

# *The Translation of Chinese Diplomatic Neologisms: a Case Study of “Zhongguomeng”*

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**Abstract:** Diplomatic translation features as the strong political nature and high policy sensitivity, which is an important vehicle for the efficient dissemination of China's diplomatic ideas but also has always been a difficulty. This paper discusses the translation of new diplomatic words proposed by Xi Jinping in 2012 “Zhongguomeng”(the Chinese Dream), which has always been inconsistent translation. By investigating its meaning and collocation, reports of western mainstream media and scouring corpus, it can be found that “Chinese Dream” as a noun modifier is more in line with the connotation of Zhongguomeng It is used more frequently in Western media and has fewer negative reports when it appears. Therefore, the author concluded that Zhongguomeng should be translated into “Chinese Dream” in a unified and standardized manner.

## 1. Introduction

“The Chinese Dream” has been widely used as a new political term and diplomatic neologism by domestic and foreign media ever since Xi Jinping proposed and elaborated it in his speech after visiting a major exhibition “The Road to Rejuvenation” in November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Xi’s words and the English Reports of *China*, *China Daily*, and *Global Times* are as follows.

Excerpt 1. Xi’s words and the English Reports of *China*, *China Daily*, and *Global Times* are as follows.

a. “现在,大家都在讨论中国梦,我以为,实现中华民族伟大复兴,就是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想。”[1]

b. “Nowadays,everyone is talking about the China Dream,” he said. “In my view,realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the Chinese nation’s greatest for the Chinese nation in modern history.”[2]

c. “...Today everybody is talking about the Chinese Dream...”[3]

d. “Nowadays, everyone is talking about the China Dream,” he said. “In my view, realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the Chinese nation's greatest dream in modern history.” [4]

In the period before and after Xi Jinping first proposed the “Chinese Dream”, the domestic news media reported that his translation was not uniform. President Xi interpreted *Zhongguomeng* that “reflects the overall interests of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people, and is the common aspiration of every Chinese son and daughter.” Therefore, domestic media mostly translated it into “China Dream” or “China’s Dream”, sometimes using “Chinese Dream”.

In fact, politic field, academia and the press follow their own policies in translating this new diplomatic word. The same is true of foreign mainstream media. In addition to the three above, there are also such expressions as “the dream of China”, “the Chinese people's dream”, and “the Chinese nation's dream”.

Nowadays, with the continuous explanation and improvement of the connotation of *Zhongguomeng*, “Chinese Dream” and “China Dream” are mostly discussed and used by people. At present, the Translation adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is “the Chinese Dream”, followed by the definite article “the” to express a specific concept. While having noticed that there is still no unified translation of these two words, the author would like to put forward some thoughts and ideas through the research that including consulting word meanings and collocations as well as comparing the usage and meaning of “China Dream” and “Chinese Dream” when they appear in Western media, and obtaining propagation acceptability through corpus.

## 2. Word Meanings and Collocations

One of the most important reasons why the translation of *Zhongguomeng* has so many versions is that it is difficult to form a unified standard is that in terms of the form of Chinese characters, *Zhongguo* (中国, China) makes people confused about whether it is a noun or an adjective. However, in English, the correspondence between “China” and “Chinese”, reflecting in Chinese words *Zhongguo* (中国, China), *Zhonghua* (中华, China), *Zhongshi* (中式, Chinese Style), *Huaren* (华人, Chinese People), *Huawen* (华文, Chinese Language) etc. and the collocation of words are complicated, which makes people uncertain whether *Zhongguo* should be translated as “China” or “Chinese” as the modifier of the noun dream.

### 2.1 Word Meaning

“China” is a noun, referring to the country.[5] “China” (n.) as an Asian country name, first appeared in 1550s as a European usage in Italian, by Marco Polo. The origin is uncertain, probably ultimately from Sanskrit Cina-s “the Chinese,” perhaps from Qin dynasty. The Chinese word for the country is *Chungkuo* (WadeGiles), *Zhongguo* (Pinyin).[6]

“Chinese” is an adjective as well as a noun,[5] which means “from or connected with China” and “a person from China, or whose family was originally from China; the language of China”. The multi-layer meaning of “Chinese” coincides with xi Jinping's saying that “the Chinese Dream belongs to the country, the nation and every Chinese”. “Chinese” first appeared as an adjective in 1570s, from China + -ese.,which means that “of or pertaining to China.” As a noun from c.1600. *Chinee* (n.) is a vulgar back-formation from this word on the mistaken notion that Chinese is a plural. As an adjective, *Chinian*, *Chinish* also were used 16c. Therefore, “China” and “Chinese”, as modifiers and referents, have been competitors for a long time.

### 2.2 Collocations

In order to find out how China and Chinese are used as noun modifiers, the author respectively looked up *Concise Oxford English – Chinese Dictionary*(2016)[7], *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (2011)[8] and *Oxford Advanced English Learner's Dictionary 9<sup>th</sup>*[5]. It can be seen from the searching results that when “China” is used as an attribute, it can be divided into two cases. The first is “China” being a pure attributive. The second is “China” followed by a noun, which becomes a compound word, as the name of a product.

Excerpt 1. “Chinatown” : An area in a city where there are Chinese restaurants, shops, and clubs and where a lot of Chinese people live.

Excerpt 2. “China Sea”: The western part of the Pacific Ocean that goes along the cost of China and Vietnam.

From the above analysis and the dictionary record, “Chinese” has a broader definition than “China” as an adjective, it can refer to “from or connected with China”, and “relating to China, its people, or their language.” Therefore, compared to “China”, “Chinese” is used more often and more flexible as an attribute. which can be manifested from the collocations given below.

Excerpt 3. “Chinese puzzle”: an intricate puzzle consisting of many interlocking pieces.

Excerpt 4. “Chinese chequers”: a board game for two to six players who attempt to move marbles or counters from one corner the opposite one star-shaped board.

According to the research of Chen. G and Cheng. L [9] on *OED Online* [10], it can be found that “China” and “Chinese” are interchangeable when they mean 'originating in China', without affecting the meaning of noun phrases. For example, *Zhuma* (a tropical Asian perennial herb) can be either “China-gras” or Chinese-grass; *Zhongguola* may be either “China wax” or Chinese wax. The OED Online (2015: China clause 2) holds that the use of the term “China” has been replaced by Chinese in general. But there is some exception of words.

Excerpt 5. “China trade”: trade with China

“Chinese trade”: trade of China

Excerpt 6. “China policy”: policy toward China

“Chinese policy”: policy of China

In the above example, China means “targeted at China; related to China”. Replace with Chinese and the meaning becomes something of “China” or “Chinese”.

When “China” is used as a modifier, its core semantics are “Chinese; from China” and “related to China”; when “Chinese” is used as a modifier, its core semantics are “from China; native to China” and with Chinese or Chinese people’s characteristics; with Chinese style”. According to this analysis, China Dream means “dream of China” or “dream related to China”; “Chinese Dream” means “a dream with Chinese characteristics (or can only be realized in China)” or “Chinese Dream”.

### 3. Corpus-Based Study of Dissemination and Acceptance of ZHONGGUOMENG’s Translation

#### 3.1 THE APPLICATION TREND OF DIFFERENT ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF ZHONGGUOMENG IN THE NEWS REPORTS OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA IN THE UK AND THE US.

Hu. K and Zhang. C [11] established a corpus of news reporting on *Zhongguomeng* of mainstream media in Britain and the United States.<sup>1</sup> The corpus contains all the news reports published by mainstream media in the UK and the us from 2008 to 2016, including the English translations of *Zhongguomeng*, namely “Chinese Dream”, “China's dream”, “China's dream”, “dream of China”, “China's American dream” and “Xi's dream”. These stories were retrieved from the LexisNexis news database.

Table 1 the Frequency of Different English Translation of *Zhongguomeng*

Translation of <i>Zhongguomeng</i>	Total	January 2008-November 2012			December 2012-December 2016		
		Total	America	UK	Total	America	UK
Chinese Dream	566	57	21	36	509	253	256
China Dream	332	48	26	22	284	206	78
China's dream	24	9	1	8	15	7	8

dream of China 8	5	4	1	3	2	1	
Xi's dream	9	1	1	0	8	3	5
China's American dream	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	940	120	53	67	820	471	349

According to the table, we can easily perceive that the frequency of using “Chinese Dream” is 1.7 times that of “China Dream”. Meanwhile, the frequency of these two translations is much higher than that of others. Consequently, “Chinese Dream” and “China Dream” are undoubtedly the most widely accepted and used by the mainstream media in the UK and the US, while the former is more likely used. After General Secretary Xi Jinping officially put forward the concept of *Zhongguomeng* in November 2012, the combined application frequency of these translated names has soared to 820 times. Among them, the frequency of “Chinese Dream” soared from 57 to 509, an increase of 8.93 times, and the frequency of “China Dream” increased from 48 to 206, an increase of 4.29 times.

The author surmised that it is because the two are more concise and more in line with the language usage habits of Native English speakers, and “Chinese Dream” is further the counterpart of “American Dream”, which are both the “adjective + noun” structure, making it easier to memorize and understand.

The study of Yang. Q [12] corroborates that *Zhongguomeng* should be translated into “Chinese Dream” from the perspective of the law of language generation. *Meiguomeng* (American Dream) has already existed, coupled with *Yingguomeng* (British Dream) and *Ouzhoumeng* (European Dream) as a reference, the *Zhongguomeng* English translation naturally should also use adjective as the attributive. Some people advocate translating “China Dream” or “China's Dream” instead of “Chinese Dream”, probably wanting to separate it from the American Dream. However, the author believes that, as *Zhongguomeng* is a highly general political term and diplomatic neologisms: expressing China's policies. It is necessary to be a norm and easy to remember and spread, so there is no need to avoid the similarity with “American Dream.”

### 3.1 The Inclusion of “China Dream” and “Chinese Dream” in Coca Corpus

In order to further explore the usage of “China Dream” and “Chinese Dream” in western countries, the author uses COCA corpus to analyze the two words.

*Table 2 the Result Of Searching “China Dream” in Coca Corpus*

2016	MOV	Streets of East L.A.	“...favorite' N'. I did good, didn't I? Your China Dream is just a few miles away.”
2014	MAG	Newsweek	...have a shot at it. To those who have already achieved the “China Dream” a decent job and ownership of an apartment or house and a car they want...
2014	MAG	Newsweek	...and ancient Chinese literature in trying to unite his citizens behind his own “China Dream”, which he defines as “the rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation.
2014	NEWS	CSMonitor	...great “rejuvenation. “Xi has lavishly promoted a vision of a “China Dream” of wealth, status, and national pride that appeals to the urban middle...
2012	ACAD	JPopularCulture	... “Shaw Movie Towns’ ”China Dream” and Hong Kong Sentiments’ ...
1993	MAG	Fortune	It's time to wake up from the China Dream and face realities. From afar, the world's fastest-growing economy looks like an...

Based on table 2, we can observe that “China Dream” with the connotation of *Zhongguomeng* that we recognize only appeared once.

Excerpt 7.

“To those who have already achieved the “China Dream”-a decent job and ownership of an apartment or house and a car... “

This article affirms the development of China’s market economy, holding an optimistic attitude towards China’s future development, and the *Zhongguomeng* explanation is also accurate. But this is not the case in several other results.

Excerpt 8.

“Xi has lavishly promoted a vision of a “China Dream” of wealth, status, and national pride that appeals to the urban middle class where he is very popular. It strikes a nationalist chord in a country that has long felt looked down on.”

The meaning given to China Dream in this article is a typical misunderstanding of *Zhongguomeng* by western countries, believing that the “Chinese Dream” is characterized by nationalism and is an attempt to no longer be despised and to dominate the world. The whole article plays up the great threat China poses to the whole world and stigmatizes China's socialist system and the policies.

Excerpt 9.

“Your China Dream is just a few miles away.” (Movie, *Streets of East L.A.*)

We can extrapolate from this example that “China Dream” here is about foreigner making money in China. In fact, this usage is very common and has been used in Western discourse for a very long time, but it is obviously not the same as what we use today.

Table 3 the Result Of Searching “Chinese Dream” in Coca Corpus

2019	SPOK	PBS NewsHour	And he is trying to, you know, build up his own Chinese Dream, which is a total control of people. NICK-SCHIFRIN): Under Xi...
2019	NEWS	New York Times	Mr. Xi's quotations on topics like building a strong military and achieving a “Chinese Dream” of prosperity and strength. The app recommends stories about Mr. Xi on...
2018	MAG	Hollywood Reporter	leaving the larger social issues to gradually play out for millions of others chasing the Chinese Dream.
2016	MOV	Crazy About Tiffany's	the American dream and - - and when you think “ American dream, “Chinese Dream,” and the vision that they both speak to, you realize that...
2015	NEWS	CSMonitor	peaceful path forward. To succeed, it must combine the American dream and the Chinese Dream. With a final flourish, he draws a four-character phrase: a dream
2014	MAG	NewRepublic	that anyone can achieve their dreams. President Xi Jinping often talks about the “ Chinese Dream, “ but has yet to define the phrase. Perhaps it's because
2013	FIC	TexasRev	...prove their leadership by good performance and lead the people to fulfill the “Chinese Dream. “ Xi (in the middle of the front row) with zhiqing...
2013	NEWS	WashPost	...of the question was streaming, some Japanese and U.S. reporters laughed. “The Chinese Dream is about cooperation, development, peace and win-win, “Xi said.
2012	WEB	thomaspmbarnett.com	...as the party of fear. At 30, Chen Kuo had what many Chinese Dream of: her own apartment and a well-paying job at a multinational corporation...
2008	MAG	Fortune	...25% of the purchase price, and bought ourselves a piece of the Great Chinese Dream. THE FRANTIC PACE OF URBANIZATION has been the transformative engine driving this country...
2008	MAG	Fortune	...another job to go to. It's not the people living the Great Chinese Dream -- with the new house and the car and the dog and maybe a...
1993	FIC	Bk:Homeland	sometimes Lew Kress, guarded the back room so diligently. To see “A Chinese Dream” cost three dollars, and required a special notched slug for the slot
1993	FIC	Bk:Homeland	a book. He took a chance.” Yeah, it's called A Chinese Dream.' Real hot stuff. Costs you three bucks.

1991	NEWS	AssocPress	are the most prominent element of an emerging middle class in pursuit of the new Chinese Dream. It's a lot like the American Dream: a color television
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Compared with “China Dream”, which has only 8 entries, “Chinese Dream” has nearly ten more results. The table suggests that before 2013, the usage frequency of Chinese Dream was not high, and there was no obvious increase or decrease. Since *Zhongguomeng* proposed by Xi Jinping was further spread and accepted in 2013, the frequency of its use has increased significantly. We can perceive from the table that there is a common usage before 2013, which refers to “the dream of ordinary Chinese people.”

Excerpt 10.

They are only 13 million, but are the most prominent element of an emerging middle class in pursuit of the new Chinese Dream. It's a lot like the American Dream: a color television this year, a stereo next; maybe a motorbike and, who knows, study abroad for the kid?

It can be seen that the connotation of “Chinese people’s Dream” carried by “Chinese Dream” has a long history. To some degree, it supports that “the profound source of the Chinese Dream lies in the people, and the ultimate destination of the Chinese Dream also lies in the people.”

As for the Chinese Dream whose usage frequency has suddenly increased after 2013, it is all about *Zhongguomeng* which has been hotly discussed by Chinese media. And often have a positive, rational, and positive attitude.

Excerpt 11.

“The Chinese Dream is about cooperation, development, peace and win-win,” Xi said. “And it is connected to the American dream and the beautiful dreams people in other countries may have.”

In this news report, the author not only correctly quoted Xi Jinping’s exposition of *Zhongguomeng*, but also highlighted Xi Jinping’s statement linking the Chinese Dream to the American dream, which was easy for Western readers to understand and reflects the media’s affirmation of *Zhongguomeng*’s connotation.

We can extract from the corpus-based study above that “China” in “China Dream” can mean “(dream) belongs China”, that is, “(dream of) Chinese country”, or “(dream) related to China” And. Chinese can mean “(dream) with Chinese characteristics”, namely. The (dream) that can only be realized in China can also mean the “Chinese (dream)”, that is, “the Chinese Dream about their own bright future”. In contrast, Chinese Dream conveys the *Zhongguomeng* more accurately.

#### 4. Conclusion

The author believes that Chinese Dream is superior to China Dream regardless of the differences in etymology, word meaning and collocation, or the usage, dissemination and acceptance of the two according to the corpus. Due to the high sensitivity of diplomatic neologisms:, improper translation in propaganda will make western media misinterpret the discourse of “Chinese Dream”, which not only reflects their negative cognition of Chinese political system or China’s development, but also has a negative impact on the cognition of “Chinese Dream” and “China’s development” in Western society. In view of this, we should use a variety of ways, accurately comprehensively promote the “Chinese Dream” and other important connotation of political neologisms to promote the spread of political discourse in the west and in China, so as to promote the west media and the public for “Chinese Dream” and even the Chinese system and form a rational and objective understanding of China’s development. Also, it’s worth mentioning that up to now, “China Dream” and Chinese Dream are still often mixed in media reports, lacking standardization and unification. It is suggested that the translation of political and diplomatic words should be both refined and standardized.

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