

Observations About Xi Jinping

Ching Cheong

Translated by Ingrid Chan

Since the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China held last November, Xi Jinping has occupied the position of supreme leader for six months now. In the past six months, one could hardly expect that he would carry out any reform in the one-party dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party.

Before Xi Jinping took over as the country's supreme leader, society, and those open-minded Party cadres, represented by the monthly magazine *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, had great expectations of him. This was because: 1) His father, Xi Zhongxun, was one of the top leaders who dared to offer forthright admonitions. Thus people expected that Xi Jinping would follow in his father's footsteps; 2) He had experienced the absurdities of the Cultural Revolution, so people expected that he would have the characteristics of the "*lao san jie*" (school leavers of 1966-1968), i.e. to have the courage to carry out reforms within the unreasonable political system. However, after hearing his opinions, people will most likely be disappointed.

There are popular sayings among the Chinese internet users, which summarize Xi's "thoughts," as expressed in the past six months. These are: one Chinese dream, two non-denials, three self-confidences, five "nos", seven "don't mentions", and being a good man. These words are all the ideas that Xi suggested in the past six months, and systematically lumped together as "Xi Jinping Thought".

One Chinese Dream

From 29 November 2012 to 4 May 2013, Xi mentioned the "Chinese Dream" seven times. The "Chinese Dream" has become Xi's political label, being the theoretical foundation of Xi's

ideological position, just as in the past there were: the pursuit of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents," and Hui Jintao's "Scientific Development Theory".

What is the "Chinese Dream"? Xi explained:

"In my view, realizing the great resurrection of the Chinese nation is the Chinese peoples' greatest dream in modern history. This dream, which is the long-cherished wish of past generations of Chinese people, embodies the overall interest of the Chinese people. It is the common hope of all the Chinese people...I believe that our country will attain a "moderately well-off society" by the time of the Party's 100th birthday, and the goal of a rich, strong, democratic, civilized and harmonious socialist modern country will definitely be achieved by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the New China."

(On 29 November 2012, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, along with other members of the Politburo visited the National Museum in Beijing to view "The Road toward Rejuvenation" exhibition, and delivered the keynote speech.)

If we make a detailed analysis of this so-called "Chinese dream", we will discover that it was not Xi's idea originally. It was rather the "Three-Step" strategy (i.e. the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of Communist Party of China and the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China) that Deng Xiaoping outlined after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee. Is there anything new about the Chinese Dream, or has Xi only repackaged the old idea as his "Chinese Dream"?

On March 17th, in his "inauguration speech" at the closing session of the 12th National People's Congress, Xi explained his "Chinese Dream". There is actually a certain novelty in the following passage:

The Chinese dream can only be realized by China seeking its own path. This is the road to socialism with Chinese characteristics. It has come from the over 30 years of experience of Reform and Opening Up, from the continued explorations carried out over the

60 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, from the profound conclusions drawn from the over 170 years of development of the Chinese nation, and from the heritage of over 5,000 years of the Chinese civilization. It has deep historical roots and an extensive foundation in reality.

In other words, in order to realize the "Chinese Dream", China has to continue the one-party dictatorship (the so-called "socialism with Chinese characteristics"). This path is not only a conclusion of the 60-year history since the Founding of People's Republic of China and 170-year history of the struggle of Chinese people, it but is also rooted in the 5,000 years of Chinese history. So it has "deep historical roots and an extensive foundation in reality". It is not necessary to change the "one-party dictatorship". These are the key points of Xi's "Chinese Dream".

Xi's speech implies that that the "one-party dictatorship" is the heritage of over 5,000 years of the Chinese nation, and that it has "deep historical roots and an extensive foundation in reality". This reminds me of the "Outline of the Imperial Constitution" established by the Qing Dynasty in 1908, in which there were two main points:

1. The Great Qing Emperor rules the Great Qing Empire, for all generations, and must be eternally respected.
2. The sacred dignity of His Majesty may not be violated.

The above two articles were to affirm the absolute respect and status of the emperor. Compared to the Qing Dynasty, Xi's "Chinese Dream" is not inferior in any respect. The Chinese Dream indicates two unshakable principles: first, "socialism with Chinese characteristics" is everlasting and unchangeable; second, the one-party dictatorship has absolute leadership over the country. No wonder the netizens commented that instead of being the dream of the Chinese people, it is only the dream of the Communist Party or of Xi Jinping himself.

The Two Non-denials

On January, 5, 2013, Xi Jinping addressed the new CPC Central Committee members and alternate members in a workshop

on studying and implementing the spirit of the 18th CPC Congress. He said that people could not deny what was done before the reform and opening-up based on what happened after it and vice versa.

However, the “Two Non-denials” actually reverse the evaluations regarding Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution in the “*Resolutions on Several Historical Issues*” (1981). According to that document, Mao Zedong was 70% right and 30% wrong in the first 27 years (1949-1976) after the founding of the People’s of Republic China. The Cultural Revolution was totally wrong. In fact, the reform and open door policy of Deng Xiaoping was based on the consensus regarding that period of history. However, Xi Jinping said that “people should not deny what was done before the reform and opening-up based on what happened after it”. This actually leads to the conclusion that “what was done before the reform and opening-up was also right”. It would pull the views of historical problems with the Chinese Communist Party back to the days before 1981.

On May 7, 2013 *Guangming Daily*, an official organ of the Chinese Communist Party, published an article by Qi Biao, a scholar of the Central Committee’s Party School, quoting the speech of Xi to the workshop (not yet published) on January 5th, especially his clear opinion of Mao Zedong. Xi reportedly stressed that Deng Xiaoping had definitely defended Mao Zedong and Maoism. Xi stated: if the Party totally denied the achievements of Mao Zedong (note: he referred to the year 1981 when the document *Resolutions on Several Historical Issues* was adopted), how could our Party stand? How could socialism stand? If they did not stand, the country would be in rebellion.

We can see that Xi, in order to defend the one-party dictatorship, did not hesitate to overturn the 1981 consensus of the Party. He reaffirmed the history of before the period of reform and opening-up. However, in that period of history, millions of Chinese people were burdened with a national disaster. Even Xi’s father could not avoid this miserable period of history.

The Three Self-confidences

On March 17th, while giving his “inauguration speech” at the closing session of the 12th National People’s Congress, Xi Jinping again explained his “Chinese Dream”:

People of all the nationalities in China must increase their self-confidence in the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics, their self-confidence in the path, and their self-confidence in the system, and steadfastly forge ahead along the right road. Through these three self-confidences, people should not question the present system, the road and the theory of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Five “Nos”

In 2011, during the sessions of the National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Wu Bangguo, the chairman of the NPC, affirmed that in China there would be “no multi-party election; no diversified guiding principles, no separation of powers, no federal system, and no privatization.” This policy became known as the “Five Nos”. The “five nos” in fact contravened the idea of establishing a “constitutional government,” a suggestion made by civil society and by open-minded members of the Communist Party, who sought to reform malpractices in the one-party dictatorship.

Although Xi Jinping did not create the “five nos,” he reaffirmed them when he strangled the “Dream of Constitutional Government”. At the beginning of 2013, the government banned the New Year’s issues of *Yanhuang Chunqiu* and *Southern Weekend*. This was because both of them spontaneously suggested the “dream of constitutional government” in their New Year’s special issues. From this action we can see that Xi reaffirmed the “five nos” of Wu Bangguo.

The Seven Don’t Mentions

On May 13, 2013, the Central Committee distributed “Document No 9” (*Minutes of a Meeting of Officials from Propaganda Ministries, 2013*), requiring all bureaus and

departments “to move quickly to implement the *briefing concerning the situation in the ideological sphere*”.

Those who had reportedly heard about the above-mentioned article said, the Document stated that “the central leadership has made a thorough analysis of and shown a staunch stance toward seven serious problems in the ideological sphere that merit attention, giving a clearer understanding of the sharpness and complexity of the struggles in the ideological sphere. It is necessary to fully appreciate the significance of strengthening work in the ideological realm, and fully comprehend the threat posed by the propagation of Western values and ideas.” The document stated, “When it comes to political principles and what is right and what is wrong, the Party Committee system and Party cadres must raise the flag, and display a staunch attitude with respect to what to support and what to oppose. In ideology, politics, and deeds, we must maintain a high degree of unanimity with Comrade Xi Jinping as the General Secretary of the Party Central Committee.”

Netizens summed up the so-called “seven serious problems which merit attention in the ideological sphere” as “the seven don’t mentions:”

Don't mention universal values

Don't mention press freedom

Don't mention civil society

Don't mention civic rights

Don't mention the historical mistakes of the Communist Party

Don't mention elite cronyism

Don't mention an independent judiciary

Why does the Chinese Communist Party fear these concepts? According to an analysis of “Document 9”:

- 1) The goal of democracy and constitutional government is the overthrow of the Communist leadership, the overthrow of the socialist system, and the subversion of state power;
- 2) Universal values: its core purpose is to negate the leadership of the Communist Party, so that the Party has to make concessions;
- 3) Civil society: its threat is to establish a new political power outside the basic party organizations;

- 4) New liberalism: its goal is to oppose the state's macro-economic control;
- 5) Western journalistic concepts: these are against the "mouth-piece theory" held by the Party, and want to eliminate the Party's leadership over the media; the aim of their disclosures is to confuse public opinion, and then to cause confusion within the Party and society;
- 6) Historical Nihilism: is aimed at historical problems which arose under the leadership of the Party, and which deny the reality accepted by the people. Its goal is to threaten and attack Mao Zedong and Maoism, totally denying the historical function of the Chinese Communist Party during the Maoist period. Its goal is to weaken, or even overthrow the legitimate leadership of the Party;
- 7) Perversion of the reform and opening-up: the emergence of bureaucratic capitalists, and state capitalism. It makes the drastic suggestion that economic reform can only be carried out after political reform.

Renowned historian Zhang Lifan said that the "seven don't mentions" were the seven taboos of the Party. They actually reminded the people of the seven major malpractices of the regime. Leading dissident Bao Tong, personal secretary of former Communist leader Zhao Ziyang, said, "The 'seven don't mentions' have pulled Xi's Chinese Dream back to the days before the 1911 Revolution. Another dissident, Ye Fu, said, "Xi Jinping's political posturing, while it may give re-assurance to the old men in the Party, really destroys China's future."

Be A Man

After having assumed the post of General Secretary, Xi Jinping went on a southern tour, following the example of Deng Xiaoping. Some parts of the speech he gave on that occasion were circulated among cadres at the county and regimental level. In his speech, Xi mentioned the collapse of Soviet Eastern Europe. He said:

“Why did the Soviet Union disintegrate? Why did the Soviet Communist Party collapse? An important reason was that their ideals and beliefs had been shaken. In the end, ‘the ruler’s flag over the city tower’ changed overnight. It is a profound lesson for us! To dismiss the history of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party, to dismiss Lenin and Stalin, and to dismiss everything else is to engage in historic nihilism. It confuses our thoughts and undermines the Party’s organization at all levels. Why must we stand firm on the Party’s leadership over the military? It is because that’s the lesson we learn from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union where the military was depoliticized, separated from the Party and nationalized, the party was disarmed. A few people tried to save the Soviet Union. They seized Gorbachev, but within days the situation was turned around again, because they didn’t have the instruments to exercise power. Yeltsin gave a speech standing on a tank, but the military made no response, keeping so-called ‘neutrality.’ Finally, Gorbachev, in a blithe statement, announced the disbanding of the Soviet Communist Party. A large Party was gone just like that. Proportionately, the Soviet Communist Party had more members than we do, but nobody was man enough to stand up and resist.”

Since then, the netizens have nicknamed Xi as “Xi Jinping the man.” The main point of Xi’s speech was: that the Chinese Communist Party must also hold military power, which is an instrument of dictatorship. His analysis on the collapse of Soviet Eastern Europe did not start from the curse of the Soviet Union’s one-party dictatorship. He believed that the nationalization of the Soviet military led to the disarmament of the Soviet Communist Party. Such an analysis is greatly different from the view of the people.

From a review of the above-mentioned popular sayings among netizens, we can conclude that it seems like many people do not have great expectations of Xi Jinping (at least in the first few months of his ten year term of office, ed).