

Original Paper

Chinese Diplomacy Discourse in the Prism of the Relations with the Sub-Saharan Region

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Abstract

Chinese economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping have given China the necessary push for the development and growth of the domestic economy. The People's Republic of China (PRC) under Xi Jinping claims, that the originally planned transformation is completed, and China is ready for achieving new goals, such as first peripheral and, later, global dominance, leadership in manufacturing and technology and probably even the moral benchmark. The PRC presents a new model of global order with its active position as the super nation.

Chinese current behaviour on the international stage is the direct illustration of the political thought of Xi Jinping. To understand the main principles and the vision of the PRC under Xi, his principles of diplomacy have been analysed.

This paper claims, that the rhetoric of Xi Jinping and his administration is a neo-pragmatic approach, which includes nativism, anti-traditionalism and pragmatism within.

The article takes as a case study for the implementation of the Chinese foreign policy the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) member states.

Contrarily to the American dominance, China suggests guidance, collaboration with mutual benefits and growth, which involves both sides. "Shift in space" stresses the concrete steps for achieving the "China's dream" of rejuvenation.

Keywords

Xi Jinping, global order, China's Dream, FOCAC

1. Introduction

Chinese science fiction film of 2019, “The Wandering Earth” (*liulangdiqu 流浪地球*) directed by Frant Gwo, at first glance looks like a parody on apocalyptic Hollywood cinema. Based on the 2000s’ novel by Liu Cixin, the film has an obvious plot for this genre: the sun is dying out and the world builds giant planet thrusters to move the Earth out of its orbit. Most of the scenes are focused on areas that previously were called China. A Chinese astronaut and his son save the planet with some support of their friends, and of a Russian astronaut, who sacrifices his life to support his Chinese colleague in the supreme mission of saving the humanity (Gwo, 2019).

Is the motive of Chinese heroes with their Russian friends saving the world only a film-makers fantasy?! Could it be a hint for a new global order with new leaders coming from the East, who claim to be able to “save the world”: to support developing regions, to elevate climate issues and to guide international interactions based on new values and norms?! Xi Jinping’s China cultivates the discourse of a “new global order model”, “superpower” and “leadership” of the PRC on the international arena. China gradually enlarges the spheres of influence, claiming that the global order might include multipolar relations with a number of superpowers, which grow their peripheral areas of interests (Heberer, 2015). Peripheral diplomacy of Xi is a part of the plan for the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” with a focus on steady improvement of its image among the neighbouring countries and regions, expanding to the African continent and the Middle East (CCICED, 2013). This statement helps to connect the global “Belt and Road Initiative” and “Maritime Silk Road” projects, as well as preceding the “Go Global” policy and “made in China 2025” with the gaining meaning narratives of “Chinese new model of global governance”, “super-nation”, “global leadership”, and others. This shapes a new discourse which might support the political strategy of Chinese expanding global influence and power.

However, such a discourse cannot exist in a political vacuum, it is addressing the international arena, where the United States of America for decades are playing the central role. The new Chinese discourse is not attacking Pax Americana but challenging the order through closing complex alliances with different regions and international institutions (Breslin, 2013). It speaks about “China Dream” which cannot be mentioned without a reference to “American Dream” since it is a global discourse. China dream is usually opposing the American one in speaking about a joint national effort, rather than about personal dreams of Americans (Callahan, 2015). The USA and China are not only ideological opponents, currently they are also political rivals. In the time of American declining activity as the leader of the global order, China could rise as the direct opponent of the unipolar world led by the United States (Sorensen, 2013). Therefore, the article presents some examples of the current American discourse as well. Hence, the way China constructs its political discourse, where it puts the accents might be strengthened.

This article deals with the Xi Jinping’s era discourse of the Chinese rejuvenation. Through explicit examples of the official rhetoric and its applications in the Sub-Saharan region, it will be shown how Chinese leadership defines new norms through shifting the focus of the global order to different

geographical areas and strategical principles in international relations.

2. Political Discourse of Two Rivals

Nowadays, the political discourse plays an important role in understanding international affairs and “balance of power” among the counterparts. Official statements and policies include open or hidden intentions of the governments towards the global order and define the objectives for the further strategies on the international stage.

Before checking the case studies of the Chinese rhetoric used as a political tool to achieve super-nation status, it is important to compare briefly China’s narrative to the US rhetoric. America was long time perceived as the only superpower after the Soviet Union’s collapse. The relationship between the Chinese and American sides could become essential for peace and stability both in the global and peripheral perspective.

In the time of the America-China confrontation, started in July 2018, and American anti-China tariffs (BBC, 2019), it is important to review the official statements regarding the global order to compare the approaches towards the global leadership and its positioning in the international system. This conflict could bring some shifts in the global order, which would influence developing regions and especially the Sub-Saharan Africa.

2.1 *The U.S. National Security Strategy of the Foreign Policy under Donald Trump*

The 45th president of the US, Donald Trump, has made quite a few changes in the national rhetoric towards internal and external politics. During the Obama presidency, the US was actively discussing its engagement into the Trans-Pacific Partnership, suggested by China, and its role in the Chinese trade pact plan for Asia Pacific. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Beijing in 2014, both Presidents Xi and Obama announced agreement in a few areas, such as climate change, clean energy cooperation, some maritime and military activities, fight against terrorism and more. The sides confirmed strong interest in mutual trust and cooperation (Heberer, 2015).

The Administration of Donald Trump has released in December 2017 an updated statement on foreign policy with Trump’s foreword. This statement, as well as the tone of the whole document indicates a strong change in the strategical course. The Trump’s direction, as it was promised in the election campaign focused on internal matters within a new discourse of aggressive global environment, which was searching for opportunities to exploit the USA and its position of a super nation.

“America First” policy is mentioned in different passages of the statement, strengthening an unstable political environment for America. This text indicates the core principle of the US contemporary foreign policy, statements are focused on the internal interests and distance from the proactive involvement in the global governance (*We are prioritizing the interests of our citizens and protecting our sovereign rights as a nation; enforcing our borders; defending without apology*). Nevertheless, Trump’s approach towards the foreign policy strengthens the will of the States to protect its interests with a “strong hand” (*United States faces an extraordinarily dangerous world; the United States will no*

longer tolerate economic aggression or unfair trading practices). The used expressions and chosen narrative with superlative and exaggerating expressions (*rogue regimes; rallying the world; we crushed; extraordinarily dangerous*, and more) show an emotional call towards the civil society. These statements hardly can be qualified as a common style of official documents and governmental statements.

Chinese contemporary discourse also consists of expressions pointing on China's goal to achieve global leadership. Nevertheless, the used rhetoric manifestly differs from the one, used by the USA in the period of Donald Trump presidency. The text presented above will serve as indicator and comparison tool to show the major difference in the rhetoric of two rivals.

2.2 Ten Principles of the Xi Jinping's Diplomatic Thought

Chinese foreign policy is expressed in different documents, one of the most known is the Ten Insistences of Xi's Thought on Diplomacy (*Xi Jinping waijiaozhanlüesixiang* 习近平外交战略思想). The principles in original are broadly cited not only in the Internet and in official texts, but they also exist in translated version on the official website of the PRC's embassy in Afghanistan, for example. It is essential to compare the original text in Chinese and its translation to English made by the Chinese authorities in order to check whether the original narrative was preserved. The text below has two versions, Chinese and English. In cursive font and brackets the translated expressions are added, which have been skipped in the original translation or carry alternative meaning in Chinese. Each principle will be commented.

1. (*Fundamental condition*): relate to the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee as a centralized unified leader in terms of the external work (*根本保证: 以维护党中央权威为统领加强党对对外工作的集中统一领导*)
2. (*Historical Mission*): Insist on pursuing China's major-country (*super-nation/great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics*) diplomacy to accomplish the mission of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (*历史使命: 以实现中华民族伟大复兴为使命推进中国特色大国外交*)
3. (*Main Goal*): Insist on building a community with a shared future for mankind to promote world peace and common development (*总目标: 以维护世界和平、促进共同发展为宗旨推动构建人类命运共同体*)
4. (*Basic (fundamental) demand*): Insist on enhancing strategic confidence to build a socialism with Chinese characteristics (*根本要求: 以中国特色社会主义为根本增强战略自信*)
5. (*General plan*): Insist on promoting **the Belt and Road Initiative** in accordance with the principle of achieving shared benefits through extensive consultation (*construction*) and joint contribution (*管总规划: 以共商共建共享为原则推动“一带一路”建设*)
6. (*Basic principle*): Insist on pursuing peaceful development featuring mutual respect and win-win cooperation (*基本原则: 以相互尊重、合作共赢为基础走和平发展道路*)
7. (*Important meaning*): Insist on fostering global partnerships by pursuing a broad-based (*deeper*,

closer relationship) diplomatic agenda (重要内涵: 以深化外交布局为依托打造全球伙伴关系)

8. (*Strenuous orientation*): Insist on steering (*guiding, pioneering*) reform of the global governance system to uphold fairness and justice (努力方向: 以公平正义为理念引领全球治理体系改革)

9. (*Starting point*): Insist on upholding China's sovereignty, security and development interests which represent the country's (*nation's*) core interests (出发点: 以国家核心利益为底线维护国家主权、安全、发展利益)

10. (*Spiritual mark*): Insist on forging and developing China's distinctive diplomacy (*unique style*) by drawing on its fine tradition and adapting to the changing times (Liu, 2018) (精神标识: 以对外工作优良传统和时代特征相结合为方向塑造中国外交独特风范 (唐淑楠, 2018)).

The ten statements are not a bound of theses, but a structured message, which begins with the fundamental condition for China's diplomacy- the uncompromised leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In the first statement in Chinese original text "leader" is expressed with the word 领导 (*lingdao*). It will be shown also in the next chapters, *lingdao* has a meaning of a "strong" lead and is most commonly used in texts referring to Western powers, and especially to the USA. To mention its own leadership, the PRC uses more "soft" expression, 引导 (*yindao*) with the same English translation "leader"/ "lead". However, in this passage the status of the Communist Party of China, the Central Committee as a leader is a *fundamental condition*, what is not mentioned in the official translation, and the used word *lingdao* shows the hegemony of the Communist Party. In the context of the global governance and Chinese mission 引领 (*yingling, guide*) is mostly used due its "softer" meaning of "guidance" and "support". It includes the idea of responsibility to do something together. (孙伊然, 2018). *Yinling* indicates, that China has reached such a level of development, that it is also able to support and guide others.

Another important expression is 统一 (*tongyi, unified*). It is mentioned both "centralized" and "unified". It could be assumed, that each word in the original text has its meaning and place and in the first statement, *tongyi* refers to the areas which should be in the future unified with the PRC under the "One China" principle. Under this principle, Taiwan is unseparated part of the PRC (*Taiwan shi Zhongguo bukefenge de yibufen, 台湾是中国不可分割的一部分*) (中华人民共和国国务院新闻办公室, 2000). According to the first insist of president Xi, the CPC is (will be) the leader of all the territories of the "one China".

The second point shows the great vision of China's rejuvenation. It is a historical mission to become the great power with Chinese characteristics. Along with some added nuances to the original translation, it is important to raise the question of the "Chinese nation" (*Zhonghuaminzu 中华民族*) meaning. The original concept formulated by Liang Qichao (梁启超) in 1901 included three main unified aspects defining the Chinese nation: 1. From the Yellow Emperor till the Qin Dynasty (*zi Huangdi yiqi Qin zhi yitong, 自黄帝以迄秦之一统*). 2. From the Qin Dynasty till the end of the Qing reign (自秦统一后至清代乾隆之末年). 3. The modern time, from the end of Qianlong era (近世史, 自乾隆末年开).

(南钢老郑, 2011). These three categories describe the united cultural, historical, and traditional features to all the ethnicities, which are counted as *ZhonghuaMinzu*. Nowadays *ZhonghuaMinzu* include 56 ethnic groups, however the concept is both cultural and political and according to the authorities, refers to both, people within the PRC and those sharing the historical and cultural concepts, described by Liang Qichao. In this broad definition, the second insist of Xi sends a message of the “superpower China” and national rejuvenation for Chinese ethnicities in the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad. Such a message gives a hint to the incessant connection of China with the Chinese expatriates and ethnic groups living abroad.

After the accomplishing of the great mission of China’s transformation, the main goal of Xi’s diplomatic thought at the international level is a mankind with as hared destiny. After fulfilling the great power ambition, the global governance according to Xi Jinping will be prosperous especially under China’s leadership.

Moreover, domination in the global arena includes the spread of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The socialism building is raised as part of the Chinese diplomacy and not only of the internal political system. It can be interpreted both as “one China” policy and the PRC fundamental demand for the final unification, as well as a part of the “new model of the global governance” (孙伊然, 2018).

Belt and Road Initiative is seen as a tool of the foreign policy. This principle will be essential in China-Africa relations. As it is mentioned in the FOCAC official declaration from September 2018: China and Africa unanimously decided to work together to build responsibility and to promote the “One Belt One Road” cooperation between China and Africa (FOCAC, 2018).

Nonetheless, Xi Jinping continues to rely on the “five principles of peaceful co-existence” as the custom of the Chinese diplomacy to show the sustainable development of the Chinese foreign strategy based on the Chinese socialist tradition (Levtov, 2018). This basic principle is also present in the FOCAC declaration as the framework of the China-Africa relations (FOCAC, 2018).

Interesting to see, that the initial *starting point* addressing China’s sovereignty comes as the ninth out of 10 principles. One of the possible explanations is that the previous insistences gave the necessary legitimation framework to insist on sovereignty rights and nation’s interests, not only internally, but also externally, like, for example, along the “Belt and Road Initiative” and within “one China”, the principles mentioned earlier.

Guojia (国家) can be translated as a state/country and as a nation. Since the official translation claims that China’s sovereignty is the country’s core interest, it supports the CPC’s legitimating as the main guarantor for China’s sovereignty, security, and development. It is an important aspect, who is addressed in this insistence. If the “country” is meant, then the question is, whether the definition includes Hong Kong or not. If it is about the “nation”, then it would also include the relations with Taiwan. This passage claims that internal issues are under the sovereignty of the Communist Party of China and others are not allowed to interfere. This veto on interfering could include the issues with Hong Kong, for example the protests in 2019 and the relations with Taiwan.

Finally, the last closing statement of adapting to the time of changes demonstrates the modern Chinese pragmatism, which syndicates Chinese tradition (till the end of Qing Dynasty and what has become “new tradition” till the beginning of the Xi Jinping’s era) and the need to adapt to the global challenges. In comparison of both texts, the American and the Chinese foreign policy principles, the difference in chosen narrative and particular expressions is well recognized. The Trump’s narrative was more focused on internal issues and national interests, whilst the Chinese one seems to be also willing to achieve leadership in the global order, however based on cooperation and win-win results. Hence, through analysing the connotation of the chosen terminology in the Chinese original text, the nationalist interests have been uncovered and become more obvious, than in its English version.

China is using rhetoric and language in an efficient way during the whole history of the People’s Republic of China. Propaganda banners promoted political and socialist education and strengthen the spread of Maoist thought in the most rural areas. Xi Jinping’s philosophy is codified in official untranslated texts and pragmatically addresses different layers of the civil society. However, the message is formed in such a way, that its English translation will be aligned with the Western political discourse and based on the accepted norms and international law. The translation cannot transform the intention of the original appeal. Its’ laconic rhetoric expresses the Chinese strategies and reveals their main objectives. The Party under Xi Jinping attempts to approach different audiences; international community, bilateral partner, Chinese minorities world-wide, Taiwan, Hong-Kong, the PRC population, political elites, and many others.

3. Chinese Rhetoric and International Relations Theories: Neo-Classical Realism by Gideon Rose and Perspective of IR Theories

International Relations theories suggest different approaches to analyse one country’s behaviour and its interaction with bilateral and multilateral partners. In order to understand Chinese rhetoric and its implementation on the global stage in general and in the Sub-Saharan region in particular, the neo-classical realism, a theory of the international relations discipline could be applied. On one hand, the choice of the realism paradigm could be explained by strongly expressed national interests in the diplomatic philosophy. On the other hand, the above claimed importance of rhetoric and selected narratives, which are usually neglected by the realists, should be included as political tools. This aspect is covered by the neo-classical approach to the realist theory.

One of the most famous adepts of the political realism paradigm, the American scholar John Mearsheimer, has always seen China as an aggressor (Mearsheimer, 2018). According to his interpretation of the basic principles of “realism”, there are three key “beliefs”. Firstly, the realists treat states as the principal actors mainly focused on gaining power. Secondly, they believe that a state’s behaviour is influenced mainly by the external environment. Thirdly, countries compete for power among themselves (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Realism makes five assumptions regarding international system. Firstly, the global order is

characterised by security competition and war, its chaotic nature means that there is no one government above all the governments (Morgenthau, 1973). During the last two centuries, there were different attempts to establish an institution, which will represent equally all the countries' interests, however as a result, a number of international and regional initiatives were recognised by the majority of states, however, one governing global entity has not been established.

Secondly, states are potentially dangerous to each other and their tool for offense is military power (Mearsheimer, 2001). In the 21st century the "super nations" did not stop to gain weaponry and invest into military innovation. Nevertheless "soft", non-coercive power becomes a new way to compete on the international stage (Nye, 1990). Through diplomacy, economic transnational projects as well as high-technology and innovation, countries are trying to claim their supremacy and leadership. The elements of "soft power" theory by Joseph Nye could be found deeply rooted in Chinese political thought. Moreover, for China, the implementation of the "soft power" measures in the "hard" military power is a common practice, for instance, dispatching peacekeepers world-widely (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). In other words, the current international system respects both "soft" and "hard" power interests. Thirdly, states are never certain about other states' intention (Mearsheimer, 2001). Countries' motivations and intentions are not necessarily offensive, some political decisions could be even predicted, however they cannot be also judged as peaceful and cooperative par excellence.

The fourth assumption of the paradigm is that survival is the fundamental desire of great powers. And finally, super nations are rational actors and consider multiple factors in their survival strategy (Mearsheimer, 2001). The pragmatic strategy of Deng Xiaoping is one of the examples of survival strategy implemented successfully in the 20th century. On the international level, he sought to locate China between two superpowers, the USA and the USSR (Taniguchi, 1983). Chinese investments in the Sub-Saharan Africa in natural resources and infrastructure could be also seen as pragmatic decision to guarantee new markets and raw materials for the PRC.

During the 20th century, realism went through different modernizations. In addition to the "classical realism" of Hans J. Morgenthau, which was prevailing mostly from the late 1940s, Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer have suggested two additions of offensive and defensive approaches (Mearsheimer, 2001). This has started a new phase of "neorealism" in the classical paradigm. This new spin of the theory still did not grant enough attention to the internal characteristics (Mearsheimer, 2001) and motives or ideological preferences (Morgenthau, 1973). International relations experts holding on other approaches, like Robert Keohane, who is associated with the neoliberal institutionalism, implement the principles of realism to evolve their own concepts (Keohane, 1984). His theory of hegemonic stability relies on the main realism principle: a state's interest is to gain power. According to Keohane, a hegemon strives to have control over markets, raw materials, sources of capital and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods (Keohane, 1984). In line with Xi Jinping's view on the diplomacy and proven presence of China in the African continent, which allows China to have access to crucial raw materials and to a large market for imports, the theory of Keohane explains both

the appetite of the PRC for the leadership in the global governance and the willing of the states along the Belt and Road Initiative to cooperate. The theory of hegemonic stability predicts that the more one power dominates the world political economy, the more symbiotic interstate relations will be (Keohane, 1984). Within this framework, leadership and hegemonic position is a necessity and a condition to activate the relationship between power capabilities and outcomes (Keohane, 1984). The Chinese ambition to “Lead the reform of the global governance system” (*Yinlingquanqiuzhilitixigaige* 引领全球治理体系改革) serves as a direct example of a global leadership appetite.

The theory of the neoclassical realism, suggested by Gideon Rose in 1998, reconsiders the influential factors on state’s behaviour and includes both *Innenpolitik* and the external environment (Rose, 1998). The theory still belongs to realism, claiming that a country’s foreign policy depends on its place in the international system and relative material power capacities. However, the theory scholars argue that the influence of material capacities on the international affairs is indirect, complex and is influenced by intermediate variables. Neoclassical realists deny the direct link between the material capacities and foreign affairs strategy. They claim that the diplomacy is led by political actors and elites and their perception of the material power and foreign relations influence the-decision-making process (Rose, 1998). This claim explains the U.S. National Security Strategy till 2021, which reflected Donald Trump’s rhetoric, known from the media channels. Contradicting the “classical” and “neorealism” belief, that internal developments do not affect the foreign policy, the neoclassical realism concerns the strength and structure of a state relative to its society. This affects the proportion of the resources dedicated to the diplomacy (Rose, 1998). It means, countries similar in capacities but different in structure are incomparable in their global performance. Systemic factors as well as context are playing an important role in analysing the foreign affairs by neoclassical realism.

Chinese current political reality is a complex system with regional and global interests. Since its official position on achieving global leadership in a variety of spheres, and acquiring new markets through a systemic approach, such as “Go Global” strategy or “Belt and Road Initiative” China’s policy should be evaluated accordingly. The neoclassical realism allows to include different interdisciplinary concepts and to argue that Chinese political thought as well as political rhetoric demand a special and objective analysis, which does not privilege the Western values and does not idealise the Chinese ones (Mao, 2010). Moreover, the theory supports a separate analysis of Chinese foreign strategy, not as a common trend among great powers or as the US rival only. It allows to include systemic approach into the study, focusing on multiple components influencing China’s performance on the international stage and in bilateral relations.

3.1 Chinese Nationalism

The perspective of neoclassical realism allows to include Chinese nationalism as one of the shaping factors of the diplomacy of China. Chinese nationalism as a reaction to the Japanese and Western imperialism advocates the Chinese Communist Party and its regime as the one to return the country’s prestige on the global stage and to succeed in rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The principle includes

two core interests: “one-China” and “Great Power” status in the global order (Bhattacharya, 2007).

Chinese nationalism is not limited only to the CCP’s legitimization tools. It has a deep connection to the Chinese political tradition and history, the accepted narratives in the different groups of the local and international society related to China, and the meaning of used terminology in the original Chinese language. Neoclassical realists would strengthen that the public support is needed for a certain foreign policy and continuous support for the ruling authority (Sorensen, 2013). In her neoclassical realist analysis of the Chinese foreign diplomacy in 2013, Sorensen claimed that China was not ready to take on itself a new role of great power and global leader. Till 2013, China, according to Sorensen, went through challenging phases caused by the internal processes and did not challenge the unipolar global order led by the United States. Gradually the USA has started to reduce its global influence, as Sorensen mentions, it has opened the PRC a window of opportunity to express its “great power” ambitions (Sorensen, 2013). The neoclassical realism allows to address the Xi Jinping’s rhetoric on foreign affairs and Chinese diplomacy principles through textual analysis. By studying the original governmental statements in Chinese language and the process of creation of the political narrative, the intentions of China to achieve both foundations of its nationalism: “great power” and “One China” have been confirmed.

Both concepts are interdependent, and the achievement of one supports the finalisation of the second one. Super-power nation status whilst embraced by members of the international community would support the idea of the unification of China with Taiwan and full integration of Hong Kong into the People’s Republic of China. According to Keohane’s theory of hegemonic stability, Chinese global leadership will gradually attract more supporters on the international stage. Global leadership is a long-term goal and could be achieved step by step, starting from accomplishing peripheral interests and progressing to the leadership position in the multipolar global order. As it will be shown further, the Chinese involvement in the development of the African continent serves both the Chinese leadership ambition and gains support for the “One China” policy by the African states (FOCAC, 2018). By achieving consensus on its core interests in the Sub-Saharan region, China, based on the African support, might continue to promote its leadership in other regions. The fitting framework for this strategy is the Belt and Road Initiative, which guarantees gradual power gaining.

Xi’s administration is granting importance on constructing a narrative, which approaches simultaneously both internal and external public. The importance of political rhetoric and constructed paradigm is not a specific feature of Xi Jinping’s government. “The five principles of peaceful coexistence” of Mao has addressed both the international customary law and the Chinese domestic interests in the international relations (Levtov, 2018). “A new type of great power relations” (*XinxingDaguo Guanxi* 新型大国关系) is a relatively new paradigm of the CPC related to the “global governance” and the “super nation” principle (Heberer, 2015). Heberer’s approach justifies the Chinese peripheral involvement and creation of multipolar global order which limits the responsibility towards the international society, as in a unipolar system and increases the chances of China to

approach leadership concept in a quantitative and not qualitative way (Heberer, 2015). Multipolarity is less offensive towards the other strong nations and especially the United States and gives China in the current dispute with the Donald Trump's administration a character of bilateral conflict rather than a conflict over the global dominance. Focusing on regional and segmental leadership, allows China to win the time and gradually implement the national strategies, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, "Made in China 2025" and others. Nevertheless, both Western scholars and contemporary Chinese political rhetoric proves that China is striving to become a super nation and to be accepted as a leader of the global order system.

Various sources of the political analysis have given different prediction dates to China to become the biggest economic power and to leave behind the United States. *The Economist* mentioned 2019, Goldman Sachs 2027 and the International Monetary Fund 2016 (Spakowski, 2016). From the perspective of 2021, we can see the disputes among the two rivals, the USA and China, however, there is no clear evidence of the Chinese unequivocal supremacy. Nevertheless, the existing conflict with the States does not prevent the PRC to spread its diplomacy principles regionally and to continue implementing its Belt and Road Initiative.

4. Theories Fusion

The neoclassical approach towards the realism is expanding the framework of the Chinese foreign affairs strategy analysis. It allows to study the internal factors and discourse as influential components of the foreign diplomacy. However, as the theory experts confirm by themselves, there is no one unique explanation which can be used to all the case studies (Sorensen, 2013). Moreover, the origin of the international relations paradigm is the Western philosophy and political thought. Whilst applying the theories to the Chinese reality it is important to take into consideration the necessity to keep objective balance and to include the Chinese historical and political background, sociocultural conditions, and structure of the political narration (Mao, 2010).

Considering the importance of the original discourse and the meaning of the used paradigms in the political storytelling, I suggest analysing the original Chinese texts, to adapt a symbiotic approach towards the study. The Chinese foreign strategy is a soft power tool; therefore, its narrative should be analysed. There is a created discourse by the Communist Party of China which currently works in both external and internal directions. I suggest studying the political discourse creation around the foreign affairs and its influence on the chosen audience, the "space", an intellectual context, where this discourse should be embedded and the consequences of the created political storytelling.

4.1 Discourse of Foucault

Constructivism, as one of the paradigms of the international relations, considers "discourse" as an important tool for shaping political reality, and was for decades contradicting to the principles of realism. With the revolution of the realist theory, Michel Foucault's concept of discourse was recognized as shaping component of a state's foreign policy (Brand, 2005). Discourse, as a social

construct raised by those, who have power, communication tools and media access, defines the main principles for a society, such as truth and morality, and shapes this society's perception (Foucault 1981). Foucault understood discourse as influential for the material world, producing practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Applicable to the political thought, discourse creates knowledge together with social practices as a form of subjectivity and power relations (Foucault 1981). Being constructed on purpose to support certain ideas and needs, discourse constitutes roles, spreads authority and produces power (Weedon, 1997). Based on Weedon's interpretation of the Foucauldian thought, discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the "nature" of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1997). Another interpretation claims that discourse is a form of power that circulates in a social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance (Diamond & Quinby, 1988).

"Global governance", "great power" and "leadership" are paradigms, which include a set of values and establish around themselves related political discourse. Due to globalisation and institutionalization of the international relations, there is an accepted understanding of these terms, based on the meaning of the words used in the official languages of diplomacy, mostly English and French, and its integration in the existing spaces. For analysing the Chinese political narrative, it is crucial to study possible interpretation of these paradigms in Chinese language and the discourse around these models, like it was demonstrated earlier. The emphasised examples of different Chinese characters used for the English words "lead" and "leadership" show careful message building, same as definition of the steps as fundamental demands, historical missions, basic principles. It grants Xi Jinping's political legitimation as the official China's paradigm on diplomacy. It is in line with the Chinese socialist political tradition and promotes the national interests.

Recognizing the importance of the political myth, the Communist Party of China is cultivating the idea of the "Chinese model of the global governance" and "great power nation" by creating a validating discourse. The doctrines of the "global governance" (*quanqiu zhili* 全球治理), "great power" (*daguo* 大国) and others are frequently repeated in official documents and speeches of the Party's political leaders, as well as in the statements of think-tanks and research groups (苏宁等, 2018). Kendall and Wickham outline in Foucauldian discourse the process of spaces formation in which new statements can be made and created and gives the framework for statements which can be said and which not (Kendall & Wickham, 1998). Shaping an appropriate space for adopting a certain discourse could be a constructed and conscious process. However, using Foucauldian methods, both scholars suggest being cautious regarding two following remarks: it is critical to look for contingencies instead of causes and stay sceptical regarding the political arguments (Kendall & Wickham, 1998). This argument leads to a conclusion, that discourse maintains the process of space formation. However, despite the attempts to construct a space to guarantee the efficiency of discourse influence, the space still includes certain unpredicted elements causing a variety of unpredictable probabilities. In other words, the created space

cannot be fully controlled and might include unpredictable consequences as well.

4.2 Production of Space by Henri Lefebvre and Structures of Feeling by Raymond Williams

Lefebvre's approach to production of space reveals a claim that space is unlimited and thus empty, yet at the same time it is full of "juxtapositions, of proximities ("proxemics"), of emotional distances and limits" (Lefebvre, 1991). Space is not a thing and not a "vessel". It is a product of social activity and a mean of production, a social reality and set of interrelations and forms. Social space is "always, and simultaneously, both a field of action [...] and a basis of action; it interrelates "everything that is produced either by nature or by society" (Lefebvre, 1991). Therefore, space cannot be totally constrained by any group or individual. Nevertheless, space is impacted by multiple narratives and causes.

By evoking "space", it should be indicated what occupies that space and how it was produced: the deployment of energy in relation to "points" and within a time frame. Space considered in isolation, not within an outline of time, is an empty abstraction (Lefebvre, 1991). For this reason, the created space containing Xi Jinping narratives is connected in multiple ways to time. It is not only directly referring to the era of Xi Jinping, but also to the glorious past and even more magnificent future of the PRC. Moreover, it has phases which are strongly connected to the time periods. For example, the "Made in China 2025" strategy speaks about gradual gain of technological power till the fulfilment of the global leadership goal in three steps (State Council/Guowuyuan, 2015). Social space is delineated and has physical and conceptual frontiers. Political and social borders of a nation-state specify the boundaries of the created space and are dictated by those in power (Fuchs, 2019). For example, the social space of the "Made in China 2025" phrased in Chinese, addresses the People's Republic of China and other Chinese speaking groups world-wide. Such a space should have an active presence to become a social consciousness (Williams, 1977). Therefore, the key principles of the "Made in China 2025" narrative might be repetitive and reflected in other official documents, statements of the political elites as well as practiced physically.

In a concrete social space, language and cultural background are used in discourse production and define social relations. In communication, humans, institutions, and power actors create and maintain social relations by making use of language (Fuchs, 2019). Communication is a concrete process that connects social space and mental space of a person and a society (Williams, 2005). Williams claims a correlation among personal and formal beliefs, values, and meanings in historical and cultural perspective. There is a nuanced interaction between private (selected and interpreted) beliefs and acted and justified by the social space experiences (Williams, 1977). Moreover, language differs from generation to generation (Williams, 1977). Therefore, the constructed discourse should take these nuances into consideration and address different angles of a concrete social space. In other words, a constructed discourse, which includes specified narratives, addresses concrete social beliefs, cultural sentiments, and personal values in order to form a necessary supportive space for realisation of political goals and interests. Interdependence of a discourse and a personal sensibility within a given space

influences the success of a political strategy's implementation.

To conclude, a social space could be shaped but cannot be fully controlled due to the endless components of this space. In order to manage a discourse for achieving concrete goals, it is important to define time frame and recipients of narratives, their values and beliefs. Within this given context, language as a way to communicate a message is an important tool, so-called "space within a space", which grants discourse its characteristics.

A political discourse could include several narratives serving different political interests of a governing power. For better employment of a discourse for political matters, political stake holders take actions to produce their version of a [social] space. Usually limited by time, physical and cultural boundaries, space affects the interaction of elements within this space, but stays unlimited and unpredictable in its outgrowth. A constructed discourse within a space tries to affect individual agents, also groups of individuals, and expands to further societies. If language is a tool for spreading a message, and a context of a social space supports narrative's adoption, in a case of spreading beyond the boundaries of the original space, a message should be compliant with the context of a space it tries to penetrate.

In the era of globalisation, it could be estimated that a narrative should be also accepted on the universal level, to be perceived as a common sense. Nevertheless, it is still a sort of wishful thinking to achieve a global perception on narratives, because there is no agreement on one global hegemon, and it doesn't serve political interests of the international players. Moreover, with the whole development of the modern science, there are still adepts of the "Flat Earth Society" (Note 1) and other subjective beliefs, therefore a global consensus is not realistic.

4.3 "Affectivity" of Chinese Contemporary Discourse

Based on Raymond Williams' research, D. Sharma and F. Tygstrup suggest a term of "affective space", a virtual environment, which is created to maintain a certain discourse (Sharma & Tygstrup, 2015). Affectivity has to do with matters of soul, it addresses the personal and becomes part of the consciousness. Affective space is an influential system of explanation and argument (Williams, 1977). An "affective space" in the political discourse is created through using a codified language, a set of terms and abbreviations, accurately chosen in advance. Because each generation speaks a language already contrasting with the language of its predecessors, narratives should be adapted to the relevant context (Williams, 1977). Sharma and Tygstrup interpret "affectivity" of Williams with matter of the soul and "attunement" of the human being (Sharma & Tygstrup, 2015). The modern Chinese political pragmatism chooses an narration style of approaching the current social experience with underlined modern aspects as well as the cultural heritage of the previous generations.

Therefore, affectivity is possible to be reached in different environments- social spaces: domestic, regional and international. In other words, to achieve a concrete political goal, a specific discourse is needed. However, all the contextual conditions must be respected. To be used pragmatically according to the political needs, a constructed discourse should include narratives which are compliant with the concrete contextual needs of a specific social space. The condition of creating the relevant narrative is

to recognise the accepted cultural patterns of the target audience and address them directly using a relevant “language”. Nevertheless, the principle of Lefebvre of unlimited and unpredictable space excludes consensus on accepting a certain narrative. However, the more social spaces will accept partly or fully a certain discourse, the closer a power group will be to achieving its political goal.

5. Filling the Space with Narrative: 3 Pillars of a Successful Affectivity

Taking into consideration the theoretical framework of the previous chapters, the following part of the study will search for the key expressions and new paradigms, which are created to fill the space and nourish the discourse in favour of the political interests in internal and foreign affairs. These particular examples are considered to influence the “affectivity” of the space due to their connection to the existing culture, social beliefs and history, as well as anxieties and concerns.

The People’s Republic of China led by the Xi Jinping’s administration uses different paradigms in their foreign policies and internal messages to the civil society. ‘In his speech at the Party’s press conference on February 19th, 2016, Xi has stated that it is important to follow rules of news dissemination, innovative methods to establish a system of discourse in external communication and enhance the right to speak internationally (Liu, 2016). Moreover, the article claims that Xi Jinping has “repeatedly stressed that it is necessary to strengthen the capacity building of international communication, carefully construct the system of foreign discourse, enhance the creativity, charisma and credibility to present positively the story of China, to spread its voice and explain China’s characteristics (Liu 2016). Among the Chinese references there are several rising up paradigms, which are appealing to both internal and externally public. The expressions used in the original text are chosen in the way, their English translation will address the international society with the accepted formulations and terminology. The Chinese characters, on the contrary emphasize another information. For example, commonly used expression “super nation” or “great power”, which Western scholars have been applying to describe the USA and the USSR during the cold war and continued using towards America after the Cold War period. China also claims to be called “super nation”, however the characters used in Chinese for this principle regarding the USA, the USSR and Japan, for example, differ from the characters used for the PRC. China names itself 大国 (*daguo*), whilst others are called 强国 (*qiangguo*). 大 (*da*) can be translated as big/large/great, related to size, and 国 (*guo*)—as country/nation/state. Both words do not have a direct “threatening” meaning. *Daguo* synonym, *qiangguo* (强国) includes the character 强 (*qiang*), meaning strong/powerful/to force/strengthen. For instance USSR superpower—“qiangguosulian” (强国苏联) and Japan superpower “qiangguoriben” (强国日本) (Renmin ribao, 2018). In its discussions on the “Chinese new model of the global order” China is promoting a new form of “great nation relations” 大国关系 (*daguo guanxi* 大国关系), using same characters for great power as it uses towards itself. Clearly, the model is not referring to a theoretical great power, but to China itself as the image of great power.

China’s initiative to promote a new type of big powers relationship during the transitional period of

leadership and collective leadership marks China's active construction of diplomatic theory, international strategy and policy measures (Yang, 2013). Moreover, it could be also proposed a different interpretation, that China does not claim the status of *qiangguo* due to the responsibilities connected to the "super nation" status. Domestically, China is still suffering from different problems and is counted as developing country and towards its population the message is that China is a "big country"- *daguo* geographically and defiantly has "global leadership" ambitions, but it is still in transition to become *qiangguo*. It is demonstrated in the "Made in China 2025" policy through the claim to achieve the strategic goal of (becoming) manufacturing "great power" (*qiangguo*) in "three steps" (Guowuyuan, 2015). Nevertheless, whilst mentioning the final stage to be achieved towards the 100 years jubilee of the People's Republic of China, *daguo* is still used to characterise China as "manufacturing super nation" entering the forefront of the world's manufacturing "great powers" (*qiangguo*) (Guowuyuan, 2015).

According to Immanuel C.Y. Hsu (Zhao, 2000) before the 19th century China did not share the features of the nation state. Culturalism and not nationalism prevailed in the traditional Chinese society. However, the Chinese defeat in the Opium War of 1839-1842 pushed the local elites to adopt the European concepts of nationalism (Zhao, 2000). Out of this bitterness, an idea of China returning its grace and restoring its position as a great power has become the leading motive of the Chinese leaders' discourse. This "great power" idea is the core of the modern Chinese nationalism (Zhao, 2000).

During the 20th century, the political elites have developed three approaches to "make China's rejuvenation": nativism, anti- traditionalism and pragmatism. Therefore, the constructed discourse of the fifth generation of Chinese government contains a unique type of pragmatism, which maintains all the best practices from the previous generations and interpretations of the Western values and norms implemented in the charters and treaties of the international institutions. In other words, the current Chinese political discourse has an open space for interpretation and leaves every involved party satisfied, because it refers to the essential values of every focus group.

Nativism, Anti-traditionalism and Pragmatism

"*Qiangguo Meng*" (强国梦-Great Power Dream) or "*Zhongguo Meng*" (中国梦- China's Dream), the idea of Chinese rejuvenation has become the leading political thought of China's domestic and foreign policy (Taylor, 2017). Previously "dream" was not used as a term of political strategy. The new narrative, however, contains traditional nativism with the modern profit-oriented pragmatism (Chai/Chai, 2013). To achieve the China's Dream, political elite is searching to reach a consensus internally and also between the party and the domestic population (Noesselt, 2017). Moreover, the narrative is addressing the international society by precisely chosen formulation, which in translation to English fit the Western narrative of great power behaviour (Mohanty, 2013). In a closer analysis, this narrative has references to three different approaches, nativism, anti-traditionalism and pragmatism. All three are uniquely combined in the message in order to address different groups of interest.

Nativism suggests sticking to the traditional Confucian principles and its fundamental nationalism

(*Rujiayuanjiaozhiminzuzhuyi* 儒家原教旨民族主义). Chinese recovery is in the resistance to foreign influence and pressure. The true independence, according to the nativism supporters, comes through appreciating the traditional principles for gaining the national confidence and strength (Xiao, 1996). Despite the devotion to the tradition, this concept is neglecting imperialism and strives to establish a modern nation-state. One of the examples of nativism's implementation is Mao's policy of 自理更生 (*zi li geng sheng* self-reliance). Zhao names the Boxer Rebellion and the Cultural Revolution as two main periods of a strong nativism expression (Zhao, 2000). The attempt to isolate China from the rest of the world was motivated by the idea to minimize the external dependency and the influence of the capitalist world system. However, this approach did not find supporters in the end of 1970s and in 1980s, and the reforms of Deng Xiaoping replaced the old ideological doctrines.

In contrast to *nativism*, anti-traditionalism sees the Chinese weakness in its tradition. The contradiction was especially expressed in the boundless adoption of the Western values and culture. The anti-traditional thoughts have been rising a few times during the 20th century. From the "May Fourth" movement in 1919 through the Maoist era to Deng's reforms, there have been repeated attacks on China's cultural heritage (Zhao, 2000). Mao tended to use the antitraditional discourse in his approach towards the traditional Chinese culture of "feudal legacies". The early stages of the Cultural Revolution have expressed this strong antagonism towards all traditional, so-called the four olds: ideas, customs, culture and habits (Durdin, 1971). Nevertheless, this period was a mixture of both nativist anti-Western and antitraditional sentiments (Zhao, 2000).

As an antithesis to both, *pragmatism* explains the nation's weakness by foreign economic exploitation and cultural infiltration. According to this, lack of modernisation has made China vulnerable to Western imperialism. Pragmatists would use any tools to achieve their dream to make China a great power again. Deng's expression regarding the cat, whose colour is irrelevant, black or white, as long as it can catch rats is the expression of the pragmatic approach before Xi (Zhao, 2000).

Through its adherence to the national interests in the foreign policy and scientific development, Xi Jinping could be considered as a neo-pragmatist. His approach differs from the one of Deng Xiaoping. Xi Jinping's era happens in the time of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which opens for China a window of opportunities to leverage its ambitions for growth and development to the leadership level. Based on the latest technological innovation of connectivity and visualisation, Chinese Belt and Road Initiative as well as "Go Global" outwards foreign investment policy enables the PRC under Xi Jinping's regime not only to gain the political and economic power, but also to spread its soft power of values and norms. Therefore, the "new model of the global order" of China has chances to be adopted by the regional Chinese partners and to spread globally. Through the structure of his political messages, Xi reaches out to adepts of the nativist and anti-traditionalist thought and still stay perceived as an attractive partner for the members of the international community. By choosing a special terminology in the official statements, which is translated to English in the way, it illustrates the major buzzwords of the Western political thought, Xi's administration appeases both internal and external communities,

spreads concrete messages to the Chinese speaking groups abroad and different circles internally.

5.1.1 《新型大国关系》 *XinxingDaguo Guanxi-New Model of Super Power Relations*

Modern diplomacy discourse repeatedly employs the terminology of “global governance” or “global order”, “leadership” and “cooperation”. Chinese scientific societies are publishing research works on the Chinese new model of global governance (Sun, 2018). This discourse is known also as “Rising China”, “Asian Century” and more. It focuses on three major dimensions: space (East vs. West), time (present vs. future, which should be same gorgeous as the past) and position on the global arena (Chinese guidance/leadership vs. Western domination).

Spakowski suggests looking from the global historical perspective, however, ignoring the common focus on the Western world development, to recognise that during the last thirty years we are experiencing not a rapid raise of China, but “re-emergence”, “restoration” or even “renaissance” (Spakowski, 2016). In other words, as it is described in the concept of China’s rejuvenation, mentioned previously in the “Ten Insistences on Diplomatic Thought” of Xi Jinping. Interpretation of China’s performance on the international arena is a matter of the analysis perspective. To reach the full picture, the Western perspective is not enough. However, the Chinese prism should be also analysed with certain scepticism, understanding that the Chinese discourse is subjective and serves particular political interests.

The global discourse regarding the “Asian Century” or the “Chinese Dominance” is produced not only by the open media sources and political analysts but also by the international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. The institutes are influencing through their reports and global-scale economic data (Spakowski, 2016). There is no global consensus regarding China’s rise in the last decade, there is enough speculation on related data, which gives feeling of uncertainty and perception of threat.

Perhaps, the western boom around the rising China was pragmatically used by the Chinese government. The Communist Party of China, being aware of rhetoric and discourse importance tries to recreate the image of the global leader and great power which was, from their perspective, unreasonably neglected due to the turbulences of the last 150 years. The most prominent example is the restoration of the “Silk Road” through the modern “Belt and Road Initiative”. However, it is important to comprehend the project as a huge network of different trade routes and regional supply chains and their mechanisms nourishing the central project. From the political strategy perspective, the success of the full BRI project might indicate relationships of cooperation and interdependency of the states which are included into this framework. The relationship with the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation members could serve as example of a strong network which is not only involved in realisation of the initiative, but also in the political interests’ fulfilment (FOCAC, 2018). African counterparts embrace Chinese leadership and support Chinese policies as part of the cooperation relations. In this way, the overlap of commercial and political interests in the region supports the general agenda of the “Chinese rejuvenation” and the “new model of the superpower relations”. China suggests an alternative to the Western dominance, by

providing aid and cooperation without direct interference into the internal politics of a partnering state.

5.1.2 Shift in Position on the Global Arena (Chinese Guidance/Leadership vs. Western Domination)

Through analysing the official Chinese political statements and white papers on “global governance” and “new global order” it can be seen that China claims to offer an alternative to the Western perception of the “global order”. The PRC claims to be ready to take over the global leadership not only in the technological development, as it is presented in the “made in China 2025” policy (国务院, 2015) and the “Artificial Intelligence Development Report” of 2018 (清华大学中国科技政策研究中心, 2018). China also sees itself as responsible leader on the international stage. As a contradiction to the capitalist western powers, the alternative approach to the bilateral relations on the global stage, according to *Xinxing Daguo Guanxi*, is not a new narrative of the Xi Jinping administration, but a sustainable tradition started in the first decade of the PRC’s existence.

The famous Chinese principle of “non-interference” is celebrating its 65th anniversary due to the unique effectiveness on domestic level as well as on the regional level of Chinese foreign policy. Its discourse “space” was cultivated during all these years and was always adapted to the current existing discourse. All this became possible through its original flexible interpretation or lack of detailed description of the principle’s application, which has kept for the CPC a manoeuvre space for political decisions. Moreover, the “non-interference” does not contradict the international customary law, which grants China legitimisation of its actions under this principle (Levtov, 2018).

To become a great power nowadays, China should serve the needs of several political narratives. First, the Chinese rhetoric should address the known and accepted terminology of the domestic Chinese discourse, however, it should carry a message of ability to embrace changes and coherence to the gaining political and economic power goal. Second, Chinese positioning should address the regional discourse in a way it would not provoke conflicts, and third, it should not underminedirectly the accepted international (western) norms. In this case, the traditional paradigms related to the international relations, such as “principle of non-interference” should get an updated interpretation and use cases and be aligned with current political strategies.

A gradual way of spreading the influence and achieving “China-centred region order” supports China in promoting its leadership position without provoking serious conflicts. According to Heberer, world’s division into the spheres of influence helps China to avoid conflicts with other great powers (Heberer, 2015). Nevertheless, the current US-China dispute shows that the US feels its “great power” threatened. Moreover, creation of such spheres and spreading the influences contradicts to the traditional paradigm of “non-interference”, because regional or global leader status potentially includes an active, even if indirect involvement into the domestic politics of the counterparts. Aid, loans and investments agreed with a local government, might change internal balance of powers and cause tacit interference into the domestic politics. The Communist Party of China cannot publicly turn away from the basic principles of the Maoist approach towards the foreign policy. To avoid a need in a new paradigm is to update the discourse around the old one, to modernise its interpretation or to make re-contextualisation of a

paradigm. These considerations are reflected in the terminology chosen for the purpose of promoting the Chinese global leadership. Chinese character for leadership 引导 (*yindao*) is carrying features of moderate guidance and not of a definite patronage or dictatorship as its' synonym 领导 (*lingdao*). Taking into consideration, that English meaning would be perceived in both cases as “leadership”, Chinese meaning of these two concepts need to be analysed from the Chinese social space perspective. Therefore, the original Chinese characters chosen to express these meanings should be revised separately with examples of their implementation in text. Leadership in the meaning of a strong, forcing position would be translated as 领导 (*lingdao*), the most frequently used characters for China's “leadership” in the original contemporary texts are 引导 (*yindao*) -translated as guidance. 引导 (guidance) could be mostly seen as applied towards China, while 领导 (leadership) is used towards the USA: “我国有能力引导世界能源变革” (*woguo you nengliyingdaoshijienengyuanbiange*, China has the ability to guide world's resources transformation) (王软辰, “经济日报”, 2017) . “中国挑战美国的全球领导地位吗?” (*Zhongguotiaozhanmeiguo de quanqiulingdaodiwei ma?*)

Does China challenge the global leadership of the United States?) (BBC 中文, 2017). Since the different use of the terms is done especially in Chinese, it becomes clear that the message is addressing mostly the Chinese community (Zhonghuaminzu 中华民族) as imagined by the political elite. In addition to the domestic target groups, such as political elites, opposing groups and the general population, China aims to reach those, who are included into the “one China” principle, the population of Taiwan; and to send an appeased message to Hong Kong. Moreover, it also speaks to the Chinese ethnic descendants 中华民族 (*zhonghuaminzu*) abroad in order to strengthen the Chinese lobby in the influential circles of politics, academy and business.

This paradigm (*tifa* 提法) appeases possible fears regarding the image of China as an aggressor. Nevertheless, in the original Chinese narrative is added an extra implication and discloses to the Chinese speaking public the image of the PRC as peaceful leader compared to the Western counterparts. Most of the Chinese decisions in the post-Mao period could be seen as pragmatic and therefore are serving the national interests and align with the official strategies.

Precise terminology in the official statements indicates the importance granted by the CPC to the rhetoric and creation of the relevant discourse. Sources, which are not the official state documents, but media references, show the degree of the political influence and its narrative penetration into the press. It makes sense, since media channels nowadays are the fastest forwarders of narratives to the target groups. Attention to translation nuances of the chosen rhetoric reveal the intention of the authorities to demonstrate that China claims for the leadership not from a position of power and offense but from an alternative to the Western “strong” and “imposing” leadership position of guidance.

Therefore, it can be concluded that China suggests a new type of a global order with a shifted focus on China as an alternative global leader, which agrees for multipolarities and wins its partnerships through “guiding” a counterpart to the mutual interdependency instead of imposing its lead.

5.2 Shift in Time: Present vs. Future

New narratives need to be felt natural and be adjusted to the existing discourse to become long-living and relevant. For these purposes, the theory of *affective spaces* describes the mechanism for creation of discourse and adaptation of new paradigms. Based on the analyses of the effectiveness of the “non-interference principle” in the Chinese diplomacy, affective space created around such principle needs to possess the three above-described elements: nativism, anti-traditionalism and pragmatism. In case of the “non-interference principle” as well as other principles out of the “five principles of peaceful co-existence” (*hepinggongchuwuxianyuance* 和平共处五项原则) due to the broad interpretation stay beyond time, and, therefore, are relevant until today. The Mao’s heritage of the principle guarantees the connection to the traditional practices of the Chinese diplomacy and the broad interpretation, which could be adjusted to the modern needs of the foreign policy appeals to the pragmatic approach. Through involving all the three elements, an affective space is created. This “space” simultaneously addresses different sorts of feelings within the target audience without contradiction to the most up to dated discourse. It reminds about the previous glory, the suffer of the generations and speeded up growth of the current period, which will lead to the rejuvenation of the country. This affective space is influential both, internally by being clear to the Chinese population, and externally showing the international community, that China is relying on three strong pillars: international customs, its own political tradition and agility, which is currently necessary to guarantee development and growth. This affectivity is strongly connected to the dimension of time. The narrative finds its legitimation in the memories of the “past” both, domestically through connection to the historical events and tradition, and internationally by showing a sign of sustainable strategy which respects the past agreements and customs.

Time aspect in the gradual plan for closing the gap with the developed world and achieving the leading position is strongly presented in the “made in China 2025” strategy (国务院, 2015) as well as in other developing projects, such as “Belt and Road Initiative” and “New Maritime Silk Road” (苏宁等, 2018). These strategies have phases and are scalable from the perspective of time. The amorphous “rejuvenation” paradigm in the Chinese interpretation turns into the concrete “leadership” project which might achieve also a new global order.

“Made in China 2025” policy, for instance, has a specified time frame for realisation of the strategic goal to become the leading manufacturing super nation world-wide till 2049. (国务院, 2015). The process should be completed in three steps. First step includes two stages: till 2020 such processes as industrialisation, digitalisation of the production, manufacturing and other industrial means should be completed. Energy and material consumption, as well as pollution should be decreased. Till 2025 the quality of the production and the full manufacturing process should be compliant with standards of the developed countries. The second step should be finalised towards 2035 with achieving even higher level of the industrial progress and competitive quality of the manufacturing with the great powers. The final goal of the leadership position among the manufacturing super nations should be achieved

towards the 100 years' jubilee of the PRC (国务院, 2015). These phases are measurable and represent the change towards the better future. The Five-Years Plan, another method of planning economic growth over limited periods of time, the implemented practice from the Soviet Union, is widely spread in the PRC (人民网, 2011). Xi Jinping's strategy of "made in China 2025" differentiates itself from the Five-Year Plan through addressing the international community, by setting the goal to close the gap, to reach the same quality level of production and towards the PRC's jubilee to enter the forefront of the existing great powers. It symbolises the accomplishment of the "rejuvenation" mission, the benchmark of the Xi Jinping era, and shows the way Xi uses the factor of time to detach his rule from the previous generations, and with this showing that under his command the big shift towards the goal of the global leader has been set up. This could also symbolise the shift from Deng Xiaoping's China to the new China of Xi Jinping.

5.3 Shift in (Geographical) Space: East vs. West

To become a global leader, a superpower needs to speak the "same language" with the rest of the international community, or at least with the important global players. However, after taking a leadership, nothing prevents the new hegemon to shape the existing discourse according to its needs, to guarantee sustainable growth of its influence in the region. For example, China is actively involved in shaping new consensuses in the Asian region. Xi Jinping's words at the "Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2014, emphasise this idea. He speaks about the need of establishing cooperative and sustainable security which will be guaranteed by development in the region. This statement of the PRC, a key trade and investment partner in the region promotes China as the major provider of such development (Heberer, 2015). At ASEAN regional forum Chinese official representatives and the Vice Foreign Minister, Liu Zhenmin continue with this concept and are warning the participating member states from the foreign intervention to the regional disputes and processes, meaning the USA as the biggest troublemaker. Moreover, he strengthens the positioning of China as the main responsible for stability and progress in the developing countries (Heberer, 2015). In the book "Global Development Politics and China's Program" (*Quanjufazhanzhiliyuzhongguofangan 全球发展治理与中国方案*) it is stated that China is willing to be involved in the development programs globally and continue supporting on regions in need. Chinese contribution to the African continent's economic growth and continuous partnership relations is one of the Chinese ways to lead global processes and to stay involved in the global governance (Sun, 2018). It illustrates the peripheral diplomacy initiative of Xi Jinping and the Chinese soft power in action. According to the official statements of Xi's administration in 2013, China's periphery diplomacy aims to bring the PRC development to these regions to keep stable and close relationship of cooperation in these areas (Glaser and Pal, 2013).

On the global stage, suggested changes in the accepted Western leadership paradigm could be seen through the Chinese proposal to the United Nations to accept a principle of Responsible Protection (RP). By reinterpreting the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P)-UNSC Resolution 1973, which authorises military intervention for civilian protection purposes, RuanZonghe modifies the R2P approach

concept by forcing to limit the legitimation for an intervention and to deal with the consequences of an armed mediation (Ruan, 2012). The “Responsible Protection” was following the concept of “Responsibility while Protecting” previously suggested by Brazil and widely supported by the Western powers (Garwood-Govers, 2014). According to the R2P, if a state fails to stop “serious harm” to its population, a military intervention for humanitarian purposes will be executed by the UN Security Council (UNSC). R2P does not belong to the customary international law, but is a multi-faceted political concept based on the existing principles (Garwood-Govers, 2014). Since the R2P is not a custom, updates and proposals from the UNSC member states could, in theory, change the implementation of the concept without creating any additional legal duties for international players. Chinese proposal of a new formulation and different interpretation of the conditions to the intervention and responsibility related to the consequences of an armed involvement, shows its intention to shift the focus of the international normative discourse from the Western dominance towards the Eastern (Chinese). In closer look, Chinese RP still recognises the need for non-consensual military interventions under the R2P, although more restrictive conditions must be applied (Garwood-Govers, 2014). This way, the PRC represents a non-Western responsible leadership which raises the non-Western normative narratives on use of power and state’s sovereignty. The RP principle does not contradict the “non-interference” concept, due to the reactive (instead of the proactive) nature of the proposed protection. However, it allows China to spread the message of its responsible leadership and action within the international community. In this way, the PRC protects its positions in the areas of interest and positions itself as a reliable partner. After mass crimes against humanity in the 1990s, like in Rwanda, Kosovo and other geographies, unstable regions are mostly counted as developing and might include the BRI infrastructure or other investment and strategic assets of the PRC. The RP is not only a positive message towards the sovereignty of these states, but also a promise to minimize the negative consequences if an intervention still will be enforced (Ruan, 2012).

Three years after the Responsible Protection was suggested by Ruan Zhonghe and a year after the analysis of Andrew Garwood-Govers, an article of Oliver Stuenkel from the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) in Sao Paulo summed up both sources. According to Stuenkel, Chinese proposal of the RP as a reaction on Syria-related resolutions is not a new normative “normal”, but rather a pragmatic strategic decision (Stuenkel, 2015). The PRC is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and qualified to take part in the future military interventions on the UN behalf. Under these circumstances, the Chinese proposal, even if it will not be fully ratified and supported, is welcomed as an opportunity to engage with an actor that will play a key role in mass crimes prevention in the future (Stuenkel, 2015). Moreover, the Chinese RP approach appeases the neighbouring states feeling threatened by China’s assertive rise (Thakur, 2013). Chinese positioning on the international stage as a responsible stakeholder in the global order and its’ claims for the “new model of the superpower relations” show a strategy for sharing perception of China as a global leading superpower.

It can be concluded that China expands its peripheral diplomacy to other regions, such as Sub-Saharan

Africa, which historically has a developed infrastructure of relationship with China through South-South cooperation, supports the progress of the relationship and helps to reach the political goals faster. Based on previous discussion, it can be assumed that China adopts the new paradigm of global leader also in the Chinese-African relations.

The affective space of the “non-interference” principle plays a critical role in these relations. Due to the internal political processes in each of the Sub-Saharan countries, the “non-interference principle” does not lose its relevance. First, it refers to the history of the Chinese support in the decolonisation period and guarantees Chinese neutrality to the internal political processes. From the second half of the 20th century the West has tried to trade in different “development packages” which has been connected to political reforms and internal changes, whereas China has proven itself to be loyal to its own diplomatic principles. Second, the “non-interference” principle does not contradict the international law and the UN Charter principles, which does not put African countries in front of the hard choice between eastern and western sides. Third, the principle allows a broad variety of interpretations and pragmatically fits to the modern political discourse. It is applicable in diplomatic issues as it can be seen in “Responsible Protection”. Based on these conditions, the new affective space is ready to include the idea of the Chinese global leadership, because it avoids touching the pain points of the counterparts. In combination with the “principle of non-interference” in particular and the “five principles of peaceful co-existence” in general, the idea of Chinese leadership in South-South cooperation countries is a serious competitor to the structural adjustment of the West. It could explain the relative success of the Chinese strategic programs and initiatives to be welcomed on the African continent.

6. Adapting of the Chinese nationalist discourse in the Sub-Saharan Region

One of the prominent examples of the affective space’s soft power in the Chinese-African diplomacy is the official documents of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, FOCAC. In the FOCAC rhetoric the growing strength of China as a regional leader can be clearly demonstrated. The latest mutual declaration officially states the leadership status of China through emphasizing the agreed African support on the major Chinese needs: “one China” policy and the “Belt and Road Initiative” (MFA, Beijing Declaration-Toward an Even Stronger China-Africa Community with a Shared Future, 2018). Paragraph 1.4 declares:

The two sides believe that China is the largest developing country and is working hard to realize the “two (times) hundred years” of struggle goal and realize the **Chinese dream** of the **great rejuvenation** of the Chinese nation (*shixian Zhonghuaminzu weidafuxing de zhongguo meng* 实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦)... The two sides will take the opportunity of jointly building the “**Belt and Road**” (*shuangfang jiang yigongjian “yidaiyilu”* 双方将以共建“一带一路”) to strengthen all-round, wide-area and in-depth cooperation to achieve win-win cooperation and common development” (FOCAC, 2018).

In the same declaration, the 53 FOCAC African members (Note 2) declare in the paragraph 8: *We agree*

to continue to give each other firm support in upholding territorial integrity, sovereignty, security and development interests. African members of FOCAC reaffirm their commitment to the one-China principle, and their support for China's reunification and China's efforts in resolving territorial and maritime disputes peacefully through friendly consultation and negotiation” (FOCAC, 2018).

On its behalf, China reaffirms its commitment for growing friendship and cooperation with all African countries and sharing with them its development opportunities. China reiterates its firm commitment to the principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs and supports African countries in independently exploring development paths suited to their national conditions. (FOCAC, 2018).

In the PRC's documentary “China-Africa Cooperation: New Era” (*Zhong feihezuo xinshidai zhuan ti pian* 中非合作新时代专题片) broadcasted in Chinese without translation in 2018, both the off-screen voice and the interviewed African decision-makers speak using same paradigms as stated in the CPC official documents. The five parts of the film repeatedly raise the following issues: friendship, partnership, Chinese-African brotherhood, Chinese role modelling and guidance for the FOCAC members, win-win cooperation as well as of “United China” (CCTV-12018).

Since the documentary was produced in Chinese and not in English language, it indicates the target audience for the message of such a television documentary project. The so-called Chinese community as defined by the authorities needed to get the feeling of the Chinese high status of a super nation and leadership position among the partnering countries. It provides legitimisation to the regime and its policy, as well as nourishes the existing pragmatic discourse of the Chinese new model of global governance. The film serves as internal motivation for different Chinese speaking groups, living in China, in Taiwan, in African countries and other communities world-wide. According to the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Republic of China (Taiwan) Report, in 2018 in Africa there were 1,106,000 Chinese expatriates out of the total number of 48,690,000 Chinese living abroad. Taiwanese emigrants in Africa according to the OCAC source have been reported in total of 10 000 persons (OCAC, 2019).

The African continent experiences during the last 30 years Chinese presence and is involved in diverse Chinese national projects. Due to the African complex geopolitics, the PRC is urged to lead simultaneously bilateral and multilateral relations with the African countries. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation serves as platform to reach global decision regarding the whole region and to achieve legitimisation of the Chinese strategic goals and almost unanimous agreement of the FOCAC members to the major Chinese insistences, such as “One China” and “Belt and Road”. African agreement with the Chinese rhetoric is not only a symbolic gesture, it is an obligation to accept the Chinese new model of global order, since the “Belt and Road Initiative” is a long-term project with variety of components and applications. To change the political course towards closer relationship with Taiwan or even the United States, the current rival of China, might be a challenging issue for the African states. The dependence on the Chinese aid, investment and infrastructure is constantly growing and threatens political flexibility of the region.

In parallel, positive narratives are feeding the Chinese discourse and trying to penetrate other affective spaces which share with the mainland China historical, cultural and linguistic background. The two-sided approach of the PRC to invest into the internal discourse as well as into the external one strengthens the legitimation of the contemporary Chinese foreign policy and supports the long-term perspective of the global leadership.

7. Conclusion

Chinese economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping have given China the necessary push for the development and growth of the domestic economy. The People's Republic of China under Xi Jinping claims, that the originally planned transformation is completed, and China is ready for achieving new goals, such as peripheral and, later, global dominance, leadership in manufacturing and technology and probably even the moral benchmark. The PRC presents a new model of global order with its active position as the super nation.

China is interested to advertise itself and to spread its values and legacy. Understanding the balance of power created during the 20th century on the global arena, China does not neglect the need to form its messages in the way they will be conventionally translated to English, however, the main message is hidden in the origins.

The existing theories of the International Relations are usually based on the Western political thought and cannot be a univocal approach to analyse China's foreign policy and political strategies. Therefore, additional attention should be given to China's political tradition and practice. Moreover, during the last decades the ideas of "soft power" and "political discourse" as strategic tools have gained power. Hence, the classical paradigms and their reincarnations along the twentieth century are not explaining the complexity of the Xi Jinping era. A theoretical framework, which could include rational and pragmatic political consideration with soft tools such as discourse and narrative is requested. This article favours the neo-classical realism for analysing China's transformation. According to this theory of Gideon Rose, the diplomacy is led by political actors and elites and their perception of the material power and foreign relations influence the decision-making process. In other words, Chinese current behaviour in the international arena is the direct illustration of the political thought of Xi Jinping. In order to understand the main principles and the vision of the PRC under Xi, his principles of diplomacy have been analysed.

The Ten Insistences on the Diplomatic Thought have revealed important nuances which are mostly hidden in the original Chinese text. "The Belt and Road Initiative", the "One China" principle as well as indisputable leadership of the Communist Party of China not only in mainland China but also potentially in Taiwan are the main principles of the Chinese foreign policy. Nevertheless, specific usage of some Chinese words has caused a deeper analysis in other official texts to understand the way the message is constructed and to whom it can be potentially addressed.

The nuanced study of the Chinese rhetoric needed a deeper understanding, which discourse these

narratives are occupying and in which way they are affecting the target audience. Based on the theoretical discussion on discourse, rhetoric and space, it was concluded that the affectivity is reached through a pragmatic space construction, which includes the necessary political discourse. Regarding Zhao, the Chinese discourse went through three main stages: nativism, anti-traditionalism and pragmatism. Therefore, the rhetoric of Xi Jinping and his administration could be perceived as a neo-pragmatic approach, which includes all these elements. Therefore, spread narratives address all sorts of public, the adherents of nativism and anti-traditionalism and those, who are strongly supporting the Western political thought. Chinese political discourse is a sort of transformer, which reveals new sides during the analysis. All this is valid also in the English translation. The chosen original wording answers the requirements of the Western political thought and do not provoke too much resistance. The strong critics towards the “made in China 2025” policy in 2018 has caused “lower profile” of the strategy (Mai, 2018), however, has not cancelled it or changed the main goals. Since the Chinese interests already exist in the discourse, they are repeated in a different formulation in other official policies.

The affective space of the Xi Jinping’s era is not addressing only the Chinese speaking world, it is simultaneously appealing regional partners and international actors. It includes also the three shifts which symbolise an attempt to trigger a new global order. “Shift in position” presents the global audience a new alternative regional and then global leader. In contrary to the American dominance, China suggests guidance, collaboration with mutual benefits and growth, which involves both sides. “Shift in time” stresses the concrete steps for achieving the “China’s dream” of rejuvenation. Xi Jinping uses time to distinguish the present and the coming future from the past and draws the line between the previous periods of Chinese political history and his rule. Nevertheless, it is done in the style of the for this purpose constructed space, with the full respect to the heritage. “Shift in space” shows the gradual process of the growing Chinese influence on the global governance and order. China is interested to also become a moral benchmark and leader. The traces of this interest are seen in the Chinese activism in the UN discussions regarding the principle “Responsible to Protect”. This shift is the most complex, due to its multiple consequences and might be never completed. Nevertheless, the attempts to shift the focus of the global order from the West to the East will bring value. The developing regions which are directly depending on the international institutions will perceive China according to its statements and actions.

Based on the American example of the global leadership, an interference into the internal issues of states is one of the privileges of the super nation status. China can be suspected in the same approach after it will be recognised at least a regional leader. In order to reduce these suspicions, China suggests a new approach of responsible protection which does not contradict to the existing paradigm of non-interference and answers the needs of the “development of peace” approach towards African states. This soft power mechanism is recognisable in the language used in the official documents on African-Chinese cooperation. The latest FOCAC Beijing Action Plan 2019-2021 speaks about Chinese

“support” in solving numerous of issues, including guaranteeing security and establishing of the joint “China-Africa Peace and Security Forum” (MFA, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action plan 2019-2021, 2018). The language used in the document refers to the meaning of the Chinese 引导 principle, where China is defined as a leader, positively perceived by the counterpart.

The article takes as a case study for the implementation of the Chinese foreign policy the FOCAC member states. The African continent is a unique case due to its growing dependency on Chinese investment, loans, and aid. The FOCAC implements the Chinese political agenda in the cooperation framework and by this justifies Chinese claims for “One China” and growing leadership. Being connected to the rest of the world through numerous trade routes and supply chains and as a part of the Belt and Road Initiative, the African continent becomes influential on the global stage. According to the peripheral diplomacy of China, the dominance ambitions might spread gradually, gaining new regions of influence. Taking into consideration, that the BRI is one of the main instruments of the Chinese foreign policy, the cross-national network which will grow with the project’s development will support the achievement of Xi Jinping’s political goals.

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Notes

Note 1. The Flat Earth Society, Official Website <https://www.tfes.org/> accessed: August 23, 2019.

Note 2. Only one FOCAC member state, Swaziland (eSwatini) didn't sign the declaration due to its obligations and relations with Taiwan. L. Madowo, “Taiwan's Last Friend in Africa”, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46831852>