

# Evolution of China's Global Foreign Policy Conception in the 21st Century

An Attempt at Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

China's rapid economic development in recent decades has significantly boosted its international political activities as evidenced by the promotion of a set of relevant global foreign policy doctrines. Unlike the concepts adopted under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, which were rather bombastic

and ideological, China's foreign policy conceptions adopted since the early 2000s were based on a scientific approach. This article explores the evolution of China's key global foreign policy concepts, enshrined in fundamental state and party documents, through the lens of Michel Foucault's methodology. Employing the "archaeology of knowledge," we show that the key concepts reflect China's transformation into one of the leaders in the system of international relations, and the genealogy of discourse helps reveal the "reflective" nature of Chinese foreign policy discourse in contrast to the "egoistic" American one. Having studied and rethought the experience of the United States and Europe, China places emphasis on universal development and prosperity, designating them as its international policy goal.

**Keywords:** China, foreign policy, archeology of knowledge, genealogy of discourse, China's foreign policy concepts.

As China's overall potential grows, the country goes further in conceptualizing its foreign policy. Along with constant reproaches of authoritarianism, the United States and the West in general more and more often accuse Beijing of striving towards global domination or, at a minimum, of harboring ambiguous foreign policy intentions (Onnis, 2013; Doshi, 2021). If these reproaches or suspicions are viewed as the opposite of what the United States itself does, then, it should be assumed that the U.S. does not hide anything. Indeed, shortly after the end of the Cold War and the transition to a unipolar world, Americans institutionalized the regular articulation of their national interests. The first report presented in 1996 by the specially created bipartisan Commission on America's National Interests named five *vital* U.S. national interests: "(1) to prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States; (2) to prevent the emergence of a hostile hegemony in Europe or Asia; (3) to prevent the emergence of a hostile major power on United States borders or in control of the seas; (4) to prevent the catastrophic collapse of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and environmental); and (5) to ensure the survival of United States

allies” (America’s National Interests, 1996). The 2000 report softened the wording: Paragraph 2 was altered and split up between Paragraph 3 “to prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or failed states *on U.S. borders*” [italicized by the authors] and Paragraph 5 “to establish productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia.” The new version of Paragraph 2 “to ensure U.S. allies’ survival and their active cooperation with the U.S. in shaping an international system in which *we can thrive*” [italicized by the authors] (America’s National Interests, 2000) clearly indicated what “rules” the Americans were going to enforce worldwide and in whose interests.

National interests are constantly mentioned in the practical documents of the American executive branch and, above all, in the National Security Strategies, where China appears as “America’s major potential strategic adversary” (National Security Strategy, 2017). One of the latest such documents, while making overtures to diplomacy and insisting on the “legality” of U.S. actions, literally stated that when promoting its interests on a global scale... “the United States will never hesitate to use force when required to defend our vital national interests” (Renewing America’s Advantages, 2021).

Taking into account these and many similar official documents, China and other countries objectively have to articulate an appropriate—sovereign—foreign policy reaction. Beijing does not hide its principled approaches and tenets either. In particular, according to the latest version of the Chinese Constitution, “The future of China is closely bound up with the future of the world. China pursues an independent foreign policy, observes the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence ... and strives to safeguard world peace and promote the cause of human progress” (Constitution, 2018).

The current Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party states that “the Communist Party of China shall uphold an independent foreign policy of peace, follow a path of peaceful development, continue with the win-win opening-up strategy, consider both

domestic and international situations, and actively foster relations with other countries, endeavoring to develop a favorable international environment for China's reform, opening up, and modernization" (Constitution, 2017, p. 7).

The traditional and main means of implementing this policy include a wide range of trade, economic, and now financial and investment instruments, supplemented with various soft power tools. A new stage of foreign policy activity has been ushered in by its conceptualization as part of a theoretical philosophical and socio-political rethinking of discourse, with foreign policy concepts being one of its main attributes. As China, which had long stayed in the shadows, progressed in economic, technological, military and other ways, it began to formulate international policy concepts based on scientific knowledge and assessment of its own transformation and its perception abroad.

Owing to a deep scientific understanding of discourse, it began to be viewed in China as a "communication bridge," and communication itself as "a way out" necessitated by colossal internal transformations (Chen, 2021). In order for this communication to meet Beijing's objectives, it must be based on a language understandable to the addressee, which can only be achieved by using scientific knowledge. It was the need for this kind of analysis that urged the creation of a broad network of analytical centers and prompted increased attention to the quality of education received by party members and key government officials (Pomozova, 2021).

With Xi Jinping's rise to power, foreign policy was upped to the level of strategic governance as evidenced by the fact that the President of China personally heads the Central Foreign Affairs Commission (formerly Central Leading Small Group on Foreign Affairs) along with several other commissions overseeing strategic areas of work in the Chinese leadership. This fact indicates that Xi's discourse is characterized by the emergence (or development) of a number of concepts, and those of them that have been formalized in fundamental party and state documents (peaceful development, the Chinese Dream, the Belt and Road Initiative, "a community of common destiny for mankind") can be considered key to Beijing's contemporary foreign

policy. Western experts are right to some extent when they speak of China's comparative "obscurity" in the sense that it becomes more difficult over time to determine the real authors of these concepts. Today all of them are attributed directly to the Chinese President and considered a component of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.<sup>1</sup>

### **TRANSFORMATION OF CONCEPTS**

Mao Zedong's ideological concept of the three worlds, which departed from the principle of global confrontation between capitalist and socialist states, implied the division of international players into superpowers (U.S. and Soviet Union), developed countries, and developing nations, of which China was one. This concept, which called for fighting the ambitions of the two hegemonic superpowers, was presented at the sixth UN session in April 1974 (Mao, 1974). However, it actually dated back to an earlier period and eventually led to the rapprochement between China and the United States, which left a scar in Russian historical memory, following President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

In a country run basically by one man and guided by an ideological (rather than scientific) approach to politics, the lack of a doctrine clearly stated and formalized in official documents was to some extent offset by a generalization of Deng Xiaoping's remarks, whose principles by and large underlay Beijing's foreign policy from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. Deng's 24-character strategy essentially boiled down to "keeping a low profile," "securing our position," but at the same time "defending our views." During the 15th Congress of the CPC in September 1997, President Jiang Zemin also said: "It is necessary to adhere to the ideas of Deng Xiaoping about diplomatic work and firmly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace" (Jiang, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> When asked about the authorship of modern foreign policy concepts in China, senior officials from the International Department of the CPC Central Committee told us in private conversations that "their author is personally Comrade Xi Jinping." At the same time, representatives of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences do not exclude the contribution of such intellectuals as Wang Huning, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Li Junru, and others. But they, too, name Xi Jinping as the author of the main theoretical construct.

Vladimir Portyakov notes that the Chinese leader's recommendations were initially addressed to the country's top leadership and were first pronounced at a meeting with members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on September 4, 1989. They became known to the general public in China in 1996 and were followed by active discussions among Chinese experts first and then in Western expert and analytical communities (Portyakov, 2012).

After the critical weakening of the Soviet Union and until its collapse, the Americans hoped that the time had come to make radical changes in China, too, and bring it into the U.S. foreign policy orbit. However, after the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Chinese leadership opted for a wait-and-see foreign policy strategy.

In the late 1990s, the atmosphere in China began to shift away from Deng Xiaoping's reserved foreign policy, which was limited to regional interests and focused on maintaining stability within China and concentrating the country's resources for socio-economic development. At first, this change of attitude manifested itself in socio-political literary works. In 1996, a book titled *China Can Say No—the Post-Cold War Era of Political and Emotional Choice* (Qiao, 1996) made big news both in China and abroad. Its authors sharply criticized the United States and Japan and openly called on the Chinese government to become a counterweight to their policies. Initially welcomed by Chinese political circles, the book was subsequently banned after a thorough socio-political analysis prompted by the wary attitude towards it in the West.

Another example illustrating the shift in public attitude towards changing China's foreign policy strategy and positioning it as a global player is a collection of works titled *China Is Unhappy*, published in 2009, twenty years after the Tiananmen Square events. Its authors, five journalists, talk about how China should treat Washington and the West in general. The book reflects the public perception of unfair sanctions against China and public demand for respect. The authors stress the need for a tougher and more principled foreign policy. Aware of social trends, they see a way out of the current situation, humiliating

for China, in “banishing doubt from the soul... and boldly coming face to face with the West” (Song, 2009).

In September 2002, ahead of the 16th Congress of the CPC, international political scientist Huang Renwei published a monograph titled “Time and Space of China's Rise” (Huang, 2002). It is believed that the idea of “peaceful rise” as a possible new path for China belongs to Zheng Bijian (Ren, 2009), who visited the United States in December 2002 and met with many former and incumbent influential American politicians, including Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Condoleezza Rice. Upon return, Zheng outlined his ideas to the Chinese authorities, after which a special group was created to develop a “peaceful rise” concept. Zheng was appointed its head.

Zheng Bijian presented the concept of peaceful rise to a broad international audience at the Boao Forum for Asia in 2003 (although the name of the concept had been mentioned before, for example, in his speech at the U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies in 2002). According to Zheng, the concept did not come into being overnight, but dated back to 1978, when the 11th Congress of the CPC chartered the vector of China's development, including its international dimension (Zheng, 2005). The concept was characterized by peaceful rhetoric and placed substantive emphasis on the differences between the “peaceful rise” of China and the historical experiences of Germany and Japan, which had attempted to build their own system of international relations through revolution, and from Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet Union, which had got engaged in fierce military competition with the United States. The concept, aimed mainly to assure foreign partners that a rapidly developing China had no militaristic or hostile intentions, was repeatedly mentioned in the speeches of President Hu Jintao (Hu, 2008) and intended for both internal and external audiences. However, even though a “peaceful rise” was declared one of the main topics at the Boao Forum in 2004 (Xinhua, 2004), Hu did not use this phrase in his speech, which signaled its dismissal.

The West's wary reaction to the “peaceful rise” (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007; Buzan, 2014) predetermined a reflective transformation of this concept, which was essentially taken out of Beijing's global foreign

policy discourse in 2004. It was replaced by “peaceful development,” designed to “calm” the international community by softening the emphasis. Disputes over “development” and “rise” reached its peak at the 17th Congress of the CPC, where this issue was addressed in a special discussion. According to Ren Xiao, “peaceful development” was not only “China’s statement of intent,” but also “a new philosophy of Chinese domestic and foreign policy” (Ren, 2009).

The concept of peaceful development is entrenched in two White Books (in 2005 and 2011), and its importance for foreign policy is evidenced by the fact that the eponymous “international” section of Hu Jintao’s report at the 17th Congress of the CPC in 2007 was devoted to explaining its meanings, as well as by its incorporation into the CPC and Chinese Constitutions (Constitution, 2017). “Peaceful development” is still one of the concepts that determine Beijing’s foreign policy discourse and are regularly used by Chinese top officials in their speeches, and the intention to “defend the path of peaceful development” is stated in the preamble to the Chinese Constitution (Constitution, 2018). The rejection of the “rise” in favor of “just” “development” (precisely “peace and development,” but “peace” was in the previous version as well) is explained by sociological considerations: while the “rise” reflected a growing awareness among the Chinese intellectuals and the political leadership of China’s significant and accelerating growth, and its new opportunities in the system of international relations, the rejection of this concept, from our point of view, reflects awareness of the fact that these positive changes have reached the state of maturity and many aspects of China’s power (economic, technological, military) have become obvious and no longer need special emphasis.

Despite the tradition not to advertise the names of international relations experts who have contributed to the theoretical development of modern foreign policy concepts, the name of the “top adviser to three emperors,” Wang Huning, is often mentioned in the context of key modern doctrines (Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese Dream (The Economist, 2022)), and therefore deserves academic attention. Wang made an even more outstanding academic career than Zheng Bijian,

the author of the “peaceful rise” doctrine, and was awarded the title of assistant professor at the age of thirty for the first time in the history of Fudan University. At the same time, both scholars are, first of all, Americanists, have worked in the United States and communicated with American top experts and members of the political elite.

After a tour of twenty(!) American universities in 1988, Wang wrote a book titled “America against America,” in which he predicted a collapse of Washington’s competitiveness due to excessive commitment to individualism, hedonism, and democracy. The book saw a second wave of popularity in connection with the events triggered by the outcome of the U.S. presidential election in 2020 (Bloomberg, 2021). Despite his specialization in Sino-American relations, what is important for the point at issue is that Wang Huning was deeply involved in the history of Western political thought. For example, in the monograph “State Sovereignty (*Guojia zhuquan*),” he refers to the philosophy of Niccolo Machiavelli, Georg Hegel, Joseph Bodin, John Langshaw Austin, and others, and in the book “Comparative Political Analysis,” he draws on the writings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin (Haig and Yi, 2018)

The Chinese leadership began to pay more attention to foreign policy in 2012, and this was not a spontaneous decision—the corresponding concepts had been evolving all along, relying on the theories of, first of all, Western scientists, as well as on the assessment of positive and negative experiences (mainly the USSR). However not all of the proposed formulations passed the test of objective reality and made their way into discourse. An example is “a new model of major country relationship,” which was proposed by the Chinese leader during his meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama in June 2013 (White House, 2013) and which actually turned out to be an interpretation of the G2 concept (Bergsten, 2005). Donald Trump’s policy, focused on the trade war with Beijing, rendered them irrelevant.

The Chinese Dream concept, first announced by President Xi Jinping in 2012 (Xi, 2012) and intended primarily for the domestic audience, is a reflective interpretation of the American Dream, and, like the American one, it has an external dimension. It is based on

“core socialist values” (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi guan*), symmetrically opposed to liberal values centered on the individual and his freedom. While the anthropocentric liberal idea of democracy implies that human freedom ends where the freedom of another person begins, democracy with Chinese characteristics draws the boundaries of human freedom where the interests of society and the state begin. It is impossible to build a prosperous and harmonious society, in which the nation as a whole and everyone in particular would feel safe and happy, without a strong and economically developed state.

At the same time, the concept of “nation” in China is devoid of a purely primordialist connotation, found in its extreme form in the DPRK (Asmolov et al., 2022), but, rather, gravitates towards a constructivist approach, according to which a nation is interpreted as a kind of “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006). The Chinese understanding of human rights, which are purely declarative without duties, is also closely related to the core socialist values (Litvak and Pomozova, 2021). Li Junru theorizes about this relationship in an article titled “Chinese Dream. Chinese People’s Dream of Human Rights” (Li, 2014), where he talks about how the Chinese Dream unites the dignity of the state, the people, and every citizen. In the absence of open information, one can only guess how much Li Junru, former Vice President of the Central Party School of the CPC and an advisor to the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, contributed to the theoretical development of this concept. However, his numerous works dealing with various aspects of the Chinese Dream portray it as one of the pivotal political concepts of modern China, inalienably connected with the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” The concept is enshrined in the Constitution of the Communist Party of China since 2017 (Charter, 2017), where it appears three times and is inseparable from the CPC, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and Xi Jinping’s ideas. The preamble to the Constitution does not mention it directly, but it speaks of the intention to “realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” as the basis of the Chinese Dream.

The Belt and Road Initiative is another key concept of modern China. Formally, it is aimed at improving existing and creating new

trade routes, transport and economic corridors connecting all nations wishing to join it, and seeks to promote the development of trade relations between them and China. But although the initiative is based on economic, infrastructure, and investment programs, it should also be classified as a foreign policy concept. This is exactly how it is perceived in the world. European countries, which are the end point of this global project, are extremely cautious about it, fearing to become strategically dependent on Beijing. The idea of the Maritime Silk Road, which later became an integral part of the One Belt One Road Initiative, was for the first time aired by Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang at the China-ASEAN trade fair in September 2013 (Li, 2013).

A law graduate of Peking University (1982), Li Keqiang received his PhD in economics in 1994 and is considered the most highly educated prime minister in the history of China. His academic supervisor was Professor Gong Ruixiang, one of the few members of the academia educated in the West (in Great Britain) at that time. A month after Li Keqiang's presentation (Li, 2013), during his visit to Jakarta in October 2013, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech (Xi, 2013), in which he mentioned the ideas recently floated by Prime Minister Li. Later, the concept combined the maritime and land components. It was named the Belt and Road Initiative and attributed to President Xi as the initiator of a global project that pragmatically invites all interested countries to cooperate, regardless of their socio-political development model, ideology or values. Being one of the key economic and political concepts of modern China, the Belt and Road Initiative is often mentioned by President Xi in his speeches addressed to the international audience. Its importance for the Chinese leadership is also borne out by the fact that it has been an integral part of the CPC Constitution since 2017. The Belt and Road Initiative is the economic basis for a superstructure designed to fill the global ideological vacuum—a community of common destiny for mankind.

Initially, the phrase “common destiny” was used in China's political discourse with regard to Taiwan. The concept was first put forth in 2007 by Secretary General of the CPC Central Committee Hu Jintao at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party. The idea was further developed

in 2011 in a white paper entitled “China’s Peaceful Development Road” and devoted to global economic processes and their impact on international relations. In 2012, the concept was mentioned again in paragraph four of Hu Jintao’s report delivered at the 18th Congress of the CPC. In 2013, it was presented to the general public by Xi Jinping in his speech at the Moscow Institute of International Relations (Xi, 2013b). In 2017, as Secretary General of the CPC Central Committee, Xi Jinping not only detailed this concept in his traditional report at the 19th Party Congress, but he also delivered a separate speech to propose it as the only true model based on “a new type of global development partnership” for all countries to follow (Xi, 2017). This model of conflict-free coexistence of states proclaims the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, is consistent with the globalization trends, and offers an alternative to the current Western vision of international order, which has difficulty conceptualizing its own internal model, plagued with constant crises and barely applicable to other countries.

It is noteworthy that while after the 18th Congress of the CPC in 2012, the idea of establishing a “new type of international relations” was addressed almost exclusively to the United States, in 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi extended it to Russia and the European Union. In the same year, President Xi offered it to the entire world community, introducing this concept into modern China’s discourse in a slightly different, more global form (Xi, 2013a).

Following the 19th Party Congress, amendments were introduced to the CPC Constitution, and in March 2018, to the Chinese Constitution, making a “community of common destiny for mankind” a foreign policy goal of the party and the state. The fact that, starting in 2017, the concept began to appear in UN documents testified to its successful incorporation into global international discourse (Zhang, 2014).

Finally, another foreign policy concept—a “new form of human civilization”—which appeared in China’s foreign policy discourse in 2021, is currently being tested and seems to have significant potential. Recorded in the “Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the

Past Century,” adopted by the sixth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee on November 11, 2021, it is designated as a major achievement of the Chinese Communist Party for the benefit of not only the Chinese people, but also the whole world, as it has paved the way for “expanding the channels for developing countries to achieve modernization” (Resolution, 2021).

Analyzing this concept, Alexander Lukin notes that its development was influenced by the ideas of Nikolai Danilevsky, Oswald Shpengler, Arnold Toynbee, Liang Shuming, and “certain features of Marxism” in promoting the understanding that there are not only different types of civilizations in the world, but there is also a single “human civilization,” and that “the Chinese nation as an ancient and great nation of the world” “made an unfading contribution” to its development by creating “a brilliant civilization with more than a five-thousand-year history” (Lukin, 2021). The aforementioned concepts are far from a complete list of relevant foreign policy doctrines, but we analyzed the most global conceptions, which are recorded in the Chinese and CPC Constitutions, and which therefore can be considered key ones.

### **FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Foucauldian discourse studies in modern China are gaining prominence in various areas, including international relations, and are even cited in official government and party documents (Litvak and Pomozova, 2021). This approach is based on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse as a verbal exploration of reality, expressed in specific, historically contingent statements, the totality of which makes up an objective form, a framework for such exploration. The novelty of this approach was in *objectifying* discourse, in justifying its independence from the subject that creates it. In addition, Foucault linked discourse to power and knowledge. As a result, according to the *archeology* of knowledge formulated by him, “power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away” (Foucault, 1996), but what is constantly produced in the statements of the subject, in his discourse. And discourse itself represents the power to struggle for, and it changes depending on

the balance of power in society: “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1981).

This approach to discourse studies was subsequently developed by Judith Butler, Jean Baudrillard, Slavoj Žižek, Gilles Lipovetsky, and others. Carla Willig believes that discourses create certain “ways-of-seeing” the world and certain “ways-of-being” in the world, and by reconstructing them one can make conclusions about the social and even psychological experiences of the actors involved (Willig, 2008, p. 113). Known in the literature as Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, it has been defined by Brian Paltridge (2012) as an analysis of trends in the language, as well as of the social and cultural context from which the language arises. In other words, such an analysis of discourse considers not only the language itself, but the ideas and beliefs that actors exchange by means of language. For example, it has been noted that China’s global foreign policy concepts are largely based on the *seduction* of other states, politicians, and peoples (Butler, 1997). China seduces other countries to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative by promising infrastructure development, new jobs, economic benefits, patronage and protection in case of emergencies. And in the process of this seduction, China builds its own image of a strong, humane, and responsible state capable of acting as an international leader (Decombes, 1977). China also seduces others to follow its own example, crystallized in a “new form of human civilization”—the Chinese recipe of accelerated modernization for developing countries. Emphasizing the attractiveness of its economic achievements, China invites other countries to adopt its approaches (but does not insist yet).

This approach is empirically quite consistent with the changes in China’s foreign policy discourse as it builds up its economic and political power and influence in various areas. In fact, from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, when the country was led by Deng Xiaoping, who declared economic reform a development priority, China’s discourse was reserved, but it begins to sound more and more confident under the third (1993-2003) and fourth (2003-2013) generations of

leaders who supplement it with global foreign policy concepts, which, although transformed in the process of social reflection, clearly point to China's ambitions. When Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, China's and his personal discourse assumed completely new forms. Since then, on the one hand, it has become tougher and more persistent. On the other hand, it has produced a number of global initiatives and concepts (Belt and Road Initiative, a community of common destiny for mankind, etc.), which differ significantly from American ones. These differences have an objective explanation, from the standpoint of Foucault's another method—*genealogy of discourse*. According to the latter approach, discourse is non-linear and is what *remains after the rejection of alternatives* (Foucault, 1988). As Oleg Samylov notes, according to Foucault, discourse “standardizes knowledge and thereby rejects all alternative formulas for its codification. Therefore, important are not only the ideas that discourse represents, but also the ideas that it excludes” (Samylov, 2013).

Francois Fournier shows that genealogy is a means to investigate the constitution of a given discourse through the rehabilitation of counter-discourses that have been actively discarded (Fournier, 2014). Samylov's conclusion that “a new discourse is something more than ideology—it constitutes a new political culture..., is the primary element of a new historical reality” (Samylov, 2013)—is quite applicable to international relations. So in this particular case, the task of genealogical discourse analysis—the rehabilitation of counter-discourses—is facilitated by the existence of the opposite, American, discourse centered on the interests, well-being, primacy, and leadership of the United States alone.

This means that the “community of common destiny for mankind” discourse is formulated in opposition to the American one by *discarding* and excluding the American “we,” for whom Washington pursues its foreign policy, and who include U.S. allies that share Western democratic values, but not China (and, by the way, not Russia). This and similar Chinese concepts reject both one-man-rule and autarkic development, existence and prosperity at the expense of others. In any case, China does not yet insist on changing the political regime in

exchange for economic assistance, although it openly emphasizes the advantages of its development path.

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One of the latest RAND reports (prepared for the U.S. Department of Defense) says that the relationship between the United States and China has already entered a new stage, characterized by increased competition as the comprehensive national power gap between them is narrowing (Heath et al., 2021). RAND has also published possible scenarios for international relations when China achieves superiority over the United States. However, the study of the reasons and prospects for this transformation of international relations mainly boils down to propaganda clichés blaming China for pursuing a traditional set of expansionist goals and using corresponding rhetoric, allegedly characteristic of socialist states. Such clichés are based mainly on the history of China’s neighbors—the USSR and the DPRK. Indeed, the Soviet Union has fallen apart, and Pyongyang is trying to threaten the West by spending enormous amounts of money for military purposes despite the problematic state of its economy and low standards of living. However, the vector and results of China’s development are clearly different.

By supporting existing institutions (UN, G20) and creating new ones (OBOR), China seeks to extend the peaceful period of development, justifiably relying on its competitive advantages. For example, in his statement following the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, Xi Jinping reiterated “our abiding commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter” (Xi, 2020), and speaking on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the lawful seat of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations, the President stressed that “we should resolutely uphold the authority and standing of the United Nations, and work together to practice true multilateralism” (Xi, 2021).

In the first half of the 20th century, the United States had such advantages and became (using market mechanisms, of course) the world economic and technological leader. Europe was not only

devastated by two world wars, but it had also sustained a huge loss of human capital, including many scientists who emigrated to the United States. An example of Soviet industrialization, and educational, scientific, and technological development proved the advantages of concentrating material and human resources and their scientific use. Now China is successfully using that experience and has already made its own, unprecedented leap in development.

From the standpoint of the Foucauldian genealogy of discourse, China's conceptual transition not only from its "peaceful rise" and even (simply) "development" to a "common destiny for mankind" signifies the rejection of both American and its own exclusivity and pursuit of its own interests in favor of common interests. Foucault's approach is not yet part of Beijing's official discourse (in contrast to his discourse-and-power concept). Perhaps the reason for this is Beijing's reluctance to aggravate relations with the West not only by showing the advantages of its development model, but also by emphasizing how divergent the vectors of global development proposed by China and the West are.

China's current international discourse, based on a scientific approach and the assessment of changes taking place in the country, has an objective nature. The endogenous factor of the country's strengthening in the economic, military, technological, and other areas has caused Beijing's discourse to intensify. Another objective, but exogenous, factor was the reaction to China's development in the United States and the West as a whole. Its analysis led to the development of global concepts that offer (albeit not yet openly) new ideological and practical development approaches to other states. Does Europe, on which China sets hopes as one of the key areas of its foreign policy strategy, understand Beijing's modern discourse? We have yet to find an answer to this question.

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