

Interpreting the ChinaAfrica Dream A China-Kenya Case

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I. The Research Background

The Chinese Dream, put forth by Chinese President Xi Jinping on November 29th, 2012,^② is a vision for the nation's future. Two weeks before announcing the concept openly, Xi Jinping expressed the intent of the would-be notion in his first public address after being elected general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC),^③ which reflects Chinese peoples' desires for 'better schooling, more stable jobs, more satisfying incomes, more reliable social security, better health care, better housing conditions and a more beautiful environment'.¹ Being the important guiding ideology and governing philosophy of the fifth generation Chinese leadership, the Chinese Dream inspires hopes and sets expectations in China. Internationally, it draws attentions but at the same time it provokes questions and elicits concerns:

Western anxiety is rooted in the fear that for China to fulfill the Chinese Dream, China will become more assertive, more aggressive and more expansionist in foreign affairs, especially when dealing with smaller neighbors.²

In a highly globalized context, the intensive interdependency and interplay of nations and powers reveal that the implementation of Chinese Dream as a new political discourse relies highly on the perception and attitudes of the global society. One can find the representative views of scholars and opinion leaders on Chinese Dream on media and publications, but the ideas of publics are hardly known and seen anywhere. This paper devotes to look at the public opinions about Chinese Dream in Kenya, and

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^② Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the notion of the 'Chinese Dream' during his visit to 'the Road Toward Renewal' exhibition in Beijing on November 29th, 2012.

^③ The press briefing after the election of Xi and the other members as the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC in Beijing on November 15th, 2012.

investigates how this political concept is understood, accepted, and shared by Kenyans.

The research adopts the quantitative analysis method, and the data is based on the online survey ‘Evaluating Chinese Dream’s Communication Effects in Kenya’, conducted by Center for International communication Studies, China international Publishing Group and HorizonKey, Horizon Research Consultancy Group, from November 2013 to January 2014. The sample size is 687 in total with a balance distribution in gender (349 male and 338 female), age (143 aged 18-24, 207 aged 25-34, 135 aged 35-44 and 136 aged 45-54, and 66 aged 55 years and above), education (469 received high school or technical secondary school as the highest degree, 179 with college or university education, and 37 with postgraduate degrees), and occupation of Kenyans. All survey participants are ordinary residents in Kenya, living continuously in the region for 1 year and above. The data bank was set up with EpiData after error checking, and the analysis was processed with SPSS 13.0. In this research $P < 0.05$ in test of significant, and the error estimation is at 95% confidence level.

The following hypothesis will be tested in the research.

1. The Chinese Dream as a political discourse is known by Kenyans.
2. Local media and Chinese media play the main role in diffusing the Chinese Dream in Kenya.
3. The economic perspective of the Chinese Dream is the most recognized in Kenya.
4. There are shared values between the Chinese Dream and the Kenyan Dream.
5. The Kenyans hold a positive view towards the influence of Chinese Dream to Kenya as well as the world.
6. The Chinese Dream is related to and attractive to Kenyans.

II. The Chinese Dream from the Perspective of Kenyans

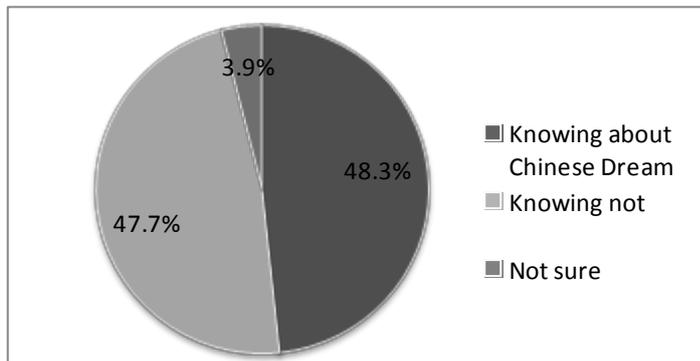
The Chinese Dream intended to serve as ‘a huge opportunity for the rest of the world’³ from its first presentation, therefore ‘The Chinese Dream seeks to develop

and prosper in sync with the rest of the world. Its fulfillment will benefit the development of the world as a whole. Each country may choose its own dream based on its own historical and cultural background, but all good dreams will seek the prosperity of the country and the well-being of the people'.⁴ The research finds that the Kenyan participants are familiar with the notion 'Chinese Dream', and China's economic development contributes to the image of the notion.

1. Half Kenyans Knows about Chinese Dream, and Local Media Play the Big Role in Communication

48.3% of interviewees in Kenya expressed that they heard of Chinese Dream, which is much higher compared with other sample countries⁴. It shows that news about China is attractive in Kenya, especially among male (53.3%), under 35-year-old (54%), well educated (62.2%) ones. There shows clear ties between China experiences and China knowledge, because almost 60% Kenyans visited China are familiar with Chinese Dream.

Figure 1: Half Kenyans Know About Chinese Dream (N=687)



Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

The main players telling the stories about Chinese Dream in Kenya are the local media. 64.5% interviewees know from Kenya's local TV channels, radios, and press about Chinese Dream; and 32.8% get the knowledge from local website and social media. Other channels, including western media (0.6%), Chinese media (13.9% traditional & 7.2% new media) and personal communication, only count for about

⁴ The US, India and Brazil.

20% in total. Chinese media put more efforts in promoting Chinese Dream compared with western media.

Figure 2: Kenya Media Play the Main Role in Telling the Chinese Dream Stories (N=687)



Note :This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

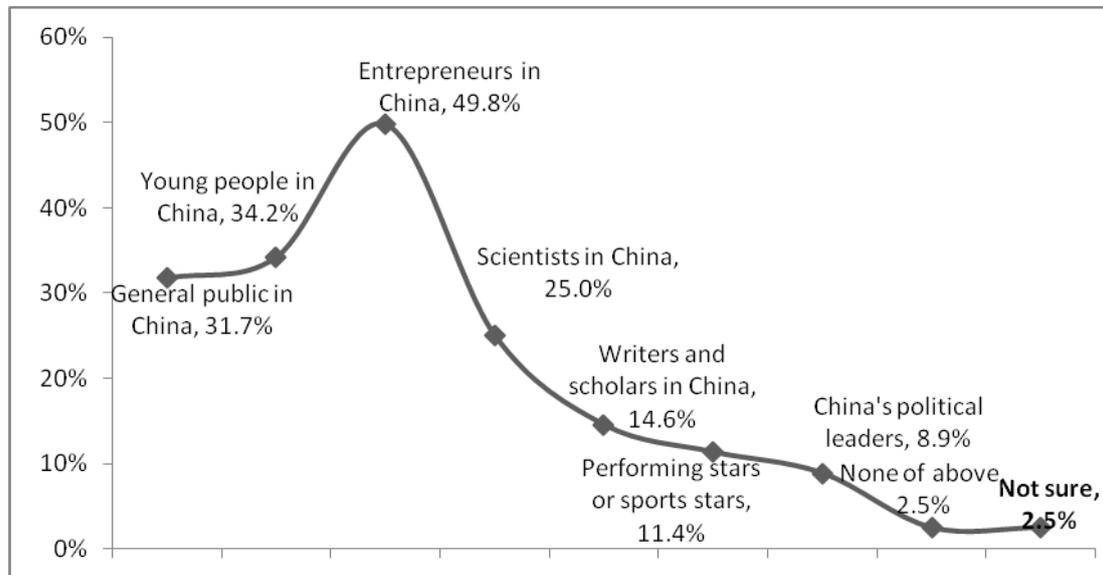
Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

The most attractive theme of Chinese Dream stories in Kenya is entrepreneurs and enterprising related which appeals to 49.8% of the interviewees^⑤. This is a unique character of Kenya since all other countries^⑥ find the dreams of ‘normal Chinese’ and ‘young people’ are the most attractive, and these two themes only attract 34.2% and 31.7% respectively. In a certain sense, the data support the hypothesis that Chinese economic developmental pattern and achievements are recognized in Kenya, which reflects the fact that Kenya, as a developing country, concerns about its own economic development and is eager to follow China’s example or share the opportunity of development.

^⑤ The question is ‘Which groups’ dream stories you will be interested in?’ (Multi-choice).

^⑥ China, US, India, & Brazil.

Figure 3 Entrepreneurs and Enterprising Dreams are the Most Attractive in Kenya (N=687)



Note :This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

2. ‘Development’ is the Characteristics of Chinese Dream

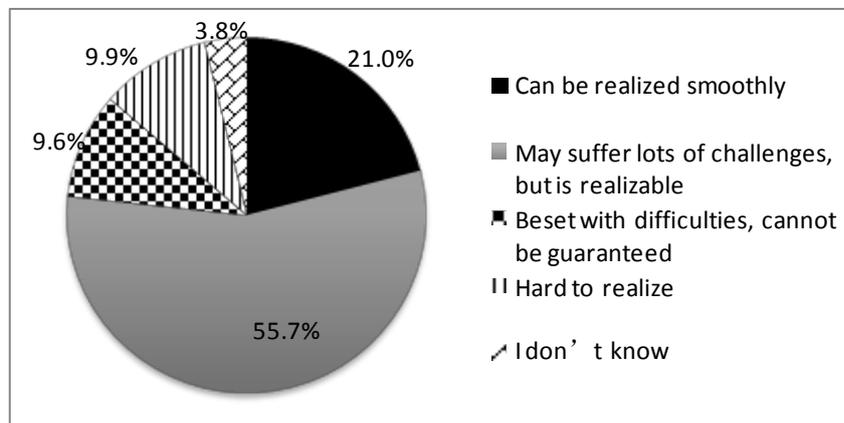
‘Development’ (59.1%) is perceived as the key word and characteristics for Chinese Dream in Kenya. ‘Reform and innovation’ (47.2%) and ‘Self-strengthening & enterprising’ (31.9%) are widely accepted as the theoretical foundation for Chinese Dream. It shows that Kenyans agree that innovation, creation and enterprising are key factors for building a powerful nation, which is identical to the ideology of Chinese Path. ‘Scientific outlook on development’ (27.7%), ‘People oriented’ (26.5%) and ‘Patriotism’ (23.7%) are also considered as important theories. It supports the hypothesis that Chinese political discourse is familiar by Kenyans.

The hypothesis is supported again in understanding the purpose of putting forward of the concept of Chinese Dream, 41% Kenyans understand it as ‘to realize national rejuvenation’. 33% believe that Chinese Dream means ‘to become global superpower’, which is remarkable since only 24.8% vote for it in China. It shows that Kenyans link Chinese Dream and national power together.

3. Kenyans Have Faith in the Realization of Chinese Dream

76.7% of Kenyans believe that Chinese Dream will surely be realized. 21% trust it will just go smoothly, and 55.7% realize the challenges but are still positive about its realization. It is worth mentioning that the most positive groups are the under 35-year-old (79.1%) and the well-educated (89.2%), which represents the affirmative attitude of the mainstays in Kenya.

Figure 4 Over 70% Kenyans Trust the Fulfillization of Chinese Dream (N=687)

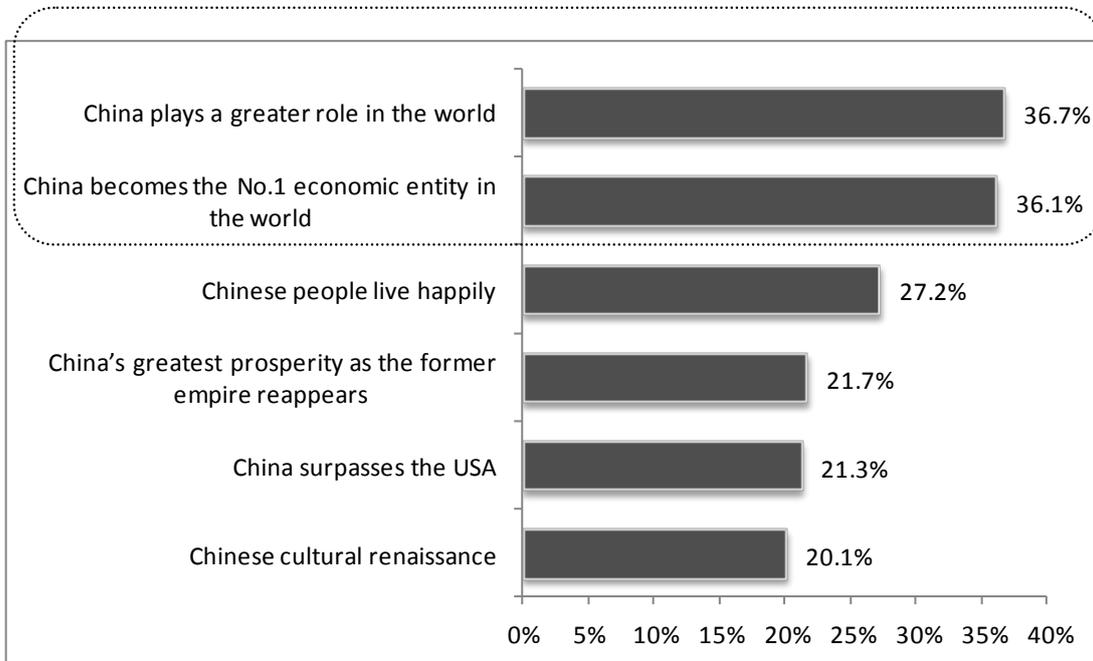


Question: In your opinion, how likely will the “Chinese Dream” be realized ?

Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

36.7% Kenyans consider the day that ‘China plays a greater role in the world’ represents the realization of Chinese Dream, and 36.1% would rather take the day that ‘China becomes the No.1 economic entity in the world’ as the signal of realizing Chinese Dream. This reveals that Kenyans understand Chinese Dream from two dimensions. On the one hand it is a notion meaningful to both China and the rest of the world, and the internal goal is to boost China’s comprehensive development, especial economic power; while the external goal is to contribute to the global development, therefore an interest-sharing opportunity can be created. On the other hand it is a notion more related to nation-state rather than individual Chinese. Only 27.2% Kenyans consider ‘Chinese people live happily’ indicates the fulfillment of Chinese Dream, which is comparatively lower than other surveyed countries.

Figure 5 ‘China Playing a Bigger Role’ Represents the Realization of Chinese Dream (N=687)

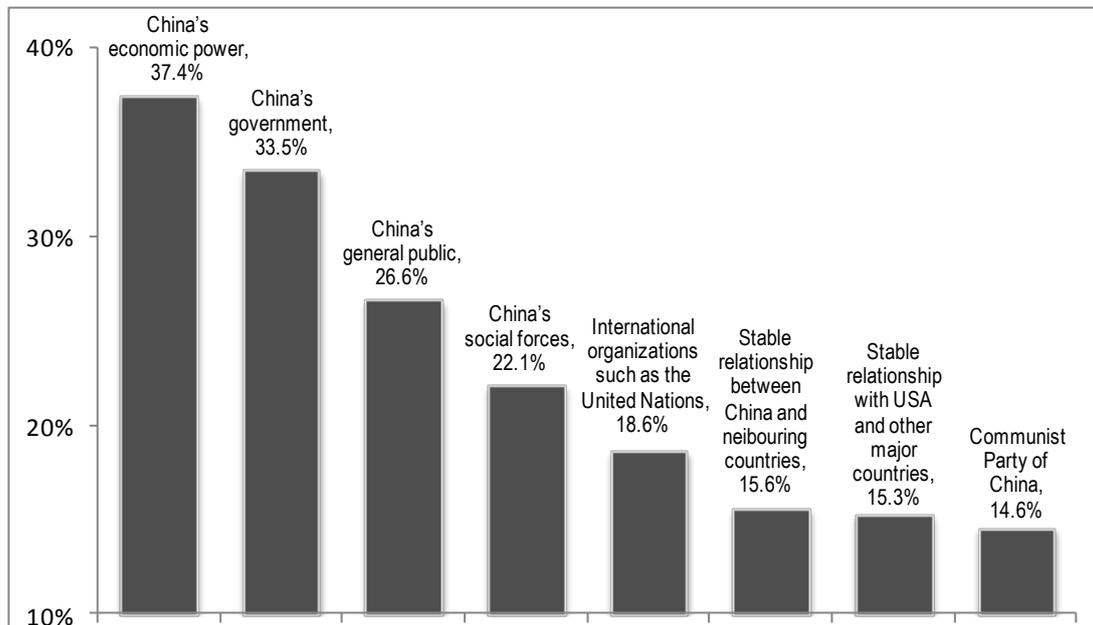


Note :This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

The internal factors are considered crucial to realizing Chinese Dream. The biggest challenges in fulfilling Chinese Dream recognized by Kenyans include ‘Population issues such as enormous population and aging’ (31.5%), ‘Corruption of government officials in China’ (25.9%), ‘Uncertain factors existing in China’s society’ (25.1%) and ‘Difficulty to carry out political system reform smoothly’ (20.7%). The factors conducive to realization of Chinese Dream are successively ‘China’s economic power’ (37.4%) and ‘China’s government’ (33.5%). This again shows that Kenyans’ nation-state oriented attitude in understanding Chinese Dream, and trust that the up-down method is suitable for fulfilling Chinese Dream. This is opposite to the opinions of Chinese and Americans, who prefer a down-up method and consider ‘China’s general public’ and ‘China’s social forces’ the main players in actualizing Chinese Dream.

Figure 6 Economics and Government Contribute Most to Chinese Dream (N=687)



Note : This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

Data Source : Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon, 2013

III. Interpreting the Chinese-Kenyan Dream

The Chinese Dream is based on the awareness that the international community is increasingly becoming a ‘community of shared destiny’⁵ in which all countries are inter-linked, therefore ‘seeking to make contributions to the world is an important international connotation of the Chinese Dream’.⁶

1. Chinese Dream and Kenyan Dream are Interlinked

Kenyans hold very positive views on the influence of Chinese Dream over the world. One third Kenyans (33.8%) believe the realization of Chinese Dream brings opportunities to the world, and 37% consider it ‘More opportunities than challenges’. This is very similar to the Chinese opinions (74.6%) and much higher than the US (43%), India (57.5%) and Brazil (58.1%).

The influence of Chinese Dream over Kenya is mingled hope and fear. 37.4%

believes ‘the exchange and cooperation between the two countries will increase’, and 28.2% thinks ‘China investment will be conducive to our domestic economic growth’; while 32.6% worries ‘Chinese products will hit local market’.

The resemblance between Chinese Dream and Kenyan Dream is highly recognized in Kenya, which is approved by the fact that only 0.4% Kenyans denies the similarities between the two. To specify the commonness, half Kenyans vote for ‘To encouraging innovation’ and one third agree ‘To achieve nation’s prosperity’. This explains why Chinese Dream is understood as a nation-state dream in Kenya—Kenyans adopt a similar framework to interpret a dream related to a developing country, which is to improve the national power as the priority.

Table 1 The Similarities between Chinese Dream and Kenyan Dream (N=687)

Similarities	Percentage (%)
To encouraging innovation	47.9
To achieve nation’s prosperity	32.9
To get more benefits for general public	28.2
To attain importance to personal value	24.6
To pursue sound economic development	18.8
To advocate opportunity equality	17.3
To be conducive to social peace and stability	15.1
To emphasize sharing opportunities and international responsibilities	14.4
None of above	0.4
Not sure	0.4

Note :This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

2. Chinese Dream is an Example for Kenyan Dream

Xi Jinping explains that ‘In the new period of history, the essence of the Chinese Dream is the prosperity and strengthening of the country, rejuvenation of the nation and the well-being of the people. Our target is to double the 2010 GDP and average income per capita by 2020, and build China into an all-round, moderately well-off

society. Further down the road, we will, by the middle of this century, realize the Chinese Dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation by making China a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious.’ This research shows that less than 4% interviewees fail to suggest Kenya to follow China Path to realize the Kenyan Dream, and the most favored Chinese policies are about urbanization, economic, diplomacy, ethnic, society, and political party successfully. This shows the concern of Kenyan publics is closely related to their contemporary problems in its development, as well as China’s most distinguished achievements.

Table 2 China’s Urbanization Policy is the Most Renferential to Kenyan Dream (N=687)

Policy	Percentage (%)
Urbanization policy: promote urban modernization through new industrialization	52.8
Economic policy: strategic guidance by government’s rational regulation to national economy	46.1
Foreign policy: stick to win-win strategy, maintain independence and peaceful development	29.8
Ethnic policy: regional autonomy of minority nationalities	18.2
Social policy: urban community autonomy and rural villager's autonomy	17.6
Political-party policy: One party’s long-term governance with multi-party participation in the state affairs	11.8
Not sure	3.1
None of above	0.4

Note :This is for multiple choices therefore the total percentage is $\geq 100\%$.

Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

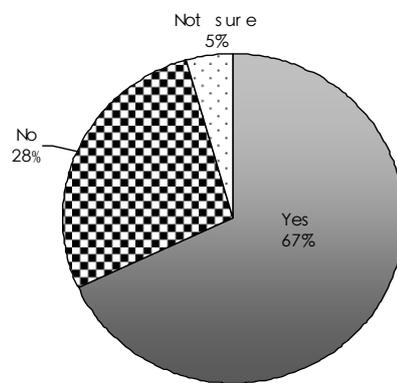
‘Development’ is the most approved and appreciated characteristics of Chinese Dream in Kenya. More than half Kenyans (52.8%) think they can learn from China’s ‘urbanization policy’ to ‘promote urban modernization through new industrialization’, and 46.1% favor China’s economic policy, so that Kenya can also have ‘strategic guidance by government’s rational regulation to national economy’. It shows that as a developing country, Kenyan publics appreciate China’s development, and consider China Path is effective to realize Chinese Dream, and also Kenya can get references

from China Path and Chinese Dream.

3. More than Half Kenyans Desire Fulfilling Dreams in China

68% interviewees express their interests to come to China to realize their dreams if there is an opportunity. The proportion goes even higher among the under 35-year-old group (76%) and the well-educated group⁷ (70.3%).

Figure 7 Near 70% Kenyans Desire Fulfilling Dreams in China (N=687)



Data Source :Center for International Communication Studies, CIPG & Horizon,2013

III. Conclusion

This study shows that the Chinese Dream as a political discourse is known by half of the Kenyan interviewees, and it is interpreted positively among the survey participants. Most of the hypotheses are supported in this research, and this echoes to the coverage of *The Washington Post*:

Does Xi mean a “Chinese dream” of prosperity, as the “American dream” is often interpreted — a promise to continue the historic progress of the past three decades in moving people from poverty into the middle class? Does he have in mind a campaign against the widespread corruption and growing inequality of wealth that rankles many Chinese? Or is he focused on raising China’s influence and profile beyond its borders? He has hinted at all three possibilities.⁷

The findings show that the Chinese Dream sounds familiar to half Kenyans, and local

⁷ Kenyans holding a Master or a PhD degree.

media play the main role in diffusing it, while Chinese media devote the most efforts. Development is the characteristic of the Chinese Dream, which approves that the economic perspective of the Chinese Dream is the most recognized in Kenya. Kenyans have faith in the realization of the Chinese Dream, and they consider Chinese government and its economic power contribute most to the Chinese Dream fulfillment. Kenyans believe that the Chinese Dream and the Kenyan Dream are interlinked, and there are shared values between the Chinese Dream and Kenyan Dream. They hold a positive view towards the influence of Chinese Dream to Kenya as well as the world so they would consider pursuing and fulfilling their dreams in China if there is an opportunity.

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