse of the Chinese Dream not only reveals the nuanced and multifaceted forms it assumes, but also highlights it as a dynamic set of responses that the leadership under Xi Jinping envisages to counter the emerging challenges to the Party’s legitimacy. The study discovers that the Chinese Dream, the ideas that inspire it, and the aspirations it pursues move beyond the three vaguely defined goals that represent it and spans across a complex socioeconomic, political, cultural, and gendered reality. Concurrently, considering the Chinese Dream as an irredentist measure to restore China's past status as the Middle Kingdom is gravely mistaken, for not only it lacks any corroborative evidence but also moves against the future-oriented spirit of Marxism. An investigation of the Chinese Dream reveals that historical themes, such as the Century of Humiliation, are instead used as tools of collective memory to craft a united group identity and a common direction for the future akin to the aspirations of the Party State while also reflecting China's insecurity regarding the West which continues as the competitiveness between the two sharpens. The Chinese Dream thus plays on both memory and foreglimpse, setting forth a direction for the populace to follow. Concurrently, it also reflects on

China's newfound confidence under Xi to profess and promote not just its theoretical innovations to Marxism-Leninism but also its attempts to craft an alternative path to development for the world to follow. While such attempts undoubtedly aid in reproducing Party legitimacy domestically, understanding them also immensely contribute to understanding China's perspectives, concerns and the motives that guides its actions.

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