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**Development of Strategic Foreign Policy  
Messages of the People's Republic of China  
and the Transformation of Collaborative  
Formats: The Case Study of the "17 + 1"  
Cooperation Format**

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis for obtaining a doctoral  
degree "Doctor of Science (*Ph.D.*)"

Sector – Political Science  
Sub-Sector – Political Theory

Rīga, 2022

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The Doctoral Thesis was developed at Rīga Stradiņš University,  
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Defence of the Doctoral Thesis in Political Science will take place at the public session of the Promotion Council of Political Science on 7 November 2022 at 14.00, in Hippocrates lecture theater and remotely via online platform Zoom

The Doctoral Thesis is available in RSU Library and on RSU website:  
<https://www.rsu.lv/en/dissertations>

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## **Introduction**

In the discipline of international relations and political science, the place of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the PRC, China) in the system of international relations and in the hierarchy of great powers has been the subject of discussions since the establishment of the PRC. Since 2004, the PRC's role, integration and interests in the international system have been linked to China's growing political ambition in international and regional governance and its growing economic integration into the global economy. China's active involvement in international relations is due to its political messages to the international community, which are perceived, analysed and interpreted in various ways in academic work outside China.

Within the framework of various academic-political discourses, the PRC has ranked as a threat and a partner in the Western world, and discussions on the PRC's "true intentions" and the potential of relations with the West are increasingly complemented by new foreign policy positions and explanations. This is complemented by China's proactive participation in international organizations, increasing its institutional capacity in the international system, and the development of new global, international and regional cooperation formats.

The direction of the analysis for the PRC and the forecasting of activities is academically an objective challenge. Looking only at the strategic messages of the PRC addressed in the international system, it is difficult to draw conclusions about their impact on the practical manifestations of transnational cooperation – currently the prevailing analytical opinion in the West is most often viewed in isolation from the PRC. On the other hand, looking only at practical policies makes it difficult to give link to strategic level, as the formats of cooperation are changing rapidly and regularly.

An equally pressing issue on the practical policy agenda is the growing number of clashes between the European Union, certain Central and Eastern European countries (CAEVs) and the PRC. In both academic and practical policy discussions, questions arise about the understanding of different values for co-operation and inconsistencies in the co-operation process and the desired outcome, which directly affect the development and sustainability of co-operation formats.

### **The aim of the work**

To evaluate the causality of the strategic messages of the PRC foreign policy with the dynamics of the internal environment and to identify the correlation with the formation of cooperation formats. The internal environment in the context of work is understood as the discourse that forms the foreign policy of the PRC, the political logic influencing it, the agents and their structures.

### **Research issues**

In order to achieve the goal of the work, three research questions are raised.

1. How to create an appropriate theoretical methodological model to analyse the conditions of internal dynamics of foreign policy strategic messages and their interaction with cooperation formats as already institutionalized foreign policy platforms?
2. What is the interdiscursive causality to be identified in the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy during the two presidencies?

3. What correlation can be identified between the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy and the formats of international cooperation by conducting a case study of the PRC's cooperation format with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe or the "17 + 1" cooperation format? (hereinafter referred to as "17 + 1").

The formulation of the purpose of such a doctoral thesis provides an opportunity to draw conclusions and predictions about the development scenarios of regional formats, to critique the expression and also to develop recommendations for effective cooperation based on changes in the strategic messages of the PRC foreign policy. This allows us to talk about a model in which, by identifying the interaction between the speaker (agent) and the act of speech (content and form), it is possible to conclude about the development of specific collaboration formats or transformations of existing formats.

## **Tasks**

In order to achieve the aim of the work and answer the research questions, the following tasks are set:

- 1) to evaluate social constructivism as a post-positivist approach to international relations and its possibilities for the analysis of foreign policy messages;
- 2) to develop a unified applicable model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis for the analysis of a dynamic perspective;
- 3) to deconstruct, map and evaluate the messages of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, the discourse structures and agents that contain them, in order to establish causality in the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy;

- 4) to determine the correlation of the dynamics of foreign policy strategic messages with the cooperation formats, to perform a case analysis and to deconstruct the messages and dynamics of the “17 + 1” cooperation format;
- 5) to assess the link between the dynamics of the strategic messages of the PRC’s foreign policy and the sustainability of regional cooperation formats.

### **Theoretical part of the work and research method**

The theoretical part of the work and the research method are based on the theory of constructivism of international relations and the synthesis of cognitive discourse analysis. Nicholas Onuf’s approach to social constructivism is metatheoretical and therefore inextricably linked to the research method of cognitive discourse analysis. The application of social constructivism in the analysis of China is a relatively new direction in the science of international relations and opens up new possibilities for the applicability of the theory as it is supplemented according to empirical data. It is important to point out that the author synthesizes a theory with a method for the needs of work analysis, offering to explain the elements of cognitive discourse analysis with a vision of social constructivism about the viability of speech acts and social rules in the international system. In such a research model, the discourse is assigned: 1) a time dimension (changes in the discourse over time, which allow making predictions about the further development of the discourse); 2) the interactivity dimension (discourse is not delimited, but is closely linked to the response to external stimuli and operates with constant expectation / supply calibration); 3) the dimension of coherence in the content – the discourse is linked to the preconditions and the practical manifestations of their coherence policy. The approach to the analysis of constructivism and cognitive discourse

synthesized for the analysis of large-scale text corpora uses a technological solution – MAXQDA software for the identification, coding and further processing of analysis text sets.

The dissertation uses the constructivist direction of the social constructivist Nicholas Onuf with the authors representing school of social constructivism today, and the authors of the analysis of cognitive discourse analysis – Thora Tenbrink, Christopher Hart, Gitte Kristiansen, René Dirven, Martin Müller, Luisa Godinho, Teun Adrian van Dijk, etc.

### **Empirical material used in the work**

The empirical material used in the work includes several groups of sources:

- for mapping discourse agents – official documentation of the PRC policies, CCP decisions and congressional minutes, recording and describing the structure of the PRC leaders and political elite.
- to reflect the messages and their dynamics at the level of both strategy and cooperation format – Hu Jintao’s speech corpora, Xi Jinping’s speech corpora, Prime Minister’s speech corpora addressed to the international community (in English) and the official message of the interpretation of other major discourse agents;
- PRC foreign policy guidelines, strategies and long-term foreign policy concepts.
- PRC “17 + 1” format guidelines and document sets derived from them.
- localized “17 + 1” format positions, document sets derived from them and existing analytical interpretations.

## Structure of the work

The first chapter discusses the principles of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis and develops a model for analysing the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy. Using Nicolas Onuf's approach, the principles of the formation and dynamics of agents, speech acts and rules, which are connected with the methodological approach of cognitive discourse analysis, are revealed. At the end of the chapter, a roadmap for the analysis of the strategic messages of the strategic foreign policy of the PRC is created.

The second chapter deconstructs and maps the PRC's foreign policy agents and their speeches, showing their dynamics in causality from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping's presidency, and reflecting the correlation of this causality with the formation of cooperation formats. The chapter discusses the messages of the most important strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy – *the path of peaceful development* and *the Chinese dream* – analysing their preconditions for regional cooperation.

In the third chapter, a case study of the "17 + 1" format is performed, analysing its institutional origins, assessing the dynamics of messages as part of the dynamics of the PRC's common foreign policy strategic messages, and analysing the PRC's understanding of expectations from partners. At the end of the chapter, the sustainability assessment of the regional cooperation format is performed, which is based on the forecasting possibilities offered by the causality of the strategic foreign policy messages of the PRC in correlation with the transformations of regional cooperation formats.

## **Novelty of the Doctoral Thesis**

Novelty of the work manifests itself in each of the research areas.

**1. Theoretical and methodological novelty.** The model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis is developed and applied in the work, which allows to evaluate the preconditions and potential for practical cooperation between countries, operating only on the level of symbolic messages. In particular, the model allows to make reasonable predictions about the interaction of the subjects of international relations, analysing only the statements of these subjects and their internal dynamics.

In today's academic thought about the meaning of the PRC's messages and their connection to reality, a relatively large amount of research material is available, but in a fragmented form. The discourse analysis either looks at the statements of the President of the PRC on specific topics or links to major foreign policy strategy initiatives in a particular region. It is also linked to criticism of the PRC's foreign policy strategies for their substantive inconsistency with the practical policy agenda. The theoretically developed and empirically tested model allows to use the changes of any foreign policy discourse as a forecasting tool not only for the development of the discourse itself, but also for its connection with various formats of practical policy cooperation.

The implementation of theoretical novelty provides an opportunity to evaluate specific national strategies, policy statements, documents and other informative units, if practical policy coverage is not available. Such situations occur when discourses are forward-looking – strategic documents, proposals for cooperation, visions and concepts. Messages claiming political change before it took place have been explored in the field of modern constructivism, but without a broad empirical basis. The multi-level strategies of a particular regional player and their promise for a practical policy, tested on the basis of the same strategies, are a unique added value of the dissertation.

**2. Empirical novelty – a longitudinal assessment of the causality and dynamics of the strategic messages of the foreign policy of the PRC.** The paper analyses the longitudinal strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy. It is seen as the strategic messages of foreign policy in the speeches of the Presidents of the People's Republic of China Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. The academic environment is dominated by a number of axes that compare the foreign policy approaches pursued by the two presidents, the style of governance and the weight of authority in the PRC's political discourse. However, the dynamics of the existing concepts in identifying causality in the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy are in fact an unexplored field. Speeches that go beyond the presidential style of expression but manifest a broader discourse with specific sets of ideas about the PRC's terms of cooperation with other countries are a vast resource for raising awareness of PRC policy thinking and the preconditions for its partners.

The identification of causality in foreign policy strategic messages allows not only to promote understanding of the PRC's foreign policy, but also to operate with foreign policy forecasts in the aspects of cooperation. The identification of causality in the dynamics of the messages gives direction to the development of the PRC by assessing the PRC's understanding of international relations, which is reflected in the presidential speeches. The internal logic of the messages, the coherence of the messages and other parameters of the cognitive models make the speeches of the presenters a direct source of objective ideas of the PRC about the order of international relations and preconditions for other participants in the international system.

Assessing individual speeches by President Hu or Xi addressed to the international community, it is not possible to understand what those who say objectively think. The innovative approach of the work – to evaluate the messages over a longer period of time, identifying the causality of the messages,

allows to evaluate the additional stage of PRC foreign policy – *not* only to make predictions about *works*, but also to understand the PRC’s own *ideas* – in the context of theory – dominant cognitive models. Recognizing that a high-quality and credible structure of foreign policy messages is based on the coherence between thoughts, speeches and deeds, the innovative approach of the work allows us to judge the quality of the PRC’s foreign policy as a whole. This approach adds a new dimension to the possibilities of analysing the PRC’s dominant foreign policy concepts – *peaceful uprising* and *the Chinese dream* – and assessing their role in the PRC’s potential foreign policy actions.

**3. Empirical novelty – evaluation of the correlation between the foreign policy messages of the PRC strategy and regional cooperation formats – analysis of the “17 + 1” format.** The format of the PRC cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe or the “17 + 1” cooperation format is considered as a case analysis unit. The start of institutionalization for the “17 + 1” format is considered to be 2011, when the then Chinese Prime Minister Wen *Jiabao*, on an official visit to Hungary, announced the PRC’s commitment to developing special relations with the CAEV countries, and a new cooperation format and institutional mechanism. In 2012, the PRC and 16 CAEV countries jointly established a cooperation platform in Warsaw, naming it the “16 + 1” cooperation format. The term “17 + 1” is used as the last official name during the case study. At the same time, the sources look at the entire history of the collaboration format, initially in the “16 + 1” format.

The analysis of the format in the work is performed in an innovative way – looking at how the format messages fit into the overall superstructure of the PRC’s foreign policy messages and what this means for the manifestations of the format. Due to the contradictory assessment of “17 + 1” in the political agenda, such an approach allows to add an additional dimension to the dominant polytechnic approach, which focuses on economic promises. The working

approach makes it possible to understand what the PRC expects from the other partner countries, how the conditions for cooperation are defined and where there are risks and inconsistencies in the level of values in the context of cooperation with the “17 + 1” partner countries.

The correlation described in the paper – between the concepts of strategic foreign policy messages and the manifestations of the potential of the format – provides quite practical added value for sustainable cooperation between the PRC and the CAEV countries, both in academic and practical policy debates. The basket of preconditions for cooperation at the level of understanding values and concepts of cooperation is an additional added value of this case study analysis.

In addition to these novelties, there is a novelty in the author’s choice to use PRC sources addressed in English. The discourse created by the PRC in English is becoming an increasingly important topic in the academic debate. The PRC addresses its message and at the same time postulates it as a viable offer for the English-speaking international environment, also linked to the PRC’s foreign policy phenomenon: the PRC has taken the initiative to explain its perceptions of international relations and foreign policy to the West. Such a corpus is considered to be a serious application for floating the views of the PRC in the discourse of international relations, and accordingly to be analysed as a closed set.

The analysis of such a set is aided by the applied research method – the analysis of cognitive discourse, which pays attention to the conceptual models of worldviews, in this case forms of cooperation, international relations and their dynamics. It has insignificant specific meanings of words, but important cognitive models, described desires, considered in time and in their development – with internal coherence and continuity. Cognitive models are projected and read directly in the partner-recipient space, where English is

predominant, and the description of specific phenomena is repeated, using various notations, descriptions and words – constructing the PRC directly in English. Such a choice of sources, defining the boundaries of the source and its representative discourse in a collaborative linguistic space, is not considered unique, but is still a relatively rare approach to PRC research.

# 1 Synthesis of Social Constructivism and Cognitive Discourse Analysis

## 1.1 Nicholas Onuf's constructivism and its applicability in the analysis of foreign policy rules

In the analysis of international relations, where it is necessary to synthesize the culturally unique vision of players and the topicalities of the generally accepted global political structure and agenda, it is necessary to look at the philosophical theory of international relations in general. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson arranges and complements the classical theories of positivism / postpositivism and the corresponding theories of international relations, while proposing to harmonize competing methodological proposals in a pluralistic philosophical context. Jackson's primary task is to develop a unified and inclusive system of research approaches. Each is associated with different philosophical traditions, ontological and epistemological settings in which any researcher must define his or her research coordinates. The most important factor in determining these coordinates is the characterization of the relationship between *the knower* and *the known*, as well as the relationship between knowledge and the way it is observed.<sup>1</sup>

The author of the dissertation chooses to analyse the research subject involved in the architecture of international relations in a cultural context and at the same time in the sub-direction of analyticism – social constructivism theory, at the same time deepening the theory with elements of transfactualism, synthesizing N. Onuf's constructivist direction and cognitive discourse analysis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, Patrick T. 2011. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics (New International Relations)*, Routledge, New York, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Sterling-Folker, Jennifer. 2013. *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Boulder, Colorado Lynne Rienner Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-58826-822-8, 8.

From N. Onuf's view of social constructivism, existing and new norms, messages, discourses, foreign policy concepts, strategic messages, cooperation models and architectures in international relations are socially constructed rules, the construction of which is a complex process of agents, ideas, interests and other components. Social rules, as a mediator between agents, addressees, their interests and ideas, agents and agencies, is the starting point of the analysis in N. Onuf's view – because the rules are those to which the other participants in the process are subject. How rules are constructed and who constructs them, under what circumstances – there are questions to be answered so that social constructivism can be applied in practical analysis.

## **1.2 The process and components of constructing social rules**

From the point of view of constructivism, social rules form a process in which people / society and the national / international system construct each other on a lasting and reciprocal basis. Legal laws (national and international) are also rules, but social rules are not limited to the law – they go beyond written material. Customary law is also an example in jurisprudence, when an unwritten law becomes a source of law; however, social rules cover all areas of public communication, not just those related to jurisprudence. The process of interaction between society and people is endless, but the rules are changing – it is possible to determine their characteristics and impact by identifying certain rules, which can also be called discourse or, more broadly, the paradigm.<sup>3</sup> Rules are a setting that tells people and countries *what to do*.

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<sup>3</sup> Milliken, Jennifer. 2001. Discourse Study: Bringing Rigor to Critical Theory. In: Fierke, Karin M., Jørgensen, Knud E. *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp Publications, 136.

In the discipline of international relations, starting with the analysis of rules can move in two directions, both from agents to the international dimension and from the international dimension to agents. One direction should be maintained within the framework of one research, because otherwise the flow of information in the discourse analysis is too large and the reference point is lost.<sup>4</sup> In this work, the author uses the second way – verifying the way of constructing social rules in the direction from agents to rules, because the aim of the work is to determine the factors forming the rules, authorization schemes and content, not to reveal the agents that secretly dominate the system.

### **1.2.1 The role of agents in rulemaking**

David M. McCourt, a new generation theorist of international relations constructivism, puts N. Onuf's constructivist relationship scheme in a dynamic context, pointing out that the rules that follow are dynamically circulated – helping agents stand out from the rest and influence the world around them – they become real, only in the practical interaction of the actors. That's why McCourt offers a narrowing approach to constructivism – relationalism, which shifts the focus of analysis to actors and their understanding of interpersonal relationships.<sup>5</sup> David Brochman *expresses* the thesis of language as a self-binding tool. Linguistic expressions, although rooted in seemingly grammatical forms, play an important role in the attractiveness and viability of the described idea on the agenda of practical politics, precisely in its forms (perceptibility, use

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<sup>4</sup> Onuf, Nicholas. 2012. *Making Sense, Making Worlds: Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations*, Routledge, New York and London, 117.

<sup>5</sup> McCourt, David M. 2016. *Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism*, University of California-Davis, *International Studies Quarterly*, 60, 476.

of words, attractiveness of expression).<sup>6</sup> Onuf renames this extreme effect of language on reality a convention. In the context of the work, studying the dynamics of the PRC's foreign policy, it is possible to observe a change in reality, because the convention, initially externally manifested and internally non-binding, nevertheless plays a crucial role in the country's self-understanding.

In conclusion, a social rule or set of social rules becomes a universal convention only if it is internally consistent, recognized and accepted in the logic systems of all agents. The role of agents in the construction of social rules is, from a formal point of view, linked to their primary desire – to turn the rules they create into a convention – the new norm of the particular social system. To paraphrase Onuf and McCourt's argument – the primary agent wants to have the truth and the social group's idea of the truth. The agent's main tool in this process is the act of speech or the use of language to perform social construction.

## **1.2.2 The role of the speech act in shaping the rules**

The speech act is the main tool used by agents to operate in the rule construction system. The branching of speech acts allows the agent to choose different strategies in a dynamic relationship with the addressee of the rule, moving his set of ideas towards the creation or strengthening of the convention. The act of speech is a connecting element – a verbal bridge between the agent and the addressee – so it is always developed with the aim of *being understood* and at the same time with the aim of *changing that understanding*.

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<sup>6</sup> Brochman, David R. 2013. *Dialectical Democracy through Christian Thought: Individualism, Relationalism, and American Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 146.

A speech act is also a form of enforcement. The form of realization has several categories – commissive, assertive, etc. In a socially constructed world, there is a constant change in social rules. Looking at the acts of speech that drive this change in a dynamic context, it is also possible to judge the degree of reliability of the rules themselves. Fully reliable rules include all forms of speech acts in a balanced way. The dominance of individual acts of speech makes it possible to judge the meaning and further development of common rules.

### **1.3 Rules as messages in interaction with cognitive discourse analysis**

The connection of the rules with the society is revealed both in terms of content and functions – in terms of what they say and what result the activity achieves. N. Onuf admits that it is practically impossible to determine exactly where a rule ends and its practice begins (or any researcher operates within his own paradigm), nor can it be determined how far a rule is influenced by others. Therefore, it is more objective to analyse groups or sets of rules.

Vendulka Kubalkova places great emphasis on written materials as the maximum link between imaginary (rules) and real-world rules (normative practices) in today's world.<sup>7</sup> Contracting is a way of institutionalizing and legalizing rules so that they become self-evident and thus create a safer environment.

Given the importance of institutional formalization in the context of the tendency for speech acts to diversify, multiply and become more comprehensive, any political settings and their formalization can be placed on two axes – the axis of formalization and the scope of sectors. The degree of formalization of the rules

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<sup>7</sup> Onuf, Nicholas, Kubalkova, Vendulka, Kowery, Paul (Ed.). 1998. *International relations in a Constructed World*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp Publications, 71.

and the axes of extension of the scope coincide with the vectors of interest of the agent in relation to the rules it directs.

### **1.3.1 Principles of discourse analysis and method of cognitive discourse analysis**

Cognitive discourse analysis fits into the broader direction of discourse analysis, which is characterized by general elements that permeate all subfields of discourse analysis. First, the specifics of discourse analysis are based on the potential of interdisciplinarity – the discussion about the belonging of discourse analysis to the field of research method or theory is widespread in the literature of social science research methods. The recommended way to understand the nature of discourse analysis is based on the authorship of the concept of discourse, which has further developed in the sub-directions of discourse analysis, which is closely related to the discourses of specific cases – Marxist discourse analysis, feminist discourse analysis, oriental, etc. This can be explained by the origin of the concept – in the context of this work it is unambiguous in the definition of the discourse of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. The statements of both authors serve as the guiding principles for the worldview of discourse analysis.

Cognitive discourse analysis is a complex method that neutralizes language and its fixed expressions as isolated units, but also looks at the patterns of opinion created by the authors of the text.

The basic principle in cognitive discourse analysis is to compare the cognitive notions contained in the texts, their internal coherence and coherence with other related notions: *“Thus, cognitive analysis is the analysis of the parts of the discourse responsible for cognitive concepts, mental representations ...”*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Van Dijk, A. Teun. 2000. *Cognitive Discourse Analysis*. Netherlands: University of Amsterdam Press, 2.

In order to capture the patterns of representations that text offers, cognitive discourse analysis focuses on the following principles: lexical meanings and connotations, local coherence, presuppositions, indirect statements (implicits). The analysis of cognitive discourse allows to reveal the models of ideas, while their dynamics in the context of international processes, and in particular the institutional form of cooperation, can be explained by the theoretical approaches of social constructivism.

### **1.3.2 Roadmap for the analysis of the transformation of foreign policy messages and cooperation formats**

Social constructivism explains and describes the interaction of conditional discourses in the discourse marketplace, while discourse analysis respects the unique role of each actor. Accordingly, the content of the discourse and its form elements are essential in the process of discourse analysis in order to form a reliable representation of social constructions. Thus, the author proposes to combine social constructivism and discourse in one model of analysis.

The purpose of creating a unified model of constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis is its applicability in practice: 1) broadening the scope of analysis – from international relations to cultural-contextual discourses, in a unified system as a practical implementation of knowledge in the sense of Jackson; 2) the road map can also be used to analyse other discourses and their viability, with the development of new messages of international relations that differ from the dominant Western discourse on the architecture of international relations; 3) the model must provide an opportunity to analyse discourses in dynamics – both internal and external, in order to include variable elements in the context of relationalism, as well as to actually determine the openness of discourse to changes from external systems of influence.

In the context of the dissertation, the global foreign policy discourse of the PRC after its analysis according to the written road map is compared and attributed to the subordinate level of regional relations – “17 + 1” cooperation format discourse and its dominance, thus allowing conclusions about both levels and coherence from both a dynamic and a content perspective. Both levels also have different relations with the political agenda – where the global concept of *the Chinese dream* outlines the architecture of the international system and the conceptualization of global governance, the regional cooperation format is closer to the political agendas of other countries; which allows to conceptually link the conceptual normative analysis with the agenda and aspects of practical policy within the framework of the doctoral thesis, while maintaining the framework of postpositivism.

Table 1.1

**A combined roadmap for the analysis of social constructivism and discourse for the deconstruction and analysis of the foreign policy messages**

<b>Analysis step</b>	<b>Actions to be taken</b>	<b>Correspondence in the empirical part of the work</b>
1 Choice of foreign policy narrative	The author chooses the concept of the Chinese dream, with its background in Hu Jintao’s presidency and its possibility in Xi Jinping’s presidency	Chapter 2. Dynamics of PRC foreign policy agents and speech acts
2 Description of the set of dominant meanings of discourse and the set of power relations	Defining the boundaries of discourse, mapping discourse agents	2.1 Discourse agents of the social system of the PRC
3 Identification of discourse messages and ideas using cognitive discourse analysis	Hu Jintao pre-Chinese dream period analysis using cognitive discourse analysis approach	2.2 Analysis of Hu Jintao’s Foreign Policy Messagees – Historical Determinants, Interpretation and Discourse Elements for Explaining the Potential of Cooperation (with subsections)

Table 1.1 continued

Analysis step	Actions to be taken	Correspondence in the empirical part of the work
3 Identification of discourse messages and ideas using cognitive discourse analysis	Xin Jinping’s Chinese dream using a cognitive discourse analysis approach	2.3 Shi Jinping’s interpretation of the Chinese dream concept and its connection with potential cooperation formats (with subchapters)
4 Explanation of the rules of social constructivism and the dynamics of speech acts of the results of cognitive discourse analysis	An explanation of Hu and Xi’s Deconstruction of foreign policy concept with reference to aspects of forms of cooperation. Proposals for testing the case study format	2.3.1–2.3.2 Influence of the dynamics of foreign policy concept and speech acts of this period on potential cooperation formats
5 Evaluation and verification of the conclusions of step 4 of the case analysis – regional cooperation format	Review and analysis of the “17 + 1” cooperation format	Chapter 3. Case study “17 + 1” cooperation format (with subchapters)
6 Drawing conclusions about the coherence of “17 + 1” with the strategic foreign policy narrative and linking elements	Looking at the Chinese dream and the “17 + 1” format in general and drawing conclusions about the impact of the strategy concept on the dynamics of the cooperation format and vice versa	3.2 Dynamics of the cooperation format “17 + 1” in the context of the development of the Chinese dream 3.2–3.3 Evaluation of the operation and sustainability of the cooperation format “17 + 1”

It is important to stipulate here the methodological execution of the third and fourth analysis steps with the help of MAXQDA. When using data processing with MAXQDA, the internal methodology of this software and the use of its full potential is essential. Different strategies for using software are used to work with large text combinations.<sup>9</sup> As part of the dissertation, the author chose to use a 5-level strategy for word processing (5 level QDA) using MAXQDA and similar software.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Kuckartz, Udo, Radiker, Stefan. 2019. *Analyzing Qualitative Data with MAXQDA*, Springer, London.

<sup>10</sup> Woolf, Nicholas, Silver, Christina. 2017. *Qualitative Analysis Using MAXQDA: The Five Level QDA Method*, Routledge, NY.

## 2 Dynamics of the PRC's Foreign Policy Agents and Speech Acts

In the analysis part of the dissertation, the author uses the steps of the synthesized road map of social constructivism and discourse analysis. According to the steps of the model, when starting the analysis of a strategically important foreign policy messages, it is necessary to stipulate the set of rules, the justification of choice of message, as well as to mark the boundaries of the analysed discourse (aware of the following iteration during the analysis process).

The author has chosen the concept of the *Chinese dream* for analysis for several reasons:

1. *The Chinese dream* is a recognized strategic message in both the PRC and Western discourse. Although the understanding and attitude towards the content, meaning and meaning of the concept differs, at the level of the concept it is a real discursive unit.<sup>11</sup>This is an important aspect, as it is not a marginalized entity that is analysed, but a strategic concept (recognized by all parties as the scope of goal-oriented message).
2. *The Chinese dream* is important because it is linked to a relatively new era in PRC foreign policy – the idea of peaceful ascent (development), which is the beginning of China's policy of exiting.<sup>12</sup>In this perspective, *the Chinese dream* is a clearly defined domestic but also a foreign policy message, which by default presupposes interaction and expectations from the international community. In its initial stage,

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<sup>11</sup> Liu, Youngtao. 2006. *American Neocons' Discourse on China: Impacts and Limitations* [online]. Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Publications: International Review, Summer, [cited 07.02.2009]. Available: [http://www.sis.org.cn/Sh\\_Yj\\_Cms/Mgz/200602/200872423442T6BS.PDF](http://www.sis.org.cn/Sh_Yj_Cms/Mgz/200602/200872423442T6BS.PDF), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Bai, Shouyi. 2008. *An Outline History of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 9. ISBN 978-7-119-05296-0.

*the Chinese dream* is at the same time a conceptual concept that also includes the potential of practical steps, the dynamics of which allow us to assess the achievement of the potential in the future as well.

3. *The Chinese dream* is a pervasive element in the PRC's political strategy, including a change in the PRC's senior leadership, which allows it to be analysed as a singular and autonomous discursive entity, which is, of course, closely linked to its authorship, but following, at the same time, its logic and dynamics. The sub-concepts explaining *the Chinese dream*, their manifestations and applicability to foreign partners and the international community – are the sets of rules to be analysed.

## **2.1 Discourse agents of the social system in the PRC**

In this chapter, the mapping of discourse agents is performed, looking at the agents' relations with the directions of foreign policy message formation, authorization and strategic choices in the formation of foreign policy cooperation formats. The party affiliation dimension in the PRC is considered to be the first and most important discourse of power for the fixation, dynamics and impact assessment of agents. The aspect of party affiliation is both a recognized aspect of official discourse for entering the political elite of the PRC,<sup>13</sup> and at the same time includes clear boundaries for the roles of agents in the social system and offers a first step to an in-depth assessment of their specific power discourse.

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<sup>13</sup> Bo, Zhiyue. 2001. *China's Elite Politics: Governance and Democratization (Series on Contemporary China)*, Beijing, 2–4.

Although in practice only the CCP plays an active role in the manifestation of power at the national level, essentially making the PRC a one-party state, eight so-called minority parties with limited powers still play a key role in the overall social fabric and its strengthening.<sup>14</sup>

The second important chapter in the mapping of discourse agents is the social arrangement of the vertical and horizontal of power – the division of power in political institutions. Western academic literature holds that the PRC is a *party-state* in which the CCP is the most important vertical of power. Formally, China is ruled by a dictatorship of the proletariat, which is, in principle, a complete dispersal of power in all institutions and at the same time serves as an agent and an actor in itself.<sup>15</sup> The hierarchy of the power of knowledge in the case of the PRC states that not only the top management of the PRC (who has unquestionable copyright and indisputability), but also academics, experts, interpreters in the hierarchy of power, are important agents in creating and strengthening discourse. who are authorized for such activities.

## **2.2 Analysis of Hu Jintao’s foreign policy messages – elements of historical determinants, interpretation and discourse for today’s interpretation**

Hu Jintao’s analysis of foreign policy messages is based on his own speeches, which were officially translated into English and addressed to the international community from 2002 to 2012, as well as on the works of Hu’s dominant interpreters, which reflect the concepts of Hu’s foreign policy. It should be noted at the outset that the Hu period is dominated by the addressing

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<sup>14</sup> Tselichtchev, Ivan. 2011. *China Versus the West: The Global Power Shift of the 21st Century*. London: John Wiley & Sons, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Jakobson, Linda, and Dean Knox. 2010. New Foreign Policy Actors in China. *SIPRI Policy Paper* (26). Available at <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRIPP26.pdf> [Accessed on February 6, 2015].

of interpreters' work to the international community, which is fundamentally different from the analysis of Sji concepts analysed below, where foreign language discourse is dominated by Sji's own interpretations rather than explanations. In the review and analysis of concepts, both here and in Xi's foreign policy concepts, the conclusions of the analysis are based on the conclusions of the cognitive discourse analysis as a whole, while references to specific speeches and texts are used to refer directly to the particular source.

The analysis of cognitive discourse here clearly shows the presence of two cognitive models as prerequisites – Hu's message about the PRC as a history-based development trajectory country – which takes over and improves Western thoughts and settings; as well as a model in which criticism from others of China's intentions is a logical component, due to the misunderstanding and ignorance of others.

### **2.2.1 The beginnings of the Chinese dream discourse – an insight into the determining factors**

In the Hu period, China's image in international relations under the new rules of international relations is made up of two parts: what China is and what China is not in the international environment. What China is has been primarily defined on the basis of semi-colonial values, as the normative element is constructed on the basis of the value system of the former metropolis, and, in the words of *the Chinese dream* interpreters themselves, Marxism-Leninism, which has determined China's development in the second centenary of its dream, is part of Western culture. Moreover, the very normative element of what China should become is also commensurate with the level of the former metropolises – Chinese political scientists themselves blame China not only for the economic, which would be logical, but also for the cultural backwardness, thus, pointing to

a certain semi-colonial state complex in the state's self-assessment.<sup>16</sup> It should also be noted that the birth of *the Chinese dream* is associated with the transition from postcolonialism to socialism, making the concept of colonialism a point of reference in assessing the history of China's rules of international relations.

What China is not, in turn, is defined by comparing its national values with those countries that did not have them, citing this as the cause for China's current path of peaceful development. In principle, wherever Chinese political scientists mention China's historical experience and its connection to setting the modern regulations, the reference is made to China's national values.

### **2.2.2 The concept of peaceful development**

Following the setting of Hu Jintao and his interpreters, a separate group of summary text conclusions and preconditions about the Chinese population and their connection with historical temperament can be identified. Peaceful development is a compilation of precise operations offered by China to be performed. In Hu's view, it is an inevitable choice made by China based on national conditions. By summarizing the general conclusions and preconditions of the text with the method of cognitive discourse analysis, the concept of peaceful development and the setting of a harmonious society within it, as well as the factors forming them, schematically provide a clear picture of Hu and his interpreters.

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<sup>16</sup> Li, Ruogu. 2008. *Institutional Suitability and Economic Development: Development Economics Based on Practices in China*. Beijing: China Economic Publishing House, 15. ISBN 978-7-5017-8836-1.

### **2.2.3 Influence of the dynamics of foreign policy concepts and speech acts of the Hu period on potential cooperation formats**

Through his foreign policy messages, Hu declares the preconditions for potential collaborative formats. In this global vision with China's full entry into the world economy, the norms of international relations should change accordingly. If, in the post-colonial period, the international relations were geared towards the unification of civilizations, imposing discriminatory norms on non-Western countries leading to racism and discrimination within semi-colonialism. Thus, the justice of semi-colonialism, which is put forward as a separate factor, was a factor that caused inequalities between states, both economically and morally. Thus, international relations are not perceived as fair, as demonstrated by the West's achievements in the post-colonial period; accordingly, it is now China's task to enter international relations as an equal player to ensure that this situation does not recur under any circumstances with any country.<sup>17</sup>

The Hu period proclaims China's commitment in its new rules of international relations to prevent the injustices the West has committed by promoting the creation of a semi-colonial system and hindering its abolition. Therefore, the principle of justice is one of the most important in shaping the new model of international relations from Hu's perspective.

In the Hu period, there is an absolute identification with those aspects of cooperation that are against China. On the basis of these comparisons of opposing views and criticisms – what the world thinks of China and how it affects

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<sup>17</sup> Shi, Yinghong. 2006. *The Evolution of International Norms in Modern and Contemporary Civilization Goods* [online]. Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Publications: International Review, Summer, [cited 07.02.2009]. Available: [http://www.sis.org.cn/Sh\\_Yj\\_Cms/Mgz/200602/200872423442T6BS.PDF](http://www.sis.org.cn/Sh_Yj_Cms/Mgz/200602/200872423442T6BS.PDF), 14.

what China thinks of the world – a significant part of what China sees as conditions for new cooperation platforms is also being formed.

China's peaceful development, which it is ready to transfer to the entire international system on the basis of its example, is based on China's national circumstances, historical and cultural traditions and understanding of today's development trends. These are aspects that the new system should take into account for each country, as it generally promotes a tolerant and mutually respectful harmonious international community. Mutual honesty and trust in the international system are complemented by a factor of mutual benefit, which is conducive in all circumstances, including in the new system: this is a series of concepts that are part of Hu's foreign policy concepts; however, it can only be seen as the basis for *the Chinese dream*, which is further filled with content by the current President of the PRC, Xi Jinping. In essence, Hu formulates aspects of how China should build cooperation in specific cooperation platforms, determines the background values, but whether the toolkit on how to do so in a unified cognitive model appears in Xi's foreign policy discourse.

### **2.3 Xi Jinping's interpretation of *the Chinese dream* concept and context of discourse**

The interpretation of *the Chinese dream* by the current President of China, Xi Jinping, must first be seen in the context of the change in political leadership in 2012/2013. The context of leadership change provides the first impetus for discourse change, especially in systems where political leadership is essential.<sup>18</sup> The 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the PRC, whose main motive was the change of political leadership – mentioning the change of PRC presidents to Hu Jintao as the most important, marks the transformation of these first elements

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<sup>18</sup> Choi, Eun, Givens, John, MacDonald, Andrew. 2021. From Power Balance to Dominant Faction in Xi Jinping's China. *The China Quarterly*, 1–22.

of leadership, the first actions of the president. Given the specifics of the PRC, at the time of the change of leadership, the logical debate on the influence of the new president on the development of the PRC as a whole was essential, opening up the question of one person's influence in the PRC's political system. In the early days of Xi's presidency, views split into two camps, claiming that the PRC's political system was heavy enough and that one person, although president, could not significantly change the course of the country<sup>19</sup> and viewpoint on the possibility that there is spill over of values also into PRC policy.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the fact of Xi's coming to power is in itself relevant in analysing how it fits into the PRC's political paradigm and how the new leader's initiatives and room for manoeuvre fit into the context of the PRC's foreign policy rules. On the one hand, it could be emphasized that Xi Jinping's own pro-Westernism is an aspect that is already the result of a paradigm shift in peaceful development and a harmonious world paradigm, but also a rather stereotypical guiding principles for the development of the PRC and the international system, which is essentially a transformation of previous cognitive concepts.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, even before Xi Jinping defined his interpretation of *the Chinese dream* and its dynamic development began, it is already possible to reach the following conclusions in the context of the transition of the presidency.

Xi Jinping, with his personality traits, fits organically into the foreign policy framework of Hu Jintao in the PRC, suggesting that these Hu's rules are strong enough to influence the development of the political environment

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<sup>19</sup> Zhao, Kejin. 09.09.2013. *Guiding Principles of China's New Foreign Policy*. Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy. Available at <http://carnegietsinghua.org/publications/?fa=52902> [Accessed on February 6, 2015].

<sup>20</sup> Yan, Xuetong. 2014. From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 7(2): 153–184.

<sup>21</sup> Qin, Yaqing. 2014. Continuity through Change: Background Knowledge and China's International Strategy. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 7(3): 285–314.

domestically (the rules themselves affect the agents themselves); as well as the new president himself is part of the rules (their bearer).

At the same time, Xi Jinping calls for a potential shift in emphasis in foreign policy messages, pointing to the risk of overturning previous messages (somewhat inconsistent), which may include an element dangerous to the international system, namely the possibility of deviating from the concept of peaceful development.

Xi Jinping begins his presidency with the potential for ambivalence, which, both in the West and in the PRC's own vision, allows the new PRC to be linked to the values that underpin the PRC's foreign policy paradigm.<sup>22</sup> Xi Jinping has the opportunity and at the same time the need to outline the further path of the PRC's strategic development in the foreign policy discourse with his interpretation of *the Chinese dream*.

### **2.3.1 Xi Jinping's strategic messages of *Chinese dream*, their form and conceptual content**

Xin Jinping's strategic messages for *the Chinese dream* are rooted in Xin Jinping's speeches, as well as in the underlying laws and regulations of the CCP. The analysis of Xi's foreign policy messages and cognitive models is based on his own speeches, which were officially translated into English and addressed to the international community from 2012-2017, as well as on the works of dominant Xi interpreters, which reflect Hu's concepts of non-political direction. With the help of the MAXQDA program, ~ 1100 pages of speech text were entered, the list of speeches in the text corpus can be found in the highlighted literature and sources.

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<sup>22</sup> Breslin, Shaun. 2013. China and the Global Order: Signalling Threat or Friendship? *International Affairs*. 89(3): 615–634.

It can be concluded that if Hu's messages still contained only a search for a vision of the PRC, a frequent explanation of concepts, a response to Western criticism, a more reactive than proactive definition of concepts. Meanwhile, Xi's messages are internally consistent, and in several respects. First, their frame and structure are consistent.

Xi's *Chinese dream* serves as a strategic message that combines the problems of the PRC's own identity in international relations, while feeling like a superpower, a regional power and a developing country (whose status depends on the context), as *the Chinese dream* includes references to all forms of this identity, justifying the development path of the PRC and eliminating inconsistencies in these concepts within an internal logical framework. In this way, the task of Xi's *Chinese dream* is not only to become accepted and used among the addressees and partners at the messages level, but also to be realized in the contexts of normalization, institutionalization and proceduralist development. For this reason, it is also necessary to look at the format of regional, tactical cooperation in order to understand, together with the strategic message, the potential of cooperation – how far *the Chinese dream* can be realized in the context of practical agreements and cooperation, constraints and expectations. determine the specific format for cooperating countries.

Thus, when talking about internal coherence, as well as understanding the meaning of expressions, the question of further coherence of the strategy in tactical cooperation formats, which are clearly understood here as China-proposed cooperation formats, and the "17 + 1" cooperation format analysed. From a strategic perspective, it can be concluded that Xi does not emphasize the explanation of meanings or that any dominant connotations are possible, as was the case in Hu messages. Thus, it can be argued that Xi's message to the international community at the strategic level is unambitious, that the addressees should perceive their meanings in particular – at the strategic level it is stated

that they provide specific perceptions, but how they are realized at the tactical operational level. Thus, it can be concluded that Xi's *Chinese dream* provides a platform for practical cooperation as a prerequisite; their existence ensures its credibility and at the same time includes the possibility of continuing the PRC's messages.

### **2.3.2 Influence of Xi's period foreign policy concepts and speech acts dynamics on potential cooperation formats**

The perspective of open messages of cognitive discourse analysis explained through the perspective of social constructivism allows to talk about foreign policy concepts as rules and acts of speech with their own conditions and motivations for viability. Looking at the internal dynamics of *the Chinese dream* from Hu to Xi, it can be concluded that Xi emphasizes the role of PRC achievements, the leading role, the role of force in *the Chinese dream* – thus the speeches become more assertive in explaining reality, not just the construct of identity, as was the case in the formulations of Hu's *Chinese dream ideas, which are dominated by the use of historical elements to explain present identities and address future concerns*.

The presence of military issues and the special emphasis on issues of territorial integrity is a significant novelty in Xi's perspective, which would be unthinkable in the format of Hu's *Chinese dream*, which places a predominant emphasis on peaceful concepts in all their manifestations. Thus, the main difference is also visible here: if Hu tries to equate the PRC with other countries, Xi's *Chinese dream* makes the PRC a potential leading country for the common good; In the Hu version, China demands recognition of equivalence, while in the Xi version, after recognition of achievements; while Hu's *Chinese dream* does not criticize the international system but points to the unreasonableness of unilateralism in the international system, Xi's *Chinese dream* criticizes all

reliance on liberal democracy in international systems, offering evidence of the effectiveness of PRC cooperation models.

The predominance of declarative speech acts, the specific manifestations of express speech acts, and the deficit of commission speech acts clearly indicate that *the Chinese dream* needs to be continued at a tactical level to make up for the shortcomings in the viability of social construction rules. Moreover, from the content elements of the cognitive discourse analysis, it can be stated that there are two relative “bottlenecks” in Xi’s speech, where it is necessary to further develop the ideas expressed. Firstly, the speech is dominated by the economic role of the PRC and economic promises, the strategic level of which is not enough and requires local expression. Secondly, *the Chinese dream* is also a proposal to make the PRC’s policy path more efficient and to take international relations to another, more effective level, according to Xi. The strategy alone cannot meet both needs without tactical action, so Xi’s *Chinese dream* is not only a promise for new cooperation platforms, but also a promise for the intensification of their economic and political relations.

Regarding the explanation of social constructivism, it is still possible to conclude about the proposals of the content of the included speech acts. Namely, the purpose of each rule (in this case Hu and Xi’s foreign policy concept) is to become conventional; and both the degree of formalization of the rules and their complexity and scope are essential in this process. By complexity is meant here the entrenchment of rules in many versions of institutional reality. There are also some trends in this respect. First, Hu’s proposals are informal, but initially very complex. Xi’s rules, on the other hand, tend to be formalized and then move dynamically towards increasing complexity and scope. Accordingly,

if in 2012/2013 Xi has a somewhat simpler, more aggressive context, then as 2017 approaches formalization, a new dimension of complexity will emerge in the rules, the manifestations of which have the potential to appear in regional formats.

### 3 Case Study of the “17 + 1” Cooperation Format

The “17 + 1” format is unique in that, in the strategic context, it is part of Xi’s comprehensive Belt and Road initiative, which complements the “17 + 1” format but also introduces new conceptual settings. The “17 + 1” cooperation format was publicly announced in 2011-2012, marking a special cooperation between China and 16 Central and Eastern European countries. In essence, Xi talks about “17 + 1” through the “Belt and Road” initiative, whose role and impeccable reputation has been so important to Xi that its scope has been expanded even during its implementation.<sup>23</sup>

In both the Band and Road and “17 + 1” initiatives for special cooperation with specific countries in the region, the prevailing discourse in Western society was that China already had a well-prepared and detailed plan for cooperation.<sup>24</sup> However, the format is characterized as a multi-layered multilateralism initiative,<sup>25</sup> encompassing large sets of messages, conveying messages to China, blending the boundaries of policy and national and global politics. Accordingly, an analysis of the dynamics of the messages, both in terms of form and content, applicable to the “17 + 1” format, identifying the same parameters as in the discourse of *the Chinese dream* and looking at their coincidence, allows us to stick to a clear line of analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> Bērziņa-Cherenkova, Una, Aleksandra. 2016. BRI Instead of OBOR – China Edits the English Name of its Most Ambitious International Project, *Latvian Institute of International Affairs*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Li, Xing. 2019. *Mapping China's 'One Belt One Road' Initiative*. Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Minghao, Zhao. 2016. *The Belt and Road Initiative and its Implications for China–Europe Relations*. The International Spectator Volume: Issues: 1–10, Taylor and Francis Group, 4.

### 3.1 Origin and institutional aspects of the “17 + 1” cooperation format

Over the last 30 years, the PRC and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced various phases of fragmented relations. The “17 + 1” format initiative in the Brown’s Movement of these relations <sup>26</sup>served both as a new regional approach, as a platform for cooperation in a comprehensive policy of other relations initiatives, and as part of the PRC’s major exit policy as a whole. Important institutional and origin aspects of the format are mentioned here, which are closely related to the cognitive models discussed in the discourse analysis below. The start of institutionalization for the “17 + 1” format is considered to be 2011, when the then Chinese Prime Minister Wen *Jiabao*, on an official visit to Hungary, announced the PRC’s commitment to developing special relations with the CAEV countries <sup>27</sup>, and a new cooperation format and institutional mechanism.

The next stage in the development of the format is 2012, when the PRC and 16 CAEV countries jointly establish a cooperation platform in Warsaw, naming it the “16 + 1” cooperation format. The first stage of institutionalization involves the coordination of relations based on common standards. The format includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In parallel with this format, the already mentioned “Belt and Road” initiative simultaneously strengthens the current

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<sup>26</sup> Vangeli, Anastas. 2019. A Framework for the Study of the One Belt One Road Initiative as a Medium of Principle Diffusion. *Mapping China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ Initiative*. Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan: 58–59.

<sup>27</sup> Belt and Road Center, *The presentation of the “16 + 1 Cooperation”*, Belt and Road Center, <http://beltandroadcenter.org/2017/11/07/the-presentation-of-the-16-1-cooperation/>

“17 + 1” cooperation and also acts as a separate vision, dominated by China’s own foreign policy view.<sup>28</sup>

It is important that, together with the agreement reached at the Warsaw Summit on cooperation, the meeting of the Prime Ministers of the member states also adopted “*Twelve Measures*”, which set out the strategic objectives of cooperation and the way in which cooperation will be implemented in the context of policy instruments.<sup>29</sup> Mentioning the goals is important here, as it shows the scope of the agreement points of the first policy action summit and also the scope of the vision, interacting with messages of different levels – political and economic, global and locally interesting, short-term and long-term cooperation motives. At the same time, Xi’s initial considerations serve as a long-standing platform and, according to a number of analysts, the first applications are the most ambitious and set the tone again for something revolutionary.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.2 Strategic messages used in the collaboration format “17 + 1”**

The “17 + 1” strategic messages discussed in this chapter are divided into two categories for analysis. First, the messages that, without direct reference to the President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, are a cross-cutting element in the PRC’s communication platforms and the format of the official communication (accompanying releases and articles in the PRC’s official “17 + 1” summits) are in contact with international message recipients. Secondly, it is the messages of

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<sup>28</sup> “16 + 1” Summit has concluded. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, [http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/ldrhw\\_1/2016lj/hdxw4/t1414327.htm](http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/ldrhw_1/2016lj/hdxw4/t1414327.htm), 2016-11-10 13:52

<sup>29</sup> Belt and Road Center. *The presentation of the “16 + 1 Cooperation”*, <http://beltandroadcenter.org/2017/11/07/the-presentation-of-the-16-1-cooperation/>

<sup>30</sup> Casas-Klett, Tomas, Li, Jiatao. 2021. Assessing the Belt and Road Initiative as a Narrative: Implications for Institutional Change and International Firm Strategy, *Asia Pac J Manag.*

the President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, that need to be seen in connection with the “17 + 1” theme. Thirdly, the statements made by the Chinese Prime Minister in connection with the “17 + 1” summits, as part of the official accompanying documents mentioned in the communication, can also be seen.

Here are two elements specific to the “17 + 1” format that complement China’s strategic vision, which is a cross-cutting element:

1. First of all, a common prosperity is no longer just a promise, a force for China’s pull and supply: the partner countries must contribute to this dream with a contribution of work. In this sense, *the Chinese dream* is the dream of all nations (except for the United States and the EU as a symbol of neoliberalism, but not for the EU of those nations or member states); and if the dream of all nations is the dream of China, other nations must make commitments, as China does.
2. There is a special emphasis on *idleness* as a threat and a call to action to achieve dreams. It also accurately reflects the nature of Xi’s strategic messages in terms of cooperation partners – namely, the need for real activities (specific contracts, projects, etc.) in which both sides of the cooperation are equally active.

Thus, it can be concluded that the strategic messages of the “17 + 1” cooperation format, although not directly referring to the major strategic messages, are a continuation of them, and already include a concrete offer of practical action models – but in order to fully understand the implementation of this offer, to the dynamics reflected in the great messages of the PRC, the expression of *the Chinese dream* through commission speeches.

There is a clear dominance, where “17 + 1” directly rhetorically continues and substantiates Xi’s *Chinese dream* concepts. There are connecting points – where separate elements from the Hu’s period are used in “17 + 1”, however, they are not considered significant. The close connection of Xi’s *Chinese dream*

with “17 + 1” expressions, and at the same time the attempts to make the strategic level tactical, can be seen through the prism of social constructivism. Where analysing the level of *the Chinese dream*, the potential of “17 + 1” to fill the gaps of the commission speeches was high, as well as the stated ambition to develop the rules in terms of formalization, complexity and scope, then the “17 + 1” analysis showed that “17 + 1” is relatively near the strategic discourse set. This suggests that “17 + 1” is strengthening the cognitive model of *the Chinese dream*, but the action policy or the tactical level are not, as Xi himself claims with all the unique elements.

It can be concluded that the “17 + 1” countries, both in the context of the universal approach of *the Chinese dream* and the messages expressed in the context of “17 + 1”, inevitably face constraints, especially in terms of future cooperation: the PRC as a partner not only cannot be subjected to any criticism (including the areas other than “17 + 1” format), but the cooperation also involves the deepening of relations, providing for actions that do not conflict with China’s fundamental interests, promoting greater market opening for the PRC, increased access to resources, and the spill-over of the partnership to other areas of the economy. At the same time, it should be noted that the PRC does not directly require the partner countries not to express their interests or views, but it is clear that such actions must not affect the PRC’s core interests embedded in *the Chinese dream* and in its interpretations, and in “17 + 1” as a set of implications and in the policy practice at the same time.

In this context, the ethical dilemma of the “17 + 1” partner countries is inevitable: if the PRC takes internationally reprehensible action, a closely integrated “17 + 1” relationship could cause problems for the partner countries to respond according to their value system, unless they have already initially been aware of these risks and have expressed their views in a timely manner in their messages on issues that are unacceptable to them in the context of cooperation.

In essence, “17 + 1” cooperation requires a great deal of preparedness on the part of the partner countries in order for the cooperation to take place at all, and requires even greater preparedness if the partner countries need to respond to any PRC activities outside the “17 + 1” format.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note here that the PRC has also begun to diversify its messages, sticking to the superscripts in the “17 + 1” countries, while in the more conservative authoritarian countries, with a much more aggressive emphasis on cooperation.<sup>32</sup> Although this consideration does not appear in the body of the text, as it is a recent topic, it is in line with the assumption of a tendency to diversify the messages,<sup>33</sup> which, paradoxically, strengthens the “17 + 1” format.

The most important conclusion about the link between the dynamics of “17 + 1” messages and the acts of speech can be found in the recognition that the PRC’s foreign policy is a dynamic process. The “17 + 1” format will undoubtedly move towards more complex cooperation rules, greater scope and new in-depth formalization efforts in the foreseeable future, otherwise it is unlikely to survive in the long term. To some extent, *the Chinese dream*, as a promise on the part of the PRC, requires the promise to be taken to action in parallel (currently in the “17 + 1” format, this promise is cascaded further, where it faces clashes between commission speeches and preconditions for cooperation) and at the same time calls on the partner countries to honour their commitment to cooperate.

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<sup>31</sup> Casas-Klett, Tomas, Li, Jiatao. Assessing the Belt and Road Initiative as a Narrative: Implications for Institutional Change and International Firm Strategy. *Asia Pac J Manag.*

<sup>32</sup> Ferenczy, Zsuzsa Anna. 29.04.2021. China, the 17 + 1 Platform, and Taiwan – a 'New Stage'? *Choice.*

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An important element that can be deduced from this is that if the “17 + 1” format is to be further developed (or another regional cooperation platform format is to emerge), it must already take place at this level of tactical initiatives. If Xi’s *Chinese dream* is to undergo further significant transformations, these cooperation platforms will also need to be reviewed in principle, and there will be a gap between the strategy and its implementation. To sum up, the further development of “17 + 1” is a matter of enabling “17 + 1”, expanding both the topics of cooperation within “17 + 1” and the ways of implementing cooperation, while operating in the condition of the invariability of *the Chinese dream*.

At the same time, “17 + 1” is also in a rhetorical trap: partner countries have changed their attitudes, becoming more demanding to the PRC messages. From the perspective of social constructivism, it has both pros and cons, if the interests of reviving the PRC’s speeches are taken as a benchmark. On the positive side, the messages and promises of *the Chinese dream* are being heard and, albeit challenged, so that they have the potential to become conventions. The downside is the need to change speech acts and ensure their internal coherence, which in turn is a problematic aspect that requires a serious approach to gradually changing all messages, aligning them with practical policy agendas and translating them from utopias into reality. From the analysis of the current dynamics, it cannot be observed that high-level messages would undergo changes – in any case, the “17 + 1” format as a regional one does not currently have the potential to change global messages.

## Conclusion

Within the framework of the dissertation, a model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis was developed, which was used to identify the causality of the strategic foreign policy messages of the PRC and to determine the correlation with the transformations of regional cooperation formats. The case study looked at the format of the PRC's cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or the "17 + 1" format.

**The aim of the** dissertation was to evaluate the interdiscursive causality and dynamics of the strategic messages of the PRC foreign policy and to identify their correlation with the formation of cooperation formats. The aim of the work was achieved – the causality in the strategic foreign policy messages of the PRC was assessed, moreover, in clear dynamics, marking also the possibilities of stable forecast in the further development of the strategic foreign policy messages of the PRC. A correlation was also identified between the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy and the transformation of cooperation formats – recording the pressure of the messages on the development of practical cooperation formats, as well as the creation of a broad framework of preconditions for potential PRC cooperation partners. Achieving the goal of the work allows to talk not only about the current strategic messages of the PRC foreign policy in correlation with the formation of regional cooperation formats, but also allows to make judgments about the sustainability of existing formats and their future development.

In order to achieve the goal of the work, **three research questions were raised**, to which answers were also found during the work.

*1. How to create an appropriate theoretical methodological model to analyse the conditions of internal dynamics of foreign policy strategic messages and their interaction with cooperation formats as already institutionalized foreign policy platforms?*

In order to create an appropriate theoretical methodological model, which would include both the possibilities of causality evaluation and correlation identification, the author expanded the construction of the model, starting with the substantiation of the ontological approach. Ontologically, the post-positivism approach was chosen, which allowed avoiding conflicting value systems due to oriental and cultural-political contradictions and emphasizing a qualitative research method that respects the influence of multi-layered factors, relationalism and constant process dynamics. The ontological choice also justified the empirical scope of the work, providing opportunities to operate in depth with the level of message and symbols from which to draw conclusions about the real political environment. It should be noted that postpositivism is sceptical about the possibilities of making predictions, but the model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis used in the work, focusing on causality and correlation considerations, identified dynamics through which it is possible to predict further developments at both message and collaboration formats. Accordingly, in the course of the work, the system of academic notions about the ontology of postpositivism and its limitations has been expanded.

Epistemologically, the author chose to apply the constructivist approach to international relations, combining it with cognitive discourse analysis. In general, the use of such a model has been justified – the analysis of cognitive discourse allowed to reveal the substantive settings of the strategic foreign policy concept, while the principles of social constructivism – to explain the dynamics of speech acts in form.

The creation of a unified model not only allowed to obtain previously unavailable empirical data, but also expanded the possibilities of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis in the analysis of a specific object. To date, the PRC's analysis of the school of social constructivism is widespread, but with an emphasis on identity research rather than strategic

proposition analysis, and largely representing the PRC's critical perspective on its potential aggressiveness or global power, often on the verge of Orientalism. The model developed in the paper proved that it is possible to understand the content of the PRC foreign policy messages in a structured way.

The developed direction of social constructivism, which focuses on acts of speech, their internal coherence and the formation of cognitive models, rather than the boundaries of static discourse, allows us to talk about the development of theory towards ecosystem thinking – respecting practical politics as an empirical expression of socially constructed reality. Accordingly, in the course of the work, the possibility of applying social constructivism to the analysis of practical policy was increased. An equally important element is that the model and conclusions used in the work are generalizable. It was deductively confirmed that the synthesis of speech acts and cognitive discourse analysis can be used to analyse any foreign policy discourse. The analysis of foreign policy messages, finding a new way to evaluate practical policy, as well as the case study in conjunction with the constructivist-cognitive discourse analysis model, which allows universal conclusions to be drawn, make a significant contribution to the academic debate on international relations.

The theoretical-methodological new discovery also includes the expanded notion of the reliability of the analysed text sets as such. Credibility issues play a central role in social constructivism when it comes to speech acts, new regulations and offers of cooperation that one international entity sends to others. Whether a country's newly created regulatory offer is credible, acceptable and commonly used is a question that the international system faces on its own. The specific situation with the offers made in the PRC in English should also be mentioned here. How to process this information academically, how to operate with the risk of disappearance in translation, the true intentions of the author and related risks – the model proposed in this dissertation allowed to focus on

material addressed to the international community, finding its reliability (or unreliability) parameters in theoretical and methodological considerations. This research approach provides great added value for researchers, allowing them to continue to look at the PRC material offered in English without having to delve into the cultural and linguistic background unnecessarily.

In general, it can be concluded that the synthesis model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis is effectively applicable and clearly shows identifiable parameters that allow judging the reliability, internal coherence and sustainability of a particular strategic document in combination with other strategic messages or complementary documents – including tactical levels of expression. The identified coincidence or dissonance between the form of speech acts and the content of cognitive models allows to assess in a structured way both the credibility of the text as a whole and its expected impact on practical collaboration formats.

*2. What is the interdiscursive causality to be identified in the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy during the two presidencies?*

Based on a unified model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis, the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy were analysed in the statements of the PRC Presidents Hu and Xi. The determination of causality was formed by matching the dynamic principles of speech acts and the theoretical motivations of agents with cognitive models or the content of specific statements.

Causality was identified by a number of factors. First, the role of the presidents of the PRC as agents of discourse in shaping strategic messages, or structural causality, was determined, forcing new rules to develop on the basis of previous rules. The President of the PRC is structurally the dominant agent of discourse, but his influence also depends on the logic of statements and promises. It was identified that the form of speech acts as Hu began to make a strategic foreign policy offer to the international community contained a number of

shortcomings, which Xi supplemented with his strategic vision. Accordingly, Xi's foreign policy message is a direct continuation of Hu's thought, but the changes that Xi brings to the speeches and the content of the discourse allow us to talk about foreign policy changes and development vectors in the future as well.

Results of the mapping of the Chinese authorities' discourse agents show that China's foreign policy depends on a small number of people, primarily the President of the People's Republic of China, who, through his authority, compiles, develops and expresses the interests of both the party and the individual power groups. Accordingly, the unit of analysis chosen in the dissertation – the dynamics of the vision of the President of the People's Republic of China – will be confirmed as justified. This is an important finding for other China analysts in mapping significant discourse units in PRC contexts.

Interpreters or knowledge workers in the People's Republic of China are important in the context of legitimizing and interpreting the messages of the Chinese President. Knowledge workers through their activities *a priori* strengthens the authority of the Chinese President in the context of foreign policy. This is particularly the case in the last decade of the hybridization of the relationship between knowledge workers and power, with their focus on creating messages and messages for the international community through the selective Anglicization of message units.

To some extent, the Chinese presidential institute acts as a crossroads for foreign policy formulation and addressing the international system, as well as for internal addressees in a strategic context.

Comparing the dynamics of Hu and Xi's foreign policy messages, it is clear that Hu's foreign policy concepts did not include the possibility of developing innovative and sustainable forms of cooperation due to a lack of internal coherence, while Xi's foreign policy concepts actually require such an

approach in order not to lose credibility. This leads to the conclusion that regional cooperation formats are a necessity for Xi's foreign policy, as Xi has committed himself to foreign policy messages.

In terms of content, the strategic messages of the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China in their dynamic development reflect the growing ambitions of the People's Republic of China and include the need to develop formats for practical cooperation, for two reasons. First, the substantive aspects of *the Chinese dream* as a foreign policy strategy include promises for the development of cooperation, but these promises cannot be resolved at the strategic level. The prerequisite models obtained from the cognitive discourse analysis, the summary conclusions of the text, the implicit statements and the internal coherence of the statements show the need of the PRC to develop cooperation formats in order to activate foreign policy concepts and strategies. Aspects of *the Chinese dream* as a form of foreign policy strategy, based on an analysis of social constructivism, point to the current shortcomings of strategic-level messages, which in turn call for the development of regional cooperation formats to address these shortcomings.

From the perspective of cognitive concepts, *the Chinese dream* is a dynamic message that, at the same time, develops internally, becoming more ambitious in the transition from the Hu's *Chinese dream* to Xi's *Chinese dream* postulates, and it is used as needed throughout its scope. This approach allows China to better adapt to the addressee of the specific rules and, following the rules of the synthesis of constructivism and discourse analysis, be more efficient in making the addressee accept the Chinese settings. In essence, *the Chinese dream* is a deliberately empathetic concept addressed to the international community, seeking to share it and emphasizing what is acceptable. However, looking at the dynamics, this amount of empathy is diminishing in Xi's speeches, as China actually becomes more precise in its statements.

*The Chinese dream* also serves as a strategic message that combines the issues of the PRC's own identity in international relations, while feeling like a superpower, a regional power and a developing country (whose status depends on the context), as *the Chinese dream* includes references to all these forms of identity, justifying the development path of the PRC and eliminating inconsistencies in these concepts within an internal logical framework. The task of *the Chinese dream* is not only to become accepted and used among the addressees and partners at the message level, but also to be implemented in the contexts of norm setting, institutionalization and proceduralization. Accordingly, causality in the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy is inseparable from the correlation with international cooperation formats.

3. *What correlation can be identified between the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy and the formats of international cooperation by conducting a case study of the PRC's cooperation format with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe or the "17 + 1" cooperation format?*

Based on the synthesis of constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis used in the analysis of the PRC, it can be concluded that China's system of foreign policy rules at the message level is self-binding, requiring a practical expansion of cooperation with international and regional partners. *The Chinese dream* of cooperation platforms presupposes a number of conditions: firstly, cooperation platforms must introduce and strengthen economic and political links; secondly, the range of speech acts must be provided and supplemented with messages already attached to practice (contracts, agreements, etc.). Thirdly, in terms of content, the promise of *the Chinese dream must be expanded*. Finally, the trend towards formalizing the rules and extending their scope in the dynamics of speech acts must be continued. This necessitates the continuation of the internal coherence of the strategy – sub-messages, which do not contradict the supra-messages and perceptions of the wishes of the addressees of the rules.

In addition, these sub-messages should be implemented in already institutionalized formats.

Analyzing the format of “17 + 1” cooperation, it is clear that the format of “17 + 1” strengthens *The Chinese dream of PRC foreign policy*, but at the same time faces several challenges. This conclusion is based on an analysis of messages, which reveals a number of messages at the heart of the PRC’s interests and a marked asymmetry in its partnership with the “17 + 1” countries. Messages of political preconditions, messages of institutional preconditions and messages of economic preconditions can be identified here. All of these are dominated by the dissonance between the form of speech acts and cognitive models – or what is said in these messages, what is meant and what is expected. This suggests that the “17 + 1” format will continue to transform, serving as a buffer zone to some extent, shielding *the Chinese dream* as a strategic message from the pressure to change.

By ranking the obtained empirical data on “17 + 1” in a broader perspective, several characteristics can be noted for the correlation between strategic messages and their tactical manifestations. First, the correlation is based on the basket of preconditions that the PRC expects from partner countries in terms of self-organization and new institution-building, which is linked from a constructivist perspective to the formalization aspects of the rules. From this angle of analysis, any format of cooperation serves as a tool for strengthening the rules and, accordingly, partner countries are expected to consistently institutionalize, standardize and process their activities. Such a basket of expectations or expectations is to some extent not voluntary, because without it further cooperation is not possible, or the already established cooperation links may be endangered. This suggests that the emergence of any new strategic messages for the PRC’s foreign policy will be translated into practical cooperation, or a restart of existing cooperation formats. The causality leading

to the strengthening of the PRC's foreign policy rules also involves a correlation with the need to make these messages a reality in practical cooperation formats. The need to formalize messages, even if there is no real economic cover for such formalization activities, is due to the strengthening of *The Chinese dream* as a message in practice, making messages actually normative, institutional and procedural, thus making the messages presence unchanged and socially objective.

The correlation between the strategic messages of the PRC's foreign policy also reveals factors that characterize the challenges for further correlation. Among the most pronounced are the announcement of rapid results to the level of regional cooperation partners and another timeline for the strategic message on the development of the PRC, which in principle reflects the slow change of identity in the PRC due to the need to maintain the *status quo*. From this point of view, regional cooperation formats are not a practical implementation of *the Chinese dream*, but a message-strengthening element that covers the shortcomings or weaknesses of the strategic foreign policy messages. The message of political level authorization revealed in the work (another understanding of the decision-making process) is practically impossible in Western society, where political power is a separate domain from free market processes. In most of the speeches, Xi emphasizes the model of the speed of political agreements for the speed of agreements at other levels, criticizing in principle the restrictive institutional aspects of partner countries. The strong influence of political decision-making on the executive is expected, which is a practically impossible task in Western society due to the existing regulatory traditions and democratic conditions.

A specific and characteristic feature of the correlation is the PRC's position on cooperation as an extended form of linking – linking the success of the cooperation format to aspects of cooperation in other areas, namely support

to the PRC in other international fora and institutions. In addition, the field of expectations from partners here remains somewhat open: the broad scope of *The Chinese dream* offers the PRC room for variation in the amount of change needed in the international system. If the *status quo against a revisionist approach* could be placed at both ends of the change, Hu's foreign policy concepts positioned the PRC, demanding its recognition as a full-fledged player in the international system. This factor clearly appears in the correlation of strategic messages with the formats of cooperation – the format, depending on the position of the addressee, either allows the maintenance of Western democratic values or emphasizes the revisionist approach to show political loyalty to China. To some extent, regional cooperation formats are an experimental field where the PRC can test values developed at a strategic level.

The stability of the existing correlation, which in principle also means sustainability for cooperation as such, also depends on a number of considerations. First, sustainability depends directly on the PRC's "17 + 1" cooperation format, which safeguards and ensures stability and economic growth. "17 + 1" serves as a conditional investment: for the "17 + 1" partner countries, it is an economic investment, while for the PRC, judging by its *Chinese dream* and "17 + 1" messages, it is a political investment in the future. In fact, this also applies to other forms of cooperation in foreign policy. These are transmission channels that can be activated for practical policy purposes, including domestic politics.

Thus, the research questions have been answered, at the same time adding novelty to the work both theoretically and empirically. At the end of the final part, the applicability of the analysis model itself and the possibilities for further research should be considered accordingly.

After looking at the “17 + 1” cooperation format and the elements of *the Chinese dream* commitment, it is possible to provide an assessment of the model of cognitive discourse analysis and social constructivism analysis itself. In general, the use of the model has been justified – the analysis of cognitive discourse allowed to reveal the content settings of the strategic foreign policy concept, while the principles of social constructivism – to explain the dynamics of speech acts in form. It is a clear advantage to focus only on the text under analysis – a set of foreign policy messages, which is important when considering a subject of international relations whose domestic policy is complex and inaccessible to the researcher.

Separately, the analysis of cognitive discourse without an explanation of constructivism would not be able to fully reveal the link between strategic messages at several levels and their impact on the formation of collaborative platforms. It is important to conclude that linking social constructivism with cognitive discourse analysis allows to solve the research problem of cultural-political uniqueness of discourse and its compatibility with the universal laws of international relations, as well as to supplement the ontological and epistemological discussion of the impact of messages on institutional and operational reality. The course of work and the conclusions prove that, respecting and analysing the sets of foreign policy messages, their internal coherence and connection with other levels of messages and internal dynamics allow to make predictions about the development of cooperation formats.

At the same time, further development of the topic is related to the expansion of the scope of dynamics, including larger time periods, as well as supplementing the discourse with the addressees-respondents. In this work, the strategic message was balanced with the messages of the regional cooperation format – analysing exactly what is being addressed to the international community. The added value of further research would be enhanced by

the addition of Chinese local discourse analysis, thus further increasing the understanding of the link between different levels of messages. Equally, the impact of message dynamics on other collaboration formats, such as global collaboration formats, should be explored.

Assuming that the PRC continues to pursue an exit policy in the future, the current message offer in English will only increase, and there are already attempts by the PRC to radically change the forms of cooperation to regional cooperation formats. In such circumstances, the application of the model of social constructivism and cognitive discourse analysis allows to process even more empirical data, revealing also the potential shortcomings of the model. Such would already be the lack of explanation of the model for polarized situations – if the state deals with the creation of completely unbelievable messages, such as blatantly false information, their internal explanation becomes meaningless. Equally, practical emergencies such as armed conflict no longer allow this method to be used. This approach works effectively when all parties involved want to work together and try to match their messages with the wishes and expectations of potential partners.

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