INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, STRATEGIC INFLUENCE, AND PUBLIC POLICY

AI TECHNOLOGIES AND XI JINPING'S "CHINESE DREAM" – A NEW PARADIGM OF SOFT POWER

Maia Gamsakhurdia[1] , **PhD in International Relations; Giorgi Chkhikvishvili**[1] ,
PhD in Social Sciences
[1] *Georgian Technical University, Georgia*

Corresponding author: Maia Gamsakhurdia; E-mail: mgamsakhurdia@eta.edu.ge

Abstract
The article analyses the geopolitical significance of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in international politics in relation to changes in the balance of political power; examines the interconnection between AI technologies and the ideological narrative of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream"; discusses the processes through which AI ensures mechanisms of social system control; and demonstrates how the strategic alliance of AI technologies and the concept of the "Chinese Dream" creates a new paradigm of soft power that transforms the traditional understanding of soft power and, through the targeted and effective dissemination of selective information, ensures the effective global spread of the values of the "Chinese Dream."

The research is based on case study methodology, documentary analysis, and discourse analysis, which makes it possible to assess the interdependence between, on the one hand, AI technologies and the narrative of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream," and on the other hand, the new paradigm of soft power.

The relevance of the article is determined by the specific characteristics of the international political agenda of the twenty-first century, in which the role of any global actor in shaping the emerging world order is fundamentally linked to its technological capabilities – particularly to critical innovations such as artificial intelligence. Over the past decade, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has gradually emerged as a global leader in the development of artificial intelligence. The country has invested heavily in cutting-edge algorithms, built large-scale data infrastructures, and articulated a clear strategic objective – to become the world's leading AI power by 2030, as outlined in the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan.

In democratic states, technological deployment is often slowed by legislative oversight, civil society monitoring, and regulatory constraints. In contrast, China has been able to leverage its authoritarian governance model, centralized decision-making, and Xi Jinping's leadership style to accelerate AI development – advances that, in turn, contribute to the consolidation of China's position within the emerging global order.

The relevance of the research is also determined by the discussion of the concept of a new paradigm of soft power, which, unlike Joseph Nye's traditional theory of soft power, carries new, non-traditional content. It expands the boundaries of soft power, integrates AI and digital

diplomacy into it, and, in the case of China, promotes the export of authoritarian technologies. The research aims to examine the role of AI technologies in the ideological narrative of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" and, based on the correlation of these two variables, to analyse the specific features of the strategy of the new paradigm of soft power.

Keywords: Xi Jinping, political leadership, technological hegemony, artificial intelligence, centralized governance, state – corporate integration, data governance, AI policy, digital authoritarianism, China's foreign policy.

Research Questions:

1. What role does AI play in the change of the global balance of power?
2. How is global technological hegemony reflected in China's strategic vision?
3. How do mechanisms of social control affect the perception of Chinese soft power in the international arena?

Research Hypothesis: The integration of AI strategies into the ideological narrative of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" creates a new paradigm of soft power that significantly increases China's global influence in international politics.

Theoretical Framework: The research uses as its theoretical framework Alan Dafoe's work "AI Governance: A Research Agenda" (Dafoe, 2018), in which the author identifies three research directions. Alongside the technical landscape and ideal governance directions, he analyzes the policy direction, which focuses on the political dynamics among governments, societies, and other actors. In his work, Dafoe also identifies the risks and opportunities associated with AI. In his view, alongside the development of artificial intelligence, it becomes possible to support the protection of policy objectives; however, such technological development is accompanied by risks, including migration, inequality, the emergence of oligopolistic elements in the global market structure, the strengthening of totalitarianism, instability, and the so-called "AI race," in which security and values may be sacrificed.

The Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence

The development of digital technologies has revolutionized all spheres of human activity. Along with the development of the internet, terms such as big data, blockchain technologies, e-governance, and others have emerged, terms that play an increasingly important role in everyday life. Approximately 35% of artificial intelligence researchers believe that the AI revolution will be as significant as the Industrial or Nuclear Revolutions. Through the transformation of existing AI technologies into so-called advanced AI technologies, it will be possible to address global issues such as international conflicts, climate change, poverty, and others. Over the next decade, AI capabilities will grow in a way that will radically change the balance of political power in the world. Those who set the standards shape the future of the world. At the present stage, competition revolves around technology, specifically artificial intelligence. The main players in AI development are the superpowers, the United States and China. The 47th President of the United States, Donald Trump, stated at his inauguration that artificial intelligence is more relevant today than ever before. According to him, the United States must be the first to create artificial general intelligence, and for this purpose, he invested 500 billion dollars in the development of artificial intelligence. China shares the same vision. In July 2017, China presented a national program, AI Made in China 2030, officially known as the "New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan," according to which China aims to become the world leader in artificial intelligence by 2030. An investment of 152 billion dollars was planned for its development (Yi, 2017). In the very first days after Trump's election, a Chinese company introduced a new innovative DeepSeek model, which may significantly change the trajectory of artificial intelligence development. While tens of millions of dollars were spent on training American LLMs, less than 6 million dollars were spent on the creation of DeepSeek (Chergilashvili, 2025).

DeepSeek's free application was downloaded by the largest number of users, which raised questions about American leadership in this sector. The share price of the AI chip designer and new Wall Street favorite Nvidia fell by 17 percent in the United States, and the company lost nearly 600 billion dollars in market value, which, according to Bloomberg, is the largest drop in the history of the U.S. stock market (Radio Liberty, 2025). DeepSeek's architectural solutions and open-source approach create a solid foundation for future development; however, at this stage, the model has certain limitations. Like OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's

Gemini, it provides relevant answers to questions, but it does not express its own opinion when questions concern topics banned in China. "Let's talk about something else," the artificial intelligence writes in such cases. It complies with the censorship of the Chinese Communist Party. For example, it returns formulaic answers when as ked about human rights violations in China and avoids discussing, for instance, the killing of peaceful protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. Its servers are located in China. This means that any information ends up in the hands of the Chinese authorities, since, as a rule, Chinese companies grant the state access to their users' personal data. Thus, artificial intelligence in the hands of politicians is gradually becoming a new component of the "soft power" strategy that transforms the traditional understanding of soft power. In China's case, the integration of artificial intelligence with digital diplomacy expands the boundaries of soft power and exports authoritarian technologies, and through the targeted and effective dissemination of selective information, it ensures the effective global spread of the values of the "Chinese Dream."

Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" Concept

Xi Jinping is the 7th President of the People's Republic of China and leads the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has 100.27 million members (Xinhua, 2025, June 30). The General Secretary holds full power over the military, the judiciary, the media, and giant state-owned companies. Xi Jinping governs the country's main political body, which consists of seven members. Four of the seven members of the Politburo belong to the generation of "red princes," which represents the highest proportion in the history of the People's Republic.

Before becoming the party secretary, Xi Jinping went through a rather difficult path. He came from the family of a well-known revolutionary. His father, Xi Zhongxun, held the position of Minister of Propaganda of the People's Republic in 1953, at the time of the future leader's birth. He joined the revolution at the age of 14, when he poisoned a teacher together with his classmates, whom they considered a counter-revolutionary. Later, when China's future leader was five years old, his father became one of the vice premiers, and Xi Jinping was enrolled in the "August First" School, intended for the children of the communist elite. The school was located in the former palace of the Qin dynasty and was known as the cradle of leaders. The descendants of the first generation of revolutionaries were called "red princes" in China.

Everything changed for Xi Jinping's family in 1962, after his father was counted among Mao's opposition. Xi Zhongxun was stripped of his positions and as signed to work as a factory laborer, while his mother was exiled to a province. After the start of the Cultural Revolution, the family's situation became even more difficult. Among other accusations, the Red Guards accused Xi Zhongxun of looking at West Berlin through binoculars during a visit to the German Democratic Republic (Zarkua, 2020). After this, Xi Jinping's father was sent to a military garrison, where he spent the following years. Later, he was included on the list of rehabilitated individuals and reinstated in the Communist Party. Xi himself also faced difficulties joining the party. His application to join the Communist Youth League was rejected seven times. He received his party card only after befriending a local commissioner in 1974 and soon became a village secretary. After graduating from Tsinghua University, he became an as sistant to Geng Biao, an old friend of his father and one of the heads of the Ministry of Defense. Xi wore a military uniform and established important connections within the party leadership. After Deng Xiaoping's reforms, when members of Xi's family went abroad to pursue careers, he became increasingly invested in the party. Finally, on November 15, 2012, Xi became General Secretary of the Communist Party and emerged as the most authoritarian leader since Mao Zedong. Under the slogan of protecting the purity of the party and the state, cases were initiated against hundreds of thousands of citizens and party officials. Xi Jinping simultaneously held ten different positions. In addition to being head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces, he chaired the most powerful party committees on Taiwan-related issues, foreign affairs, and the economy, and on March 14, 2013, he was elected President of the People's Republic of China.

As early as 2012, when Xi was General Secretary of the Communist Party, he presented to Chinese society a 14-point version of the "Chinese Dream," which became a kind of action program for China's governing elite. At an exhibition at the National Museum of China titled "The Road to National Rejuvenation," Xi stated that the Chinese Dream is the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Graham, 2025).

The "Chinese Dream" was based on archaic Chinese constructs from medieval China. In the context of foreign policy, this concept included: 1) relations with major powers, relations with the United States; 2)

peripheral relations with neighboring countries; and 3) "peaceful development" and "harmonious coexistence." Every speech and address by political leaders began with a reference to the "Chinese Dream," followed by China's peace initiatives and China's constructive role in the international system, which rested on three elements: "no conflicts or confrontation," "mutual respect," and "win-win cooperation."

The narratives created within the discourse of the "Chinese Dream" were the following:

1. "National rejuvenation," an archaic narrative implying China's liberation from the remnants of past humiliations brought by colonial powers and wars, followed by the strengthening of China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

2. "Peaceful coexistence," China's soft power political strategy aimed at the peaceful development of international relations, reducing the security dilemma caused by China's growing strength, and lowering international fears.

3. "Fighting spirit," which was to be expressed in China's more active defense of international justice on the global stage.

With his concept, Xi Jinping created the image of China as a "good neighbor" within the foreign policy discourse of the "Chinese Dream." By invoking the "Chinese Dream" in the international context, XI transformed this discourse into a campaign of Chinese soft power. It can be said that from 2013 to 2014, the discourse of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream became directly linked to the task of using soft power by the Chinese state (Callahan, 2015). Following the logic of a soft power campaign, the attempts of China's political elite to present themselves positively and to counter the oppositional "China threat" discourse become understandable.

The economic dimension of the "Chinese Dream" was represented by two initiatives: the "Two Centenary Goals" and the "Belt and Road." It also serves as the ideological foundation of the global project known as the New Silk Road, also called the Belt and Road Initiative, whose implementation falls within the sphere of interests of Central Asia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and the South Caucasus countries, including Georgia. Some countries are already fully involved in this project, while most are still at its initial stage.

Thus, the "Chinese Dream" created the entire spectrum of China's foreign, party, and economic policy, which laid the foundation for Xi Jinping's new document, "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," commonly known as "Xi Jinping Thought." A similar development occurred in China only in the cases of two general secretaries, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. This term was embedded in the national memory of the Chinese people by Xi Jinping's predecessor, Deng Xiaoping. However, during Deng Xiaoping's time, the concept implied the adoption of elements of a capitalist economy and the implementation of market reforms.

In Xi Jinping's era, "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" was reintroduced with a different meaning. The president presented this concept on October 18, 2017, at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in a report delivered before 2,300 delegates titled "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." The speech coincided with the end of the first five-year term of Xi Jinping's rule, which influenced its emotional tone. He spoke for 205 minutes. The speech was essentially built around maintaining ideological control. In one excerpt, Xi Jinping repeatedly reiterated elements of his "Chinese Dream," particularly "national rejuvenation."

In 2017, the document developed by Xi Jinping was incorporated into the Constitution of China and declared the party's new ideology, effectively equating Xi Jinping with the party's founder, Mao Zedong. Previous Chinese leaders had also attempted to enshrine their ideology in the Constitution, but none of them referred to their philosophy as "thought." Before Xi, only two leaders' names appeared in the Chinese Constitution: Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. It is evident that Xi Jinping succeeded in creating a fully distinctive political and party concept. His ideas are taught in schools and universities, and knowledge of them is mandatory for employees of state enterprises and members of the Communist Party (On.Ge, 2017).

Social Control Mechanisms in China and the AI Factor

After the adoption of the document developed by Xi Jinping, a new era began in China's political life. Even the limited freedoms that a small segment of China's most educated and promising citizens had retained were curtailed. For years, the Chinese authorities had granted them access to so-called VPN services, Western websites, and social networks that were blocked in China. Most internet users were less interested in politics and more focused on following Western celebrities on Instagram, but on April 23, 2014, the Chinese authorities finally blocked VPNs and declared their use illegal. Overnight, the majority of China's population

lost access to the free internet. Internet control was as signed to an army of 30,000 military censors. Gradually, the largest network of surveillance cameras in the world was established in China. It should be noted that there is no single, official, publicly confirmed figure for the number of cameras, since official statistics published by the Chinese authorities on the total number of cameras are not publicly available. Various non-governmental, media, or analytical studies use different methodologies. According to the latest estimates, as of 2023, up to 700 million cameras are cited (Bischoff, 2023). In this respect, the country is a record holder. For comparison, there are about 50 million such video cameras in the United States. The vast majority of these cameras are equipped with facial recognition technology.

In 2015, the Chinese authorities launched a project aimed at creating a comprehensive database based on facial recognition technology. With the help of this technology, the Chinese government collects and consolidates citizens' personal information into a unified database. The database collected by the authorities is integrated with the databases of the police, banks, and various online services. On the basis of this unified and comprehensive database, the Chinese authorities introduced the so-called social credit rating. The social credit rating system includes all citizens of China and archives complete personal information about the population. Each citizen is as signed a certain number of points based on their behavior, and these points determine whether the citizen can use various services. For example, crossing borders, obtaining a tourist visa, receiving social as sistance, applying for low-interest bank loans, and others. This also applies to politicians, although compiling their personal ratings is prohibited in China.

In recent years, the National Science Center of China developed a program that, using artificial intelligence, determines how loyal a particular political figure is to the party. The equipment was tested through the reading of brain waves and the analysis of facial scanning. Observations took place while subjects were reading articles. Based on these observations, the algorithm ultimately as signed loyalty scores to the readers (On.Ge, 2022). These activities were not only not protested by Chinese society but were met positively. According to several indirect studies, Xi Jinping's approval rating is quite high, at around 80 percent.

In contrast to the Chinese context, in democratic systems where the protection of citizens' personal data receives paramount attention, many countries have adopted special legislation to ensure the protection of personal data. In 2018, the European Union introduced the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which imposed strict frameworks on relevant actors for the protection of internet users' rights. However, it is precisely the protection of citizens' rights that hinders the rapid implementation of technology in democratic countries, since the effective functioning of artificial intelligence requires the processing of large datasets that include individual information. This is one of the main reasons why China's system has a structural advantage in terms of AI development (Zeng, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the verification of key as sumptions of international relations theory, the present study confirmed the hypothesis presented in the paper. The findings show that China effectively uses AI strategies as instruments of soft power to promote and disseminate the values of its "Chinese Dream" and authoritarian technologies on the international stage. For international audiences, authoritarian technologies become attractive as a foundation for the rapid implementation and development of strategic initiatives. This process will lead to a fundamental transformation of the international geopolitical landscape if the international community does not develop new counter-strategies.

Acknowledgements. None.

Conflict of Interest. None.

References:

Dafoe, A. (2018). *AI Governance: a Research Agenda. Governance of AI Program, Future of Humanity Institute.* University of Oxford: Oxford, UK.

Yi, Z. (2017). Robots Bring Asia into the AI Research Ethics Debate. *COSMOS.* https://cosmosmagazine.com/physics/robotsbring-asia-into-the-ai-research-ethics-debate

Shergilashvili, D. (2025). *DeepSeek: როგორ ცვლის ჩინური ინოვაცია ხელოვნური ინტელექტის სამყაროს* [DeepSeek: How Chinese Innovation is Changing the World of Artificial Intelligence]. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/deepseek-როგორ-ცვლის-ჩინური-ინოვაცია-ხელოვნური-david-shergilashvili-4ynef/ [in Georgian].

Radio Liberty (2025). *ქართულად ყველაფერი დაფქვა – როგორ ველაპარაკეთ ახალ ჩინურ AI-ს* [Everything in Georgian Was Broken – How We Talked to the New Chinese AI]. https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/რა-გვითხრა-ახალმა-ჩინურმა-ხელოვნურმა-ინტელექტმა/33295600.html [in Georgian].

Xinhua (2025, June 30). CPC Membership Grows as Primary-Level Organizations Become Stronger. C*hina.org.cn.* https://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2025-06/30/content_117954294.shtml

Zarkua, A. (2020). *პრეზიდენტი, რომელიც გამოქვაბულში ცხოვრობდა – ვინ არის სი ძინპინი* [The President Who Lived in a Cave – Who is Xi Jinping?] https://tabula.ge/ge/news/646408-prezidenti-romelits-gamokvabulshi-tskhovrobda-vin?redir [in Georgian].

Callahan, W. A. (2015). "Identity and Security in China: the Negative Soft Power of the China Dream." *Politics, 35(3-4)*, 216-229.

On.Ge (2017). *მეორე მაოს შემდეგ: სი ძინპინის სახელი და იდეოლოგია ჩინეთის კონსტიტუციაში ჩაიწერება* [After the Second Mao: Xi Jinping's Name and Ideology Will Be Written into China's Constitution]. https://on.ge/story/15558-მეორე-მაოს-შემდეგ-სი-ძინპინის-სახელი-და-იდეოლოგია-ჩინეთის-კონსტიტუციაში-ჩაიწერება [in Georgian].

Bischoff, P. (2023). The World's Most-Surveilled Cities. *Comparitech.* https://www.comparitech.com/vpn-privacy/the-worlds-most-surveilled-cities/

Zeng, J. (2020). AI and China's Authoritarian Governance. *International Affairs*

On.Ge (2022). ჩინეთში ქმნიან ხელოვნურ ინტელექტს, რომელიც პოლიტიკური პარტიის მიმართ ლოიალურებს დაადგენს [China is Creating an Artificial Intelligence That Will Identify Those Loyal to a Political Party]. https://on.ge/story/106658-ჩინეთში-ქმნიან-ხელოვნურ-ინტელექტს-რომელიც-პოლიტიკური-პარტიის-მიმართ-ლოიალურებს-დაადგენს [in Georgian].