

## The awakening of Xi's Chinese Dream

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The 'China Dream', a signature slogan of President Xi Jinping, has drawn worldwide attention. At a time when the growing assertiveness of China is being linked to the revival of the idea of Sino-centrism, the resurgence of a once 'humiliated' nation is being viewed by some countries with much apprehension. But what exactly is Xi's vision of the 'China Dream'?



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The Chinese Dream, according to President Xi, refers to the collective aspiration of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' as well as the personal dreams of the individual citizens of China to attain productive, healthy and happy lives. Xi has emphasised that the 'China Dream' is a dream of the Chinese people that can only be attained through 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'.

Internationally, the Chinese Dream can be viewed as a continuation of the country's peaceful development strategy. It is a key component of China's soft power campaign, which seeks to counter the theory that China is a threat to regional peace and security and promote instead a benign and positive image of the country. [To quote President Xi](#) <sup>[2]</sup>: 'We Chinese love peace. No matter how much stronger it may become, China will never seek hegemony or expansion. It will never inflict its past suffering on any other nation.'

Over the years, China has moved away from Deng Xiaoping's strategy of 'lie low, bide your time' and has adopted an [assertive foreign policy approach](#) <sup>[3]</sup>. The Chinese Dream discourse has been designed to institute a robust foundation for the development of a new overarching diplomatic strategy. The goal is to not only promote a renewal of the nation, but also enhance China's international appeal to the rest of the world and, in turn, its stature in world politics.

A key step towards this end is fostering China's relationships with other developing countries, particularly in Latin America and Africa. President Xi's visits to South Africa, Tanzania and the Republic of Congo as part of his first overseas trip emphasised the importance of these countries in China's foreign policy agenda. Strengthening relations with Latin American and African countries would benefit China in terms of securing energy resources, which is vital to sustaining its economic boom.

The Chinese leadership also seeks to promote a [new type of major power relations](#) <sup>[4]</sup> with the United States ostensibly based on the principles of non-confrontation, mutual respect and mutual benefit. And China has broadened its cooperation with the other major global players, including the European Union, and has deepened its strategic trust with Russia.

President Xi has proclaimed China's commitment to the idea of multilateralism and has stressed the importance of key multilateral bodies such as the UN. China has taken keen interest in fostering synergy between the BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — resulting in the establishment of a BRICS Development Bank. This is part of a broader drive towards a new and a more 'equitable' international and political order.

But how do those outside China view Xi's Chinese Dream?

The Chinese Dream discourse has been a subject of much speculation in the West. It is commonly viewed as a nationalist doctrine that is likely to hold perilous implications for international security in the future. Western nations are apprehensive about the more assertive and expansionist foreign policy approach seemingly implied by the Chinese Dream, particularly as it relates to China's increasing military assertiveness in the South and East China Seas.

Critics also suggest that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to realise the Chinese Dream. This is both due to China's economic slowdown and, more importantly, the reality that it is unlikely that 'each Chinese person' will dream the same dream, and that that dream will be consistent with that of the Chinese Communist Party. The 2014 pro-democracy [protests in Hong Kong](#) <sup>[5]</sup> demonstrated the fragile foundation of a unified Chinese dream. In mainland China, the Chinese leadership is also confronted by widespread public resentment against instances of injustice and corruption.

Xi's 'China Dream' is ultimately founded on his determination to both preserve the dominance of the Communist Party and persuade Chinese citizens to look beyond the immediate challenges to an image of Chinese national rejuvenation. How successful this dream will be, both at home and abroad, remains to be seen.

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<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/20160316001239215082-minihi ghres.jpg>

[2] To quote President Xi: <http://au.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t1293415.htm>

[3] assertive foreign policy approach:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/02/20/why-has-chinese-foreign-policy-become-more-a ssertive/>

[4] new type of major power relations:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/02/09/us-china-rivalry-does-asia-have-to-choose/>

[5] protests in Hong Kong:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/10/10/hong-kong-protests-about-economics-as-much-as-democracy/>