

# Chinese aspirations in the context of the ‘Chinese Dream’

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China is a land of creativity that is blessed with a rich heritage.

The ‘Chinese Dream’ as a concept was brought to prominence by the current Chinese President Xi Jinping on 29 November 2012 when he visited the Road to Rejuvenation exhibition at the National Museum of China. He was at that time the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China. He did not actually use these exact words but conveyed its denotation through the Chinese phrase ‘zhongguo meng’.

There have been individual interpretations of this phrase but Yi Zhongtian, a Chinese historian has probably summed it best by explaining it as- ‘national prosperity, social progress and people’s happiness’. It is being hoped that this dream will be fulfilled with the help of the economic opportunities arising out of the rapid economic growth that has characterized Chinese efforts over the last decade.

Today, the phrase ‘Chinese Dream’ is accepted throughout Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America as a theme whose objectives are- to reduce poverty, encourage economic growth and assist in the attainment of sustainable development based on the principles of equality, mutual trust and cultural exchange. In this context, it is also generally agreed that efforts in the realization of this ‘Dream’ would be assisted through the use of positive psychology that stresses well-being. In this context Professor Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania has pointed out that the Chinese ethos believes that a person with a higher well-being also ‘has higher engagement and accomplishments that contribute to achievements, innovation, spirituality and harmony’. The Chinese in this regard believe that the positive pathway encouraged by the ‘Dream’ is paved ‘not with confrontation and aggression, but with cooperation, development and peace’. This, according to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will help release the Chinese people’s true creative potential.

The Chinese believe that their ‘Chinese Dream’ has four facets- an economically and politically strong China, a civilized China which relies on equity and fairness, a harmonious China where there will be amity among the different social segments and a beautiful China with a healthy environment, low pollution and innovative

arts. Such a scenario underlines that the ‘Dream’ belongs to both the nation and the people- neither being separable from the other. This, they consider as pre-requisite for achieving their goal of being recognized as a fully developed socialist modernized nation by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.

He Chuanqi, a researcher in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has explained what is being expected by China by 2049- a) the per capita income will reach the equivalent of US Dollar 40,000 a year, b) agriculture will account for about 4 per cent of the economy and industries for about 60 per cent, c) the coverage of retirement, health and employment insurance will be 100 per cent, d) informatization rate will reach about 80 per cent, e) the core indicator of cultural innovation should be among the top 20 of the world, f) where China remains in the top 20 in terms of international competitiveness, g) where college education rate will exceed 80 per cent and h) life expectancy will be above 80 years.

Robert Engelman, President of the Worldwatch Institute has made an inter-

However in the case of the United States, the focus is more on individual freedom and a chance to succeed financially. This trend of thought has been taken further by Wang Zhan, President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences who has observed that the ‘China Dream’ will also attempt through collectivism to integrate ‘the cultures of different peoples on a more solid basis of mutual understanding and cooperation’. One can only add here that both China and America need not be mutually exclusive in their efforts but try to identify common ground while preserving respective differences.

The responsible Chinese authorities however realize that achieving their ‘Dream’ will not be an easy task. They know that several challenges will have to be overcome to move forward in their path to success.

They have identified that the first task will be the need to fight widespread corruption within the Chinese socio-economic structure. The determination in this regard has already been demonstrated by President Xi in the last few months. The second important drawback has been rec-



Wind farm in northwestern China

anti-subsidy measures) against Chinese imports being put in place by recession-hit Western developed countries.

To this, one needs to also add the issues of the widening rich-poor gap, the dwindling demographic dividend and the urban-rural development imbalance.

include ‘mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination’. This view has gained especial focus because China today has become one of the major engines driving world economic growth. It is also the biggest trading partner for 128 countries.

This has also given its diplomacy a more global perspective where they advocate not only equality among all countries regardless of their size but also promotion of democracy in international relations. They also oppose interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Their stand on the exacerbating situation in Syria has been consistent with their belief that ‘international and regional hotspot issues must be addressed through dialog and negotiation’ and not through use of force or regime change.

China also believes that traditional and non-traditional security threats are entwined within the complex world of foreign relations. Speaking in the Second World Peace Forum in June 2013, Wang Yi went on to add that financial risks, climate change, food security and cyber security are all global issues that need enhanced international coordination for equitable and sustainable solutions.

These factors apparently have led President Xi Jinping, after assumption of Office, to visit Russia, USA and some African and Latin American countries. China has also played host to the French President, several other European leaders and also leaders from Vietnam, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea. The common denominator in discussions during all these visits was the focus on ‘mutually beneficial and pragmatic cooperation’, recognizing the important role of multilateralism through the United Nations and the importance of honoring international obligations. These views have since been also reiterated in the G-20 Summit and the leadership meeting of BRICS Group.

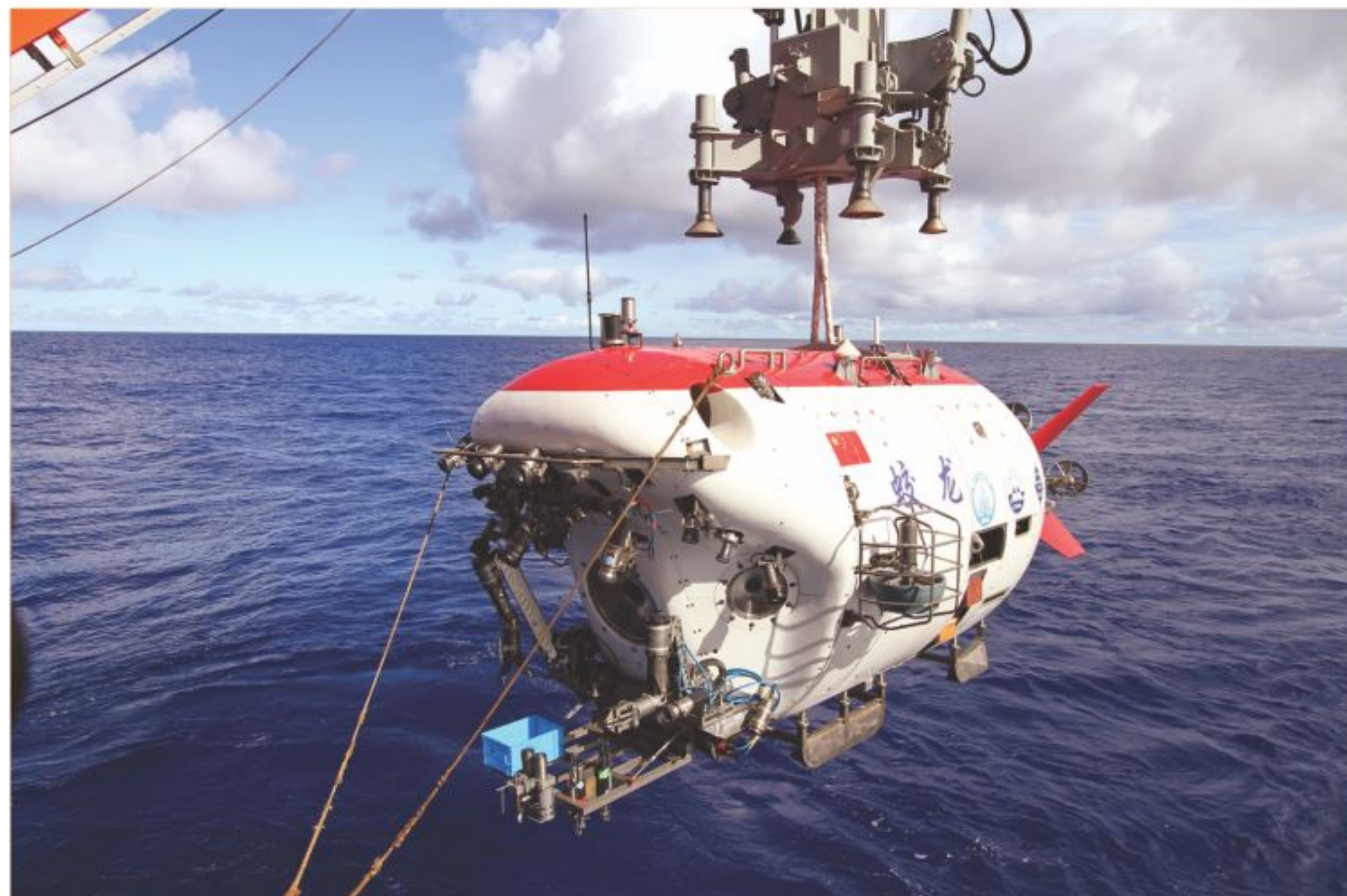
The Chinese ‘Dream’ has today become a comprehensive driving force for the new Chinese leadership. It is confident that in the coming years it will prove to be a crucial tool, receive international recognition and be recognized as a peaceful development strategy. The common Chinese people are hoping that it will also enhance their stature and voice in the arena of international affairs and give expression to, as Wang Yi puts it, ‘the strong synergy between our domestic and external agenda’.

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Rocket ready for takeoff in China Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center

esting point in his recent observations on the ‘Chinese Dream’ and its difference with the ‘American Dream’. He has explained that in the case of China, there is greater emphasis on the common well-being of the Chinese people as a whole.



Deep sea research submarine Jiaolong, which is capable to dive to a depth of over 7000 meters. It has the greatest depth range of any manned research vehicle in the world.

ognized as the inherent difficulties associated with existing administrative procedures and abuse of official power, resulting in inefficiency and injustice, right down to the lowest hierarchical level. Premier Li Keqiang has acknowledged the difficulties and has gone on record that the new government will try to cut down a third of the 1,700 items that require the approval of government departments. This will reduce the red tape within the system and facilitate transparency in decision making and the growth of accountability.

The Chinese government, unlike its neighbors in South Asia has also taken another important step. Spending is being reduced in government offices, buildings, travel and hospitality (no more large official banquets). This is being done so that the savings can be redirected towards social development.

Other challenges that will need to be tackled successfully to achieve the ‘Dream’ include- managing properly the impact on its domestic currency arising out of its huge foreign currency reserves, the regulation of capital flows and finding solutions to the different forms of protection (such as tariff hikes using anti-dumping and

Addressing these factors would reduce social inequalities and also facilitate consumption-led growth. One understands that the present government is taking necessary steps towards this direction.

It would also be pertinent to refer here to two other areas which have drawn the attention of the current Chinese government. The first relates to China’s rising environmental problems (water scarcity, increased flooding, air and water pollution) and the second pertains to peaceful settlement of its disputes related to territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the East China Sea and South China Sea. Both of these factors need to be carefully discussed with other stakeholders and solutions found through international negotiations. One hopes that the ‘China Dream’ which is known to emphasize on stability, peaceful development and cooperation will be the guiding factors in this exercise.

China, consistent with the ‘Dream’ has been pro-active and inter-active in matters of foreign policy. It has, in this regard, given emphasis on ‘a new security concept’ as underlined by its Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The essential elements in this paradigm



The Chongsheng Temple in Kunming, Yunnan province

## Is China rising or rejuvenating?

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By force they seized territory along the eastern coast. Thus over the years the French, the British and the Germans carved out exclusive territorial ‘concessions’. At the end of the Qing dynasty which succeeded the Ming, the foreigners could finally force open the door of China. China was exploited and this great country was made poor and often became famine stricken.

Until the Chinese people under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung the Chairman of the Chinese communist party declared China a Peoples Republic in 1949, the Chinese history unfolded a new page. Through social reforms it has restored order and authority of the Chinese people and embarked on its journey towards economic growth. Deng Xiaoping from 1978 encouraged China to open its doors to the world for trade, investment and technology. From that time onwards, China again started to make phenomenal economic progress. It became the largest factory in the world and the biggest consumer market. Today China is in the enviable position of being the second largest economy in the world after the USA.

Last year (2012), the Chinese Communist Party convened its 18th National Congress and Mr. Xi Jinping was elected to the position of Secretary General of the Party. President Xi then gave out his mission statement and proclaimed that all his efforts would be directed to ‘rejuvenate China’ and restore its glory that was lost due to foreign aggression. To him the fact that China was getting economically developed was not enough. He wants to see the country develop in all areas and human dimensions. To him that is his “Chinese dream”.

So in real terms, what constitutes the new Chinese

dream? President Xi mentions that the dream is about ‘national rejuvenation, improvement in people’s livelihood, prosperity, construction of a better society and military strengthening’. The dream describes the role of the individual in Chinese society and draws a set of ideals for China.

So President Xi’s Chinese dream will inevitably end up achieving the ‘two 100’s’. It is the material goal of China becoming a ‘modestly well off’ society by 2020,

the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party. The second goal is for China to be a fully developed nation by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China.

The Chinese dream focuses on four particular areas. The first area is a STRONG CHINA (economically, politically, diplomatically, scientifically and militarily). The second is CIVILISED CHINA (equity,

and fairness, rich culture, high morals), HARMONIOUS CHINA (amity among social classes) is the third area. The fourth and last component is BEAUTIFUL CHINA (healthy environment and low pollution).

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Representatives from 56 ethnic groups gathering at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.