China's "discourse power" strategy: Taking China's Twitter publicity as a case

By

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Acknowledgement

Abstract

To strengthen china's external publicity, Xi Jinping has mobilized massive resources to secure China's interests and reinforce its reputation both at home and abroad. This dissertation inquiries into why and how China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic era has been actively engaged in conducting online publicity by means of disseminating good images of China on Twitter. The analysis part illuminates the features of linguistic tendency in publicizing, narrative style and Xi's idea of "discourse power" strategy for "telling China's stories well (jianghao zhongguo gushi, 讲好中国故事)". In response to the need to enhance China's discourse power, various propaganda approaches have been adopted and the impacts of China have been increased on some levels. Two spokespersons of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian) as well as two Chinese state-owned mainstream media (CGTN and China Daily) play major roles in the construction of Twitter publicity fronts which serves China's diplomatic purposes. Three systemic analysis methods, which are interpersonal systemic analysis, modality systemic analysis and evidentiality analysis, are adopted to deconstruct and reclassify the text content of Hua and Zhao's Tweets, and to observe and deduce the characteristics of "discourse power" strategy. Though a number of exploratory approaches to influencing foreign targeted audiences have been taken, China failed to achieve the desired effects; the COVID-19 publicity has further exacerbated the mutual political misunderstanding between China and the United States.

Keywords: External publicity, discourse power, discourse analysis, social media, public diplomacy, nation branding, the United Front Work, propaganda

1. Introduction

It must be understood that, a "new idea" (Xin silu 新思路, the Chinese meaning of "new idea") and explanation of Xi Jinping government, the concept of "discourse power" or "Huayuquan (话语权)" (the Chinese meaning of discourse power) dominates the narrative strategy at the centre of China's public diplomacy "to strengthen China's international communication capacity, enhance China's voice in the world, and focus on telling China's story well, at the same time, to optimize the strategic layout, and strive to build flagship media for external publicity with strong international influence (Xi, 2016)." Schmidt (2008) believes that idea is the essence of narrative, and in the absence of it, narrative would be hollow, meaningless and powerless. Thus, this new idea of "discourse power" strategy supported the action and narrative conducted in Chinese public diplomacy, which could constitute sustainable patterns of thought and behaviour that set the agenda in the political world and influence the public diplomacy efforts (Vincent, 2004).

Broadly defined, discourse is "a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts", and power in "discourse power" concept represents either "the ability to act or produce an effect" or "legal or official authority, capacity, or right" (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). In the inchoate Western academic discussions, discourse and power rarely appeared as a complete continuous phrase. That did not change until the new concept of the power of discourse was originally proposed and elaborated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (Daudi, 1983; Wandel, 2001; Karlberg, 2005). In

Foucault's early writings, discourse is a highly abstract ideological structure, unaffected by non-interfering factors such as society, political events and institutions, economic processes and practices. However, in his speech of the order of discourse (1970), he emphasized the idea that discourse is power, and people endow themselves with power through discourse (Ding, 2019). When extending the theory of "discourse and power" to the concept of "international discourse power", the meaning has changed. In Western political concepts, the essence of "discourse power" is related to power. Some scholars such as Sun (2018) summarized that the stronger a country's national power, the more capable it is to hold or monopolize the "discourse power", which means, the countries with more military and economic strength as support, the more they can play a leading role in the discussion and decisions of international affairs, reflecting the will and power of a country by using discourse.

In contrast, after the concept of discourse power was introduced into China, some scholars had added some discussions (it mainly focused on the discussion of the definition of quan) in the context of Chinese and English language environment to the interpretation of its meaning. The most representative one was Wang's (2015) dual interpretation of the meaning of "quan" in "Huayu quan". If the emphasis of "quan" was on power, which was the first English definition of quan, then China's pursuit of discourse power was not different from other countries that pursue power. Whereas, if the emphasis was on the part of rights, which was the second English definition, then it shows that China expects to take its due interest in the existing international order. Due to the differences in national conditions, language background and diplomatic practice, the concept of "discourse power" in Chinese political

context is different from the mainstream interpretation in the academic field. Based on the

research results of scholars around the world, this dissertation summarizes the significance of

"discourse power" in Chinese diplomatic politics, as well as the meaning of "discourse power"

in Chinese politics and lexical context.

The process of China using its discourse power to enhance its international influence is

mainly carried out through the means of public diplomacy. The notion of public diplomacy

could be understood as the interchange of information between a nation and foreign public

(Malone, 1985). Because the purpose of both public diplomacy and propaganda is to influence

the views and actions of the objects of publicity, the two have long been thought as synonyms

(Vlahos, 2009). But as many countries have upgraded their communication strategies, their

goals have developed from one-way flow of influencing politicians and organizations to

reciprocity building and managing relationships with non-government organizations (NGOs)

and individuals (Pamment, 2015; Huang and Wang, 2020). Therefore, Chinese authorities are

more inclined to use public diplomacy instead of propaganda to express the behaviour of using

social media, which are applications that use information and communications technology (ICT)

to generate expression and promote the dissemination of news and so forth, and to export

information to foreign countries. By integrating with the soft power concept of Nye (2004),

Huang and Wang (2020) outlined three dimensions of public diplomacy, which are, first, it is

necessary to communicate with foreign people through large-scale communication platforms,

such as social media, and explain some domestic and foreign policies; second, the use of a

variety of propaganda means such as cartoons, short videos and other forms to strengthen the

narrative ability; and third, maintain interaction and establish long-term relationship with the

publicity target. This dissertation combined with China's external publicity texts during the

COVID-19 pandemic extracted from Twitter to examine whether China followed these

dimensions in public diplomacy. This dissertation also takes Twitter as the focus and research

object, and set the time period during the COVID-19 global outbreak (from March 2020 to June

2020), to observe how China used its own narrative to tell stories and publicize them on

international social media platforms.

Furthermore, though previous research on the media, political publicity of China was

abundant, the author was curious about how political narrative and discourse power strategy

of China were conducted on Twitter during the pandemic. Therefore, this dissertation proposes

the following research questions:

Research Question 1: In the representation theory and reception theory paradigm of the

international communication theory, what types of content do China's COVID-19 tweets

contained?

Research Question 2: What specific strategies and methods do Chinese Foreign Ministry

and news organizations use to conduct Twitter publicity for new public diplomacy during the

COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 3: Whether the use of Twitter for publicity help to enhance China's discourse power, make China gain a more favourable position in the competition of international public opinion, or improve China's international image?

Concerned with these questions, this dissertation concentrates on the manifestation of the discourse power strategy in China, and raises the empirical and conceptual questions of the role of the social media discourse on Twitter in China's public diplomacy agenda. Explicitly, rudimentarily and exploratory, the dissertation's main intention is to examine Chinese "discourse power" strategy, social media discourse, and digital public diplomacy. Combining historical exploration and discourse analysis, this dissertation starts with a brief discussion on the definition of the discourse power, then the historical reasons that continue to shape China's attitudes toward discourse power in currents international society. In addition, political science terms such as new public diplomacy, nation branding and United Front were combined to discuss China's process and aim of publicity on Twitter during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of method, this dissertation relies on a systematic analysis of discourse and narratives on social media accounts of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (MFA), related primary documents such as official proposals, diplomacy statements and viewpoints delivered by officials of MFA on Twitter, which is relevant to the COVID-19 crisis, are also investigated. In addition to this, some Chinese news account such as CGTN and China Daily are used as an additional resource because publicity models for both have changed during the pandemic and the role of news agencies in narrative discussion should not be ignored (Shen, 2018). This is followed by a discussion of the distinct aspects of China's efforts in pursuing international

discourse power, with a particular attention to how China conducted "Xuan Chuan" (宣传, the Chinese meaning of "publicity") on Twitter in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how Chinese foreign ministry officials (Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian) and two representative Chinese news media (CGTN and China Daily) used diversified methods of audio-visual language to elucidate China's views and stances. Drawing on a discourse analysis of Chinese discourse on Twitter, the final part of the dissertation outlines the international, institutional and textual factors that lead to the poor effectiveness and the lack of international trust of information in China's foreign discourse publicity. After research and discussion, this dissertation believes that China's Twitter publicity or propaganda during the pandemic was ineffective, and it did not play a big role in enhancing its international discourse power, but aggravated the diplomacy friction between China and the United States.

2. Literature review

2.1 Discussing the definition of discourse power

In the Western academic discussions, "discourse power" rarely appears as a continuous phrase. The concept of the "power of discourse" was originally proposed and elaborated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. From then on, many scholars had attempted to discuss more about discourse and power, discourse of power or power of discourse (Daudi, 1983; Wandel, 2001; Karlberg, 2005), and the core of these discussions were placed on "discourse"

and "power" or "strength", and the relationship between them. In brief, these concepts were related to social theory. In Foucault's early writings, discourse was a highly abstract ideological structure, unaffected by non-interfering factors such as society, political events and institutions, economic processes and practices. However, in his power and knowledge (1980), he increasingly emphasized the role of power in knowledge, and discourse was therefore given the meaning of "tool of power and confrontation". Weedon (1987) also concluded that "discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning". They seek to dominate the mind and emotional life of the subjects. In a word, discourse transmitted and generated power, and it also strengthened and exposed the existence of power (Roberts, 2005; Ding, 2019). In terms of its essence, the "power of discourse" involves the beliefs and consensuses that are accepted by all parties. There must be a universal ethical standard between the interacting parties, which can obtain basic mutual trust and stable mutual expectations (Wandel, 2001).

But this definition has changed when extending the theory of "power of discourse" to the concept of "international discourse power". In political concepts, the essence of discourse power is related to power. Whether a country has a strong discourse power, its strength and platform still play a decisive role. The stronger a country's national power, the more capable it is to hold or monopolize the "discourse power". It embodies the comprehensive use of "to know, to express and to participate". In the meanwhile, with more military and economic strength as support, the more the countries can play a leading role in the discussion and decision of international affairs, reflecting the will and power of a country (Wang, 2015; Sun,

2018). For instance, the five permanent members of the United Nations have a say in

determining international affairs and can veto other countries' proposals with a single vote

(Illingworth, 2020).

Just as other Western concepts and norms (such as human rights, nationalism and

legitimacy) have become part of Chinese discourse, "discourse power" also needs to be

nationalized, that is, redefined to reflect unique and specific Chinese national conditions

(Breslin,2015). In the context of the growing national strength of China and other emerging

countries and their demands for redistribution of power in the international order (Yan, 2016;

Huang, 2021), China proposed a "discourse power" strategy different from that extracted from

previous studies by Western political scholars such as Wandel (2001), hoping to help China

carry out external publicity and gain political interests or international power. According to

Chinese literal translation, discourse power was translated as "Huayuquan (话语权)" in

Chinese language, and the Chinese authorities defined "Huayuquan" as the "the right to

formulate standards, and the right to interpret and define world affairs" (So "Huayuquan" is

sometimes translated as "speaking rights") (Guangming Online, 2017; Geall and Ely, 2018),

whereas, it was inconclusive in defining "Huayuquan" in academic fields. Some Chinese

scholars like Zuo (2020) held a similar view to that of Chinese officials, that "Huayuquan" is the

right to speak, which is the qualification and power of speaking. It is often closely related to the

discourse expression of economic, political, social status and interests. For example, the right

to explain the existing state of affairs, appeal for self-interest, and interpret political opinions.

As for the discussion of China's "discourse power", some international scholars have expressed different views. In the existing literature, there were two major stances concerning the meaning. Geall and Ely (2018) claimed that discourse power was "speaking rights" which was a part of China's soft power strategy, and it stood in opposition to "Western discourse" and was conducive to national rejuvenation. However, Wang (2015) adopted the selective stance and explained the concepts of discourse power in the Chinese linguistic context. He believed that the definition of "Huayuquan" should be discussed in different contexts in different situations. In Chinese, "Quan (权)" contains two meanings, one is power and the other is rights. As the meaning of power, the interpretation of "Huayuquan" has no differences between that of western scholars before: With national strength as the backing, diplomatic discourse is used to realize diplomatic ambitions in the international arena; and when it means rights, "Huayuquan" refers to the rights to express opinions on national affairs and related international affairs in international organizations and platforms with national interests at the core. Although this is not the final conclusion in academic circles, this dissertation combines the viewpoint of Zuo (2020) to conduct the following discussion on discourse power.

Since Xi Jinping put forward this new term and elevated it to the level of foreign policy, discourse power has been mentioned frequently by Chinese officials, which seems to be significant in Chinese diplomatic policies. The following dissertation provides evidence with a brief history of Chinese discourse power to explain why China feels that it lacks the discourse power and attaches importance to it.

2.2 Placing China's discourse power in a historical perspective

Viewed from a historical context, China's perception of the "discourse power" policy is changing. In plain terms, China has gone through several stages of discourse power. First, there was no discourse power for China; second, China as an emerging country was not willing to fight for the discourse power; the third was that China pursued discourse power in the international arena; at the present stage, China pursued discourse power in line with national interests. All kinds of historical and international reasons affect the attitude toward the notion of discourse power, and the development of public diplomacy. Looking back at the history of China and objectively understanding the discourse power or "Huayuquan" is a prerequisite for reasonably carrying out this research.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, worldwide authority with Britain as the centre was established in the West (Hack, 2019). In the discourse system of colonialism, the expansion of the West was claimed to be civilized, advanced and reasonable. During this period, China was forced to open its "door" and passively entered the international system led by the European powers such as the United Kingdom (Wang, 2010). In this system, China was in a subordinate and isolated position which suffered from "aphasia" in the powerful rhetoric of Western hegemonic discourse (Lai and Rao, 2017). Meanwhile, China's image became negative and even distorted, such as Fu Manchu's image, which was born during this period (Frayling, 2014).

In the middle and late 20th century, on the one hand, the United States had gradually

become the centre of world economy, politics, and science and technology since World War II,

and it used broadcast media, movies, the Internet and other tools to spread political value

discourse, such as freedom, democracy and freedom of speech; on the other hand, the

disintegration of the Soviet Union and the drastic changes in Eastern Europe had deprived the

United States of its main competitor in political discourse (Wang, 2016). Therefore, the United

States gradually dominated a powerful discourse system on a global scale. In this situation,

non-western countries were in a subordinate and relatively weak discourse position. Their

discourse either coincided with American political discourse, or it was hard to be perceived by

the worldwide local area since it was in opposition to American political values (Wang, 2010).

Due to its weaker national strength compared with European and American countries and

weak discourse power consciousness, China had no international discourse power to some

extent during this period, which was reflected in the Paris Peace Conference after World War I,

when China's appeal for recovering territory was not paid attention to by the Allies (Hou, 2015).

Under the deliberate exaggeration of American political discourse, China's national and

international image was always "being shaped", such as the Yellow Peril in the early phase of

the discussed period and the China Threat theory from the new millennium, which had

worsened the international public opinion environment for China's development (Frayling,

2014; Wang, 2010).

Since the implementation of "reform and opening up" in the late 1970s, China had zeroed

in on domestic financial turn of events and monetary collaboration, but seldom partook in the

discussion on foreign relations. Deng Xiaoping also proposed the strategy of "to conceal one's fame and ability" (Tao guang yang hui) in order to avoid conflicts with other powerful countries and seek peaceful development (Zhao, 2016). During this period, China basically maintained a low-key posture in the international community of non-alignment, not exporting revolution, and avoiding conflicts with other countries. In this diplomatic environment, the development of China's international discourse power had stagnated for a long time (Zhang and Zhuang, 2017).

In 2005, Chinese scholars introduced Nye's soft power theory to China for the first time, and expanded and modified its definition. Therefore, in China's political environment, the concept of soft power had become "almost any power other than military or economic." Then till 2007, the concept of soft power was further subdivided. In Hu Jintao's report on "taking national soft power as a strategic goal in the new century", soft power is almost equivalent to "cultural power" (Zhang, 2010; Klimeš, 2017). At this stage, China has two important cultural "soft power" practices: the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Expo (Flew, 2016). The Communist Party of China believed that culture was the main source of China's soft power, and cultural strength was a necessary prerequisite for enhancing its international image. Therefore, the main driving force of this policy was to strengthen the construction of cultural soft power, emphasizing cultural reform and the revival of Chinese culture. Take Confucius Institutes as an example. China has established more than 500 Confucius Institutes in the world. This was a conscious strategy, and the "global orientation" of Chinese cultural strategy was obvious (Wang and Adamson, 2015; Sun, 2016).

However, after China entered the 21st century, it integrated into the world trade system

and entered a period of rapid development. Before President Xi came to power in 2012,

China's Gross domestic product (GDP) was already the world's second largest, and its military

and technological capabilities had improved significantly. With the continuous rise of China,

China's international influence is also increasing, which poses some challenges to the

dominant position and situation of the United States in some international affairs (Kwon, 2012;

Li and Shaw, 2014). In the field of global politics and economy, competition and friction

between China and the United States and other Western powers was also intensifying. The

United States used its media advantages to continue to create discourse, framed China's

image, formulated China's policy agenda, and even conducted verbal attacks. Due to the lack

of the ability and experience to construct discourse and agenda, China is often in a passive

position when responding to the "traps" set by Western discourse and agenda (Li, 2013). Since

2011, Chinese leaders had increasingly emphasized the "discourse power", especially in 2013

when Xi Jinping put forward: "We must focus on shaping the image of the country...improve

the country's cultural soft power, strive to enhance international discourse power, and

strengthen international communication capabilities, carefully construct the external discourse

system, give full play to the role of emerging media, enhance the creativity and appeal of

external discourse, tell Chinese stories well, spread Chinese voices, and interpret Chinese

characteristics" (Lams, 2018; Guo, 2018). China had begun to highlight its discourse strategy

in its governance, giving its "discourse power" increasingly strategic significance (Zhao, 2016).

Due to the continuous enhancement of comprehensive national strength, China's diplomatic

strategy had also undergone some changes. For example, China began to attach importance to public and cultural diplomacy, and had invested a lot of capital (Li, 2013); China often used words that support the voices of developing countries to put forward international initiatives; China attached importance to the reforms of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to challenge the dominant international system of traditional Western powers (Zhao, 2016). It is worth acknowledging that China gained some influence, economic strength, and "discourse power" in these political practices. But despite these, the power relationship between China and the United States was not changed (Yang, 2016; Ji, 2017).

To sum up, from a historical perspective, China had gone through a long and complicated process in pursuing the discourse power to formulate international rules and shape its own image. The reason behind this was that since the "reform and opening up", the continuous accumulation of comprehensive national strength had made China not only purely pursue discourse power, but also gave the ability to fight for the power corresponding to its international status in an arranged manner. However, in the official view, China's "right to speak" was in a relatively weak position compared with that of developed regions such as Europe and the United States. In response to this situation, the Chinese government had also made some efforts and practices, hoping to alter the "status quo".

2.3 Various views on China's discourse power strategy

2.3.1 Discourse power in Chinese officials or policies

He Yiting from the Party School of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee once combined "discourse power" with the revival of the Chinese nation: "With the rise of western discourse, ancient Chinese discourse was pushed into the dark corners of history ... The revival of discourse brings the hope of national revival, and the revival of discourse begins with the revival of the nation" (Geall and Ely, 2018). After the CPC Central Committee realized the importance of "discourse power", the CPC proposed for the first time to combine the international "discourse power" with the external publicity at the National Propaganda Ministers' meeting on January 2010 (Sun, 2016). Since 2011, China has formally put forward the idea of "strengthening China's voice in international discourse". In terms of content, "discourse power" has begun to shift to the strategy of pursuing national interests in the international arena. The shift in discourse helps shape the narrative and helps China expand its own influence, ideas and concepts as part of its soft power strategy (Geall and Ely, 2018).

After taking office in 2012, Xi Jinping believed that as a great power in today's world, "China must improve its diplomatic capability of rulemaking, agenda setting and propaganda, targeting the international community for the purpose of enhancing its influence of global governance" (CPCNews, 2017). To create a good public opinion atmosphere, publicity activities are the key to the success of a big project (Suzuki, 2019), just as China hired two

companies to improve its international image before the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Navarro, 2019). Therefore, Xi called on the Party and the media to strengthen the constructing of our international communication capacity, improve our international discourse and focus on telling China's story, and strive to build a flagship external propaganda media with high international reputation (Xinhua Net, 2016). On September 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee adopted the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Some Important Issues concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform, which also pointed out that to promote Chinese culture to the world, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of international communication capacity and foreign discourse system. In addition to paying great attention to the government, in practice, China has made many efforts in the fields of ideology, external publicity, public diplomacy and other fields to improve its international discourse (Sun, 2016).

Under the guidance of this thought, the implementation of "discourse power" strategy is embodied in the field of network publicity. Since the Chinese government stressed "Internet sovereignty" in 2010, it has paid more attention to accelerating the construction of party, government and official media, and strengthening control and supervision of online media. In his report in 2019, Xi Jinping acknowledged that the Communist Party's rule is confronted with more crises in the face of social changes brought about by the information technology revolution (Lu, 2021) ... It is difficult to maintain the one-party system, so one of the most important tasks is to be mindful of public opinion, especially in cyberspace that is awash with political ideology from various forces at home and abroad (Lu, 2021), the CPC must "win the

war of discourse to master political hegemony" (Suzuki, 2019). "The party's media work must reflect the party's will, authority and unity," Xi emphasized at the CPC's public opinion work symposium, adding that "Chinese media are the key to political stability" (CPCNews, 2016). In recent years, with the development of information technology, the extensive reports of Chinese media around the world have attracted the attention of researchers, and the publicity on overseas social media platforms has become the latest embodiment of Xi Jinping's foreign publicity policies. The Communist Party of China hopes to win the war of discourse through the spread of the Internet, thus maintaining the firm rule of the Communist Party in China (Suzuki, 2019).

2.3.2 Discussions in academic fields of Chinese discourse power

Views on China's discourse power of Chinese scholars'are similar to the tone of the Chinese government, which are such，China's international discourse power is relatively weak compared with the "West". In order to cope with the penetration of foreign discourse, China needs to grasp the initiative of discourse construction system, so as to narrow the "deficit", "contrast" and "gap" of discourse power between China and European and American powers (Lai and Rao, 2017).

Deficits: The Shaping of Universal Values

First, in the international discourse system, the "distribution" of international discourse power is extremely unbalanced in both the colonial discourse in modern times and the political values discourse led by the United States after the end of the Cold War (Zhao, 2017). Since the end of the Cold War, American discourse has interpreted the end of the Cold War and the dramatic change of Soviet and Eastern Socialism as the victory of "Western political and economic system", and relied on the discourse of "democracy", "freedom", "human rights above sovereignty" and so forth. Discourses derived from European and American political thoughts are shaped as dominant international discourses, and their common feature is deeply rooted in their superior material civilization and cultural strength (Zhang and Zhuang, 2017; Zhao, 2017).

Second, compared with English, China lacks linguistic influence and the international identity of traditional culture is weak, which restricts the shaping of its international discourse power. In addition, Chinese cultural products have little radiation, low overall quality, and lack of cultural influence and appeal. Therefore, non-Chinese speaking communities lack audiences that recognize Chinese cultural ideas, values, and political systems. In consequence, unlike European and American countries, China does not produce a discourse or narrative that can be called universal values with Chinese culture, thoughts and values as the main body (Zhao, 2017).

Contrast: international discourse and agenda-setting dominated by the "West"

Some Chinese scholars believed that the competition of international discourse power, agenda-setting ability and political institution will increasingly become the focus of international game (Li, 2013; Zhao, 2016; Zhang, 2016). As a developing country in media field like China, acquiring these capabilities is the "ticket" to participate in international rule-making, a manifestation of national strength, and a necessary policy to safeguard national interests (Zhang, 2016).

However, the current international media environment allows the European and American media to occupy an absolute advantage in the international media field. Coverage of major international hotspots is dominated by four major News organizations (The Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters and Agence France-Presse). China is a follower of this process. On some politically sensitive topics, Chinese media discourse is in a passive position (Zhang and Zhuang, 2017). A considerable part of Chinese media discourse and external propaganda discourse is a rebuttal to "western media", and China's national identity and image are often "positioned" and "shaped" (Zhang and Zhuang, 2017).

Gap: China's discourse power has not improved with the development of economy

Compared with China's economic achievements, China's international discourse power presents a relatively weak imbalance. Although China has successfully integrated into the

international system in the economic field, it still faces political and ideological opposition from

Western Europe and the United States, making it difficult to increase international recognition

in terms of institutions, culture and values. China's overall international image and reputation

have not been fundamentally improved in western mainstream public opinion. China is often

the subject of analysis and debate rather than an active participant, and China's discourse

power is still disproportionate to its great power status (Zhao, 2017).

One of the reasons for this phenomenon is that the discourse quality of China's external

communication discourse is not high and the perspective is relatively single, there is also a

lack of pertinence in the design of discourse content. For example, The Chinese narrative

always uses "Western countries" and "Western media" to summarize the whole "Western

world", but ignores the characteristics of each Western country, resulting in concept confusion,

and only pays attention to the universality while ignoring the particularity of the "Westerns". As

a result, some international discourse concepts and external propaganda languages are

"unconvincing, logical and infectious" (Zhang and Zhuang, 2017). Second, Chinese officials do

not pay enough attention to the role of unofficial information dissemination and do not make

good use of unofficial channels for citizen participation to carry out multi-faceted and

multi-angle external political propaganda. The news media that is not controlled by the

government has its anti-government attributes. In many cases, the Chinese official attitude

towards non-official media is to weaken and suppress, to avoid reducing the public's trust and

recognition of China's political system (Chen, Li, and Ye, 2022). However, according to the

research results of Wang and Lim (2011), most respondents prefer to collect information from

unofficial channels rather than official channels. Because of this, the Chinese government may

not be limited to releasing information only from official channels, but can also put more trust in

unofficial channels, thereby expanding the reach and acceptance of Chinese propaganda (Li,

Sia, Chen, and Huang, 2021). Third, China did not first form a set of dominant discourse in the

region like the Monroe Doctrine of the United States, and the distrust of China from

neighbouring countries also hindered the acceptance of Chinese discourse overseas. The

territorial dispute between China and the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries in the South

China Sea is a typical case. Because these countries have conflicting interests with China in

the South China Sea, they also criticize and distrust China's military actions in the South China

Sea. Such distrust is also reflected in these countries' suspicion of China in international

discourse, fearing that China will bring new factors of regional instability (Gao and Jia, 2013).

Therefore, Chinese scholars believed that the Chinese government hoped to establish

and expand China's overseas influence through the practice of discourse power strategy

(Zhao, 2016), which needs to be showed maturity and sense of trust in publicizing (Li, 2013).

Non-Chinese scholars' views on China's discourse power

However, some non-Chinese scholars like Wilson (2015) believe that China's relative

"weakness" in the international discourse power and immature position in external publicity are

not enough to support its narrative ability, and that the relatively weak phenomenon is because

China's narrative ability and narrative techniques, which seriously hinders China from realizing its vision of enhancing discourse power, need to be improved.

First of all, the lack of discourse communication ability and limited communication channels restrict the expansion of China's international discourse power. Mobile Internet is becoming the mainstream communication technology paradigm, and the new media on the Internet has become an important tool for the competition of international discourse power. On a global scale, the United States and the UK were the first to choose the Internet to spread news, political ideas and shared values. Thus, they have remained dominant in these political fields (Buzan, 2010). In contrast, the network communication of Chinese media has weaknesses such as late start, small scale, insufficient communication intensity and lack of overseas audiences, which result in China being at a disadvantage in discourse confrontation with the US and the UK (Camicia and Zhu, 2011). In addition, after the "Great Firewall" was established, China was not isolated, but created a two-way blockade of information exchange, which means difficulties in both accessing to foreign information and limiting the spread of opinions among domestic Internet users and news media (Taneja and Wu, 2014). However, in recent years, under the guidance of the policies of The Xi Jinping government, many Chinese media have begun to target Twitter and other mainstream media to tap external publicity channels, hoping to spread China's attitudes, values and discourse propaganda through overseas social media, so as to gain more public opinion support at home and abroad, and justify China's pursuit of national interests (Blokh and Alexandrov, 2016).

In respect of Chinese discourse techniques, Hartig (2018) selected China as a case to study the political slogans of Chinese politics, which is the key to governing China. In order to analyse political slogans, he focuses on some Chinese political communication slogans such as Chinese Dream (Zhongguo Meng) and Peaceful Development (Heping Fazhan) in international political communication. According to his research, China's external publicity and communication are inevitably infected with the habit of political propaganda in China, which is, using slogans to explain Chinese political ideas. This method, however, makes propaganda sound hollow and boring, and not easy for target foreign audiences to accept. Therefore, Hartig (2018) proposed the concept of "new public diplomacy", arguing that China's publicity should focus on changing the communication mode from the one-way flow of information and the narrow idea of influencing public opinion to reciprocity and two-way communication as a means of relationship strategy and propaganda.

2.4 The relationship between new public diplomacy and the United Front Work in Chinese publicity

Public diplomacy aims to increase attention to global public sphere issues or to influence foreign publics to increase acceptance of the implementation of foreign policy in third countries aside from home and target. The purpose of public diplomacy should be to fully explain a country's policies and show how they contribute to the provision of global public services such as peace and security, human rights and international collaboration.

Since public diplomacy cannot merely promote policy values, national image and culture, it needs to establish mutually beneficial relationships with the public at home and abroad. In the early 21st century, scholars began to distinguish between the new and the old public diplomacy, and the "new" one emphasizes that public diplomacy should influence the foreign public through new information technology and communication means and broader relationship building, such as dialogue and interaction with the people of target countries, and should aim at improving the overall image of a country (Prodrou and Frangonikolo, 2012; Mogensen, 2015), as mobile technology and free services provided by social media platforms make direct international communication between national leaders and the public easier and more convenient, and the trust between the two is gradually established over time (Mogensen,2015). Navarro (2019) commented that this new diplomacy is a mix of all outward facing political communication strategies, with countries devising a persuasive public diplomacy propaganda strategy by using all the communication tools at their disposal. Its purpose is to promote the image of the country's international public opinion on a defined world scale (Iglesias and Molina, 2008).

Another concept is nation branding, similar to corporate branding, that is, to promote the national image in the target country. This method is also regarded as a part of the new public diplomacy and a tool to serve public diplomacy and national development (Mogensen,2015). For example, China Daily's panda promotion on Twitter has been well received by many non-Chinese people. It connects panda pictures with China, so as to convey a cute and cordial image of China to target foreign public (Huang and Wang, 2020). In addition, the building of

national brand is closely related to a country's words and deeds. Only when a country's words

and deeds are consistent in dealing with international affairs can its national brand be

considered convincing. Thus, public diplomacy can win the trust of the people in the target

country and achieve propaganda success (Mogensen, 2015). For instance, China has fulfilled

its commitments in the economic support and construction projects aid in Africa, which has not

only brought economic development to 47 African countries, but also brought China some

good international reputation (Dong and Fan, 2020).

The concept of the United Front Work was originated in Russia as a tactical device; it

developed through the Soviet Union and was learned and internalized by China (Sapio, 2019),

this strategy is a tactical means of conquering political opponents at a later stage when

needed. Under the influence of the political culture of zero-sum game, the CCP was

accustomed to using the strategy of the United Front to defeat political opponents stronger

than it. For example, the CCP united the Kuomintang (KMT) twice and defeated the Beiyang

warlords and the Japanese army; after World War II, the CCP also used this strategy to defeat

the KMT and unify mainland China (Dreyer, 2018; Yoshihara, 2020). Deng Xiaoping, the

second-generation leader of the CCP, summarized the means and ends in terms of this tactics:

"Uniting with all those who can be united (and isolating our enemies), to jointly maintain the

stability and development of the political situation" (Sapio, 2019; Wang and Groot, 2018).

Therefore, the CCP's united front method is not to pursue peaceful coexistence, but to rule

over the so-called "enemies".

In the era of Xi Jinping, the united front work has become increasingly important in China. It is noteworthy that in July 2015, Xi Jinping announced the addition of a central United Front working group. In the same year, the united Front work plan was finally written into the Party constitution, making the United Front one of the basic ideological principles of the Communist Party of China. Moreover, this principle will play a key role as China continues to try to gain its rightful place in the international discourse (Sapio, 2019). However, one of the preconditions for uniting the people of the target countries is to first create a sense of trust in the consensus and trust of Chinese discourse and initiatives, such as China's alternative model of globalization, and trust is also the highest price of public diplomacy. To earn the trust and support of people in other countries through advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange programs, international broadcasting and so forth, in short, is about generating international trust in building a national brand through public diplomacy. The United Front means that China needs to win hearts and minds of the public abroad, forming a political environment conducive to the interests of China's Party and state in the target country, and realizing the internal and external strategic interests of China's party and state (Mogensen,2015; Gill and Schreer, 2018; Sapio, 2019). For example, through communication and dialogue with various political and religious groups in Pakistan, China effectively maintains a united front with Pakistan on the issue of anti-terrorism, so as to achieve the purpose of maintaining stability in Xinjiang internally and safeguarding the security and interests of Chinese in Pakistan externally (Duchatel, 2011).

At present, the general trend of China's United Front is to increase the investment in the United Front Work Department, the Publicity Department and the International Liaison

Department. One of the important means is to expand the presence of Chinese state-owned

media through domestic and foreign broadcasting digital platforms, so as to facilitate and

expand the external publicity of Chinese media, to achieve the purpose of "uniting all who can

be united" (Gill and Schreer, 2018). Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

transcends the geographical barriers associated with mainstream media, traditional public and

political consultation, changing the nature of power and diplomacy. Network news production

is better than traditional news production in terms of transmission speed and timeliness due to

its zero-space constraints, multi-centrality and diversity of information sources, and the

interaction between publishers and audiences increases audience participation (Prodrou and

Frangonikolo, 2012; Navarro, 2019). Therefore, some of the undemocratic governments

including China are keen to establish information and communication systems and manage

overseas social media platforms. These countries use online platforms to promote their politics

or local customs to overseas people (of course, the introduction of local customs is also at the

service of political propaganda in the future), making it only a tool for government propaganda

and communication (Navarro, 2019).

In addition, according to Mogensen's (2015) research, most people only rely on shortcuts,

such as social media or network news, to get a rough understanding of different countries in

the world. People's trust in other countries is closely related to people's trust in the government

and media's propaganda of that country. Moreover, when talking about international trust,

researchers need to separate people's trust in foreign governments from their trust in

foreigners (Mogensen, 2015). Thus, what needs to be discussed and differentiated in this

study is whether a series of propaganda by Chinese public diplomacy practitioners on Twitter

is aimed at increasing the target people's trust in China or increasing the trust between

ordinary people in different countries.

To sum up, China's foreign publicity idea is to first build its national brand and win the trust

of the people of the target country through new public diplomacy, and at the same time to carry

out direct and extensive publicity to the people of the target country, and finally to achieve the

purpose of United Front Work of uniting the target public or dividing the target country.

Therefore, Zhao (2017) emphasizes that in the process of enhancing the "discourse power";

the Chinese government must identify and screen the target publics of discourse, and carefully

understand and confirm the needs and preferences of these discourse objects, so as to

enhance pertinence and effectiveness. Only when the subject and object of discourse form a

high degree of international identity due to the common values, core interests and rules can

they truly realize the international discourse power.

2.5 Social media and China's "Wai Xuan" (external publicity)

The term social media was first established in 1994 by Tokyo online media environment.

Since the birth of this term, the meaning of social media has been changing, and it was not

until 2010 that it became the main term used by scholars (Aichner, Grunfelder, Maurer and

Jegeni, 2021). Many researchers have attempted to explain what exactly social media is

(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Obar and Wildman, 2015; DeNardis and Hackl, 2015; Kane et al.,

2014). In summary, social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are applications that use

information and communications technology (ICT) to generate expression, promote the

dissemination of news, facilitate information sharing and collaboration among user groups and

social interaction with users' content (Velasquez and LaRose, 2015). The timeliness and

interactivity of communication are also the biggest differences between social media and

traditional media. Therefore, online social media plays an increasingly important role in

people's daily interpersonal communication. In the meanwhile, it also has a profound impact

on the social culture and political environment and boosts political publicity, making it able to

break through national boundaries and spread to every corner covered by the Internet.

The use of social media has changed the nature of information dissemination, and with

the spread of the Internet, major technical barriers have been largely removed. Some social

media have developed rapidly and are increasingly used in political context, especially Twitter

and Facebook. In recent years, political communication based on social media has been

considered very important by many politicians (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2012). From the

perspective of the public, the development of new information and communication

technologies has reduced the power of the state, because the public and the media have

gained the opportunity to communicate in cyberspace, and any citizen with enough Internet

knowledge and ideas can directly and quickly collect information across the borders of his or

her country (Steel Stein, 2002; Radojkovic, 2015; Aleksandar, 2017). At the level of public

diplomacy, social media is not only a platform to communicate and share digital media, but

also a forum for political communication, enabling ordinary people to communicate with foreign

and political figures (Bond and Messing, 2015). Aleksandar and Zeljko(2017) argue that

traditional diplomatic roles are now almost meaningless, and that the development of modern

information and communication technologies affects the transparency of international relations,

so that information about global politics is no longer limited to the professional circle, but can

be made available to the widest possible public. People can freely access the latest diplomatic

news through social media platforms, thus participating in public diplomacy.

According to the survey of Internet users by Shearer and Mitchell (2021), more than half

of people in the United States use social media, and over 70% of whom use Facebook,

YouTube and Twitter to get news regularly, social media seem to be becoming more important

in news communication. Inevitably, because of the virtual and accessible nature of the network,

there is some misinformation, which is false Information that is spread regardless of intention;

or disinformation, which is false Information that is spread intentionally to confuse or mislead,

through the news (Wang, Lee, Wu and Shen, 2020), which are easy to bring about confusion

and misunderstanding to the information recipients, they might mislead the judgment of the

audiences toward some events, or even cause direct or indirect harm to those who believe the

"rumours". For this reason, some stakeholders in the international community often make use

of the attribute of social media to carry out political publicity or propaganda, whatever facts or

misinformation, with the help of several social platforms, so that the information flow could

serve their own political interests (Navarro, 2019). Or in some cases, public opinion, which

refers to the sum of the ideas and attitudes that the majority of people have in response to the

real events, phenomena and problems in a given period (Lei, 2017), could be influenced by the

languages which were released by politicians, especially world leaders (Rufai, and Bunce, 2020). For example, in 2003, the Bush administration of the United States started the Iraq War by spreading the conspiracy theory about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction through the American media. However, the fact proved that this was disinformation with ulterior motives (Lewandowsky, Stritzke, Freund, Oberauer and Krueger, 2013; Navarro, 2019). In addition, the 2016 US election also attracted the interest of many researchers. Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton used Twitter and other social media to build and publicize their good political images, and communicate with netizens who support them. Meanwhile, they used misinformation to attack their rivals, guide public opinion and build momentum for the election (Budak, Agrawal, and El Abbadi, 2011; Guess, Nyhan and Reifler, 2018; Lee.et al, 2018).

Not only in these cases, after entering the Internet age, manipulation and control of the media seem to have become a common tactic between two sides in a dispute, whether it was a democratic regime or the leadership of a democratic government. The manifestations are nothing more than "forging" and spreading false or half-false information, so as to confuse or influence the trend of international "public opinion" (Navarro, 2019). Therefore, Zhang (2018) explained that social media played a non-negligible role in political propaganda. Targeted network political propaganda can bring political dividends to propagandists and help them realize their political intentions.

China, as a large power in the internet field, is also conducting online publicity at home

and abroad, hoping to build a good international image. Many official and Communist

party-backed media outlets have entered mainstream social media platforms overseas. They

started with light-hearted, non-political and non-ideological publicity, to attract a large audience,

especially young people; and then through short videos, cartoons and other flexible forms to

comment on and publicize some major events in China or the world, and imperceptibly

inculcates the political views and positions of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the

Chinese government to the audience (Huang and Wang, 2020). The practice of publicity on

social platforms could be traced back to the implementation of the 'Going out, going global'

(Zou chu qu) strategy proposed by the CPC in 2011. Also in the same year, the Chinese

government launched a seven-billion dollars' plan to establish a global media presence and

launch public diplomacy initiatives through Chinese state-owned media worldwide. Two years

later, Xi Jinping reaffirmed the importance of external publicity (Wai Xuan, 外宣), encouraged

Chinese media overseas to tell China's story well, and called on media workers to strive for the

"discourse power" for China (Huang and Wang, 2020).

According to the definition of Huang and Wang (2020), "Wai Xuan" refers to

government-led international political communication or public relations practice to promote a

good image of China in the world. Therefore, Former Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi

defined public diplomacy as the communication activities that create and manage a good

external public opinion environment. In addition, China's network public diplomacy is

consistent with the government's pursuit of innovation and improvement of network

propaganda to guide Internet public opinion. Chinese state media have shifted from a

slogan-based style of propaganda to a more dynamic form of expression, such as tweeting

text-image and video clips instead of tweeting official narratives. Chinese media deliberately

set aside their ideological bias and try to evoke positive emotions among the public by

engaging in narratives and interacting with the potential target public (Wang, Lee, Wu and

Shen, 2020). In short, these changes in China's external propaganda methods in recent years

are manifested as "changes in propaganda methods and terms" and "use of overseas social

media" (Hartig, 2018). The Chinese government tries to use the strategy of soft power to

connect the target public, export information content, and foster the national image (Huang

and Wang, 2020). Take Twitter as an example, by 2020, many Chinese government agencies

had opened official Twitter accounts, the CCP treated Twitter as another platform of

disseminating propaganda. Under the guidance of the idea of "Wai Xuan", Chinese

government agencies hope to reshape their authority on the Internet, and try to grasp the

mainstream discourse on the new media platform.

Twitter is an important platform for spreading information, and it has 330 million monthly

active users in 2020 (Twitter.com, 2020). Its role can also be seen in public diplomacy, where

Twitter has become a tool for promoting understanding between different groups, supporting

horizontal and non-hierarchical communication, and thus attracting a larger audience than

traditional media (Mustapha and Omar, 2020). This is why many scholars mention the

importance of social media for public diplomacy (Dale, 2009; Graffy, 2009; song and bian,

2016).

As a consequence, under the guidance and drive of this policy, since 2019, in the era of

Public Diplomacy 2.0, China Daily, as one of the first Chinese official media to enter Twitter,

has carried out a new round of publicity to foreign audiences on Twitter. For example, in

addition to introducing cultural customs, natural scenery and animals (especially Panda) in

various parts of China, China Daily will also publish information about Chinese political leaders

on its official Twitter account, such as Xi Jinping's visit to the UK, to create a friendly

atmosphere for foreign communication (Tang, 2011).

3. Methodology

As this research is exploratory in nature, this research is qualitative in that it relies on

meaning-based understanding of language or discourse rather than data analysis. Moreover,

this study belongs to the category of political discourse analysis, which focuses on the

language of politicians and the broader linguistic dimension of the political text and discourse

(Van Dijk, 1997; Hartig, 2018).

The linguist Grice summarized the three main purposes of political discourse. Ultimately,

they all want to influence the recipient through discourse, thereby approaching or achieving

the speaker's purpose (Li, 2014). The essence of political discourse is a social and purposeful

power activity (Harris, 2001). The sociality is reflected in the distance and relationship between

the speaker and the receiver, which is "closed" by the discourse; the purpose is reflected in the

speaker through the discourse, expressing his own position and attitude, and promoting views

and values; at the same time, the speaker also demonstrated his status, strengthened the

value system he followed, and demonstrated power. Correspondingly, this dissertation

analyses the discourse phenomenon of Chinese propaganda language on Twitter during the

pandemic by using three systematic discourse analysis methods: interpersonal, modality, and

evidentiality.

In this study, this dissertation mainly needs to explain three issues: what are the contents

of China's COVID-19 related tweets; what are the specific strategies of China's Twitter

promotion and has this strategy enhanced China's discourse power during the pandemic? The

researcher decided to use the qualitative method for data collection, collation, and analysis,

with a view to drawing conclusions for the above three research questions. Specifically, this

dissertation would take discourse analysis as the main research tools. According to the

discourse analysis theory used in political science, the essence of political discourse is a kind

of social, purposeful and powerful activity (Kazemian and Hashemi, 2014). In terms of sociality,

it unites the relationship between the discourse sender and the discourse receiver, and in the

process of dissemination, it has also played the purpose of promoting new ideas, views, and

values, and in this process of propaganda, it has demonstrated the speaker's position and

strengthened the value system that the speaker follows. Therefore, politicians often like to use

mature political discourse for domestic propaganda and diplomatic propaganda, but in the

process of expressing their discourse, they will not directly reflect the will of policy. At this time,

researchers need to apply discourse analysis methods to analyse the speech text to

summarize the political tendencies and intentions expressed by politicians in their speeches,

as well as the deep political considerations contained in some texts (Fairclough and Fairclough,

2013). When studying the theme of Chinese policy, the speeches and official documents of

Chinese leaders, such as white papers are often analysed by the researchers. Bowen (2009)

pointed out that government documents are easy-to-access and reliable data sources, and are

manageable, more cost-effective and time-efficient practical resources. These documents can

usually be easily found on the Chinese government websites, and basically reflect China's

high-level policy ideas, and are the authoritative research materials for studying Chinese

diplomatic terminology. By analysing discourse and writing, researchers can gain a general

understanding of China's national policies and political language. Due to differences in

national conditions, context, and ideology, some Chinese policy concepts learned from

international studies are still relatively vague and may differ from internationally recognized

political concepts. For example, in Chinese political concepts, soft power may equal cultural

power, but the original meaning of soft power also includes foreign policy, political value, and

scientific and technological strength. In Chinese political environment, its meaning has

narrowed. Therefore, in China, when the leader announced an increase in the country's soft

power, his specific approach only indicated that China would implement some policies to

invest in cultural industries or cultural-related schools, such as Confucius Institutes, or give it

more room for development. Therefore, it is not enough to understand China's policies only by

analyzing discourse and literature. It is necessary to combine policy practice with China's

national conditions to draw more accurate conclusions. This same applies to the research

focus of "discourse power".

Slightly different from other scholars' previous research, when searching for information

about "discourse power" in China, the researcher of this dissertation chose Twitter as the data

source rather than traditional newspaper or TV news. Because according to the analysis in this

dissertation, China is currently "competing to establish a new world order with China's

discourse", and the new method of Xi Jinping's government is to increase investment in

overseas propaganda. Specifically, a large number of official Chinese propaganda units have

already settled overseas. Also, Chinese propaganda and discourse are more active and

"radical" than before, which can be seen on social platforms like Twitter. Zhao Lijian and Hua

Chunying, as senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responded with fierce remarks

on the "condemnation" and "stigmatization" of senior US officials on Twitter. In addition, a large

number of Chinese media outlets posted several videos or articles similar in tone to the

"biological research base closed by the United States last year" and the "ten question marks

about the pandemic" (Guanyu yiqing de shige wenhao) proposed by the Chinese government

against the United States on Twitter. These are subjective and clearly directed publicity reports.

Therefore, based on the current events, the researcher chose to follow China's Twitter

propaganda during the COVID-19 pandemic, analyse the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

spokesperson's Twitter as a point of entry for case and discussion.

3.1 Background and principles of design choice

Since taking office in 2013, Xi Jinping has paid more attention to China's "discourse power", hoping to further enhance China's international discourse power by enhancing China's soft power, and the policy focus is also reflected in the Chinese political academia. The researcher retrieved 886 articles (from 2007 to 2019) related to the theme of "China's International Discourse Power" on "cnki.net" (academic websites in China), observed the annual output of academic papers in this field, and found that since 2013, great emphasis has been placed on external publicity and China's international "discourse power". Discussions on "discourse power" have developed rapidly, from papers with an annual output of less than 50 to an average of 120 papers per year (see figure 1).
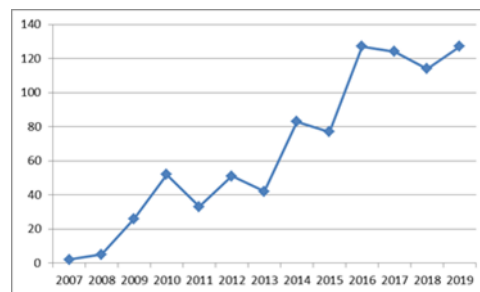
Figure 1

In the information age, online propaganda is more attractive and influential than traditional media propaganda due to its wide coverage, rapid dissemination, and strong interactivity. Charles Swett (1995) explained the special value of the Internet, i.e., it can realize unconventional psychological offensive actions. Jason Llebman (2010) also reported the impact of Twitter, YouTube and other social networking sites on foreign policy. It can be seen

that the Internet can indeed achieve strategic effects in publicity, play a psychological

deterrent and "brainwashing" effect on its opponents. The United States, as a large Internet

country, has already applied Internet publicity tactics to reality. China's network technology is

advancing by leaps and bounds in the 4G era, and it has also implemented the Internet

publicity strategy. After gaining the leading position in domestic network publicity, the Chinese

government has set its sights on overseas publicity, which is characterized by increased

overseas news base construction and network publicity intensity. After the international

incidents related to China happen, many Chinese media and individuals often spoke and

propagated for China on Twitter. The most striking one was the active action of the

spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Faced with diplomatic issues, the

spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has largely represented the official

position and proposition of the Chinese government. In order to study China's diplomatic

discourse and attitudes, the attention and study of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

spokesperson's speech may have a major impact. It can give researchers a general

understanding of China's current diplomatic situation and Chinese government officials'

attitudes to international events. Therefore, in this study, the researchers chose the account of

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson on Twitter as the data source. Foreign Ministry

Spokesperson Hua Chunying is often active on Twitter and other social platforms outside

China, using Twitter as the frontline for external publicity with "tough" language and narrative.

Since Hua Chunying registered a Twitter account in October 2019, she and her colleague in

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Lijian, began to promote China-related diplomatic issues

on Twitter. This situation was more fully reflected during the COVID-19 pandemic. For

example, Zhao Lijian tweeted five times in a row on March 12 questioning the openness and

transparency of the US COVID-19 information. Similarly, Hua Chunying posted "Ten Question

Marks for pandemic Situation". On the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "facts

about the prevalence of China's new coronary pneumonia" was published. After summarizing

all the tweets, the researchers roughly divided the tweets of Hua and Zhao and China's

overseas propaganda media into three categories, namely "praising China's epidemic

prevention achievements and expressing all openness and transparency", "counterattack"

instead of responding to the "defamation" of Western media and politicians and "proactively

questioning the transparency of US pandemic information, and condemning its politicians for

lying about China." Judging from these cases, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs during Xi

Jinping's period has changed greatly. From passive responses in the past to active attacks,

when responding to discourse attacks and provocations from countries such as the United

States and the "Five Eyes Alliance" (the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand),

they no longer just said "strongly condemn" and found a reason to defend themselves, but

began to collect opponents' information and disadvantages, and use the opponent's idioms

and skills to actively attack. In general, the Twitter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

spokesperson is easy to track and observe, and the information is more official and

authoritative, which facilitates researchers to collect data for analysis. In addition, since 2009,

"China Daily" and other official media have registered accounts on Twitter and started to

promote Chinese news to the world. Since that situation is not a new external publicity trend,

this dissertation will no longer focus on this theme, but extract the information materials and

promotional materials for pandemic messages from China. In the process of selecting and

analysing samples, the researcher will focus on the keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, China and the United States, WHO, verbal attack and etc., to analyse the language theory of the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, discuss the new propaganda of China background, and make analyses.

When collecting news and reports about COVID-19, the researcher needs to spend a considerable amount of time reading news, government documents and media reviews, and selecting the most relevant materials for analysis; when studying certain terms, such as the core of this dissertation, "discourse power", the researcher also needs to read massive Chinese and foreign literature to find a clear definition of the terms to establish a theoretical framework. After analysing the rest of the materials, since the analysis is language-oriented, there may be subjectivity in language understanding and deviations in the evaluation process. For example, the speech and accusation regarding COVID-19 between China and the United States. Certainly, researchers cannot subjectively analyse the discourse from one side. Instead, they need to understand related scientific research and conduct auxiliary evidence analysis based on the "facts" that can be mastered. In short, the researcher cannot only analyse language according to language, but also needs to pay attention to combining evidence to draw relatively objective conclusions. As the experimental results and data analysis are displayed in text form, they cannot be directly perceived as the data representation of quantitative methods. These shortcomings are inevitable. The researcher decided to use the Twitter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson and the official account of the Chinese media as data collection vehicles, as well as discourse analysis and

literature analysis as the main research methods. The reason is that the news and statements

on Twitter are easy to track and access and reliable; files (such as messages on Twitter) can

be reviewed multiple times, are easy to find, and have nothing to do with researchers and

research processes (Bowen, 2009), which is an effective method of data collection.

3.2 Design or method description

The following part will explain the process of collecting and analysing data or solving

research problems. Firstly, in order to investigate the first research questions, namely what are

the contents of China's COVID-19 related tweets, the researcher used coding processes

described as follows:

The dissertation coded Hua Chunying (@SpokespersonCHN) and Zhao Lijian (@zlj517)'s

tweets, including text form, pictures and screenshots of related tweets. Instead of relying on

previous studies, the researchers encoded and classified the obtained text and visual data:

From March 6, 2020 to May 24, 2020, a total of 56 tweets related to the COVID-19 were

extracted from Hua's tweets. The researcher uses capital English letter H to represent Hua

Chunying, and arrange tweets from H1-H35 in chronological order. If there are several tweets

in the same day, lower case English letters are added after the numbers in order of publication,

such as H3a, H3b, and H3c (see Appendix 1). Similarly, Zhao Lijian's tweets were coded

according to the above method, extracting 29 tweets from March 5, 2020 to May 20, 2020. The

capital letter Z is used to represent Zhao Lijian, and all texts are sorted chronologically

according to Z1-Z15. Multiple tweets per day are coded in the form Z4a and Z4b (see

Appendix 2).

This study reviewed and coded more than 150 tweets from Hua and Zhao between March

and June 2020. During the coding process, the researcher deleted irrelevant tweets (such as

references to "cloud diplomacy" or "the George Floyd incident"). In the end, a total of 85 tweets

made up the final set of analytical texts used to provide qualitative analysis of the narrative

related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Faced with the 85 tweets finally extracted, the researchers

took the representation theory in the international communication theory as the theoretical

guidance to conduct the language text research. When it comes to the theory of international

communication, Aleksandar and Zeljko (2017) summarizes five paradigms based on previous

studies, which are internationalism theory, the Marxist paradigm, representation theory,

reception theory and the identity theory. This dissertation will use the representation theory,

that is, the linguistic study of international media in the context of international relations, to

conduct the discourse study of Chinese Twitter; there is also Reception theory, that is, through

text analysis, it is tested whether China's external Internet publicity is designed to be an

element that can be recognized by people around the world, and whether it can make it easy

for people from different cultures to interpret the information transmitted by China.

Furthermore, in combination with the Interpersonal systemic analysis, modality systemic

analysis, and evidentiality analysis in the systemic discourse analysis, the twitter text contents

of Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian are classified and discussed. Halliday's view was that

interpersonal functions can be embodied by the personal system (Nur, 2015). The first-person

singular form often plays a role in demonstrating personal ability and success in political

discourse, highlighting "I", shaping one's own image, and strengthening power; and the use of

the first-person plural form is to make the recipient think that "we" belong to the same "camp",

which have common goals and opponents, and play a role of unity the propaganda target; the

second person and the third person are often used to refer to the "enemy", they implies that

"you" or "them" are different from "us", and successfully antagonizes the "rival" and "our" own

camp. In this analysis, Hua and Zhao often used the first-person plural and the second-person

in their Twitter to unite the countries that have suffered from the pandemic together with China,

to oppose the "camp" between the United States and China to achieve political intentions.

Modality is the second main analytic object in the text. Modal auxiliary verbs such as would,

should, could are an important part of expressing modalities. They can express the speaker's

judgment, attitude and determination on the possibility and validity of the proposition. Among

them, certain modal discourses such as "must" can also express the request or command

attitude of the speaker to the receiver of the message to assume responsibility or fulfill the

obligation, control the process of discourse interaction, and ultimately achieve the political

purpose of speaking (Sulkunen and Törrönen, 1997). In addition, in the text, Hua Chunying

and Zhao Lijian also often use the "evidentiality" technique. Evidentiality means that the

speaker "shapes" or "transforms" certain statements into "common sense" or "facts." Through

the discourse technique of "implying" or "proving" for example, influence the recipient's

understanding and judgment of "facts" to rationalize their own practices and demands

(Schneider, 2013). This study takes Hua Chunying, Zhao Lijian, CGTN, and China Daily's

publicity on Twitter during the epidemic as examples to discuss China's publicity language and

methods on overseas social platforms, using system analysis as a theoretical analysis

perspective, to discuss the propaganda strategy, style, and discourse characteristics in order

to reveal the Chinese "discourse power" strategy and political intention behind the discourse

(Zhang, 2018).

For the second research question, the researcher chose Twitter as the data collection

platform to observe some of China's recent efforts to enhance its publicity and discourse.

Specifically, the researcher plans to study China's "discourse power" and the publicity of

Chinese overseas media, hoping to obtain key information from the spokesperson's speeches

on Twitter and Chinese news media for analysis. In addition to the spokesperson's "wolf

warrior" performance, China's diplomatic system also has "softened" actions. For example, the

Chinese embassy in France also published comics on Twitter, using humorous images to

satirize the US government's ineffectiveness in preventing and fighting the COVID-19. Besides,

the researcher also pays attention to Chinese official media such as China Daily and CGTN.

They promoted the achievements of China's pandemic and overseas aid, but also reported

poor pandemic measures during the pandemic and some "adverse events" in other countries.

These reports can be used as auxiliary materials for observing their text and narrative. For

more detailed information and arguments, this dissertation conducts the discussion combines

with several political terminologies, such as, new public diplomacy, national branding, the

United Front Work. The Twitter remarks of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

are used because they are authoritative and represent the will of the country, and they have

become the frontline of China's overseas propaganda. As the two largest English propaganda

agencies in China, China Daily and CGTN have also played an important role in external

English propaganda. Therefore, this dissertation believes that these cases can play a

representative role and help researchers grasp the discourse strategies and methods of

Chinese diplomatic publicity.

In this study, the texts of Hua Chunying, Zhao Lijian, CGTN and China Daily were

screened by a computer, and the advanced search function of Twitter was used with keywords

such as COVID-19, WHO, US and so forth. The final text was 2269 words, and there were

many screenshots of examples of other publicity methods during the pandemic in China.

Please refer to the appendix for the complete text. The time span for material collection was

March 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020, which was 3 months. These tweets spread propaganda as the

pandemic began to spread throughout the world, involving the achievements of China's

defence and treatments toward COVID-19, overseas aid propaganda and vigorous

counterattacks against the words "disgrace" and reproach of senior US officials. The discourse

text material extracted from Twitter was used for critical analysis of discourse. The text was

mainly taken from Hua Chunying's Twitter homepage. During this promotion period, Hua

assumed most of the discourse promotion tasks, that is, Hua's Twitter content was almost all

discourse propaganda in the form of text. In addition, Zhao Lijian, CGTN and China Daily's

other forms of Twitter publicity were used as supplements to discourse propaganda. Hua's

tweets expressed three main matters: publicizing China's international aid and demonstrating

China's humanitarianism and good image; "conspiracy theory" and "slandering" with the

United States and anti-conspiracy theory, shaping China and the United States as a distinct

image of opposition; sarcasm and mockery regarding the current status of the US pandemic.

These extracted tweets were used to discuss the third research question, which is the effect

that China's external publicity has had on its discourse power strategy.

In general, this research selected Twitter accounts of Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian, who

were two Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokespersons, and Twitter accounts of CGTN

and China Daily which were two China's English news media, as representative cases to

organize and observe their discourse and publicity during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The

researcher set the time span to start from March 1, 2020, and end on June 1, 2020, because,

during these three months, China's concentrated publicity of the pandemic situation and

experience, the frequency and intensity of the COVID-19 outbreak publicity are high, and this

was also the period of frequent verbal condemnation and discourse shaping the relationship

between China and the United States on Twitter.

4. Data analysis and discussion

The researchers noticed that certain politicians and media propaganda in the "Five Eyes

Alliance" led by the United States portrayed China as the chief culprit of COVID-19 and

demanded that China apologize to the world for compensation. However, in the face of these

discourses, China also defined them as "the words that slandering China", and aroused a

"merciless" discourse from Chinese officials to fight back. At the same time, it also launched

discourse propaganda about China's good image. This situation of propaganda was reflected

on the Internet, especially Twitter.

4.1 Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian

4.1.1 Interpersonal systemic analysis

After sorting out the Tweets of Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian, this dissertation counts

their use of personal pronouns. Hua Chunying used the first-person plural form 20 times in

twelve tweets of different dates, forming the main personal pronouns in the original text, while

Zhao Lijian used "we" fourteen times in nine tweets. "We" have two interpersonal functions in

the use of discourse, excluding or including discourse receivers (Crane, 2006). In the text, the

first-person plural form used by Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian belongs to the second usage.

The advantage of this kind of discourse is to unite the speaker and the receiver, shorten the

emotional distance between the two, and resonate with an event, thereby unifying the camp

and having a certain appeal.

For example, in H2, when facing the WHO Director-General's tweet expressing gratitude

for China's financial support for the WHO, Hua Chunying reposted Dr. Tedros' tweet and said

"We are together in the global fight against COVID19" indicated that China was standing with

WHO during this global crisis and "jointly" responding to the epidemic; in H3a, Hua Chunying

relayed Foreign Minister Wang Yi's willingness to provide medical assistance to Italy. At the

time, "We're with you!" was used as the ending; and in H6, after the Chinese medical team had arrived in Italy to start work, Hua Chunying used "we" four times to strengthen the tone in the tweet. The first two times "we" stated the reason for the mutual assistance of the two countries, namely, Italy's assistance to China's Wenchuan earthquake. Therefore, China's aid this time is of a "repay" nature; the last two "we" referred to Italy as family, and stated that the two countries will be firmly together in the face of disaster. In this discourse propaganda about Italy, Hua Chunying also attached a cartoon "Everything will be fine" created by Italian cartoonist Aurora Cantone, which created the image of doctors from China and Italy jointly supporting Italy. Hua's words such as "we", "together", "family" and so forth, pass on a message to win over the Italian people and show China's good international image of friendship, mutual assistance, and goodwill. Such examples also appeared in the aid propaganda to Moldova of H22a and the medical propaganda to the Philippines of H27a. Both used "we" to show China's friendly image and express the willingness to unite with other countries to overcome the virus.

Similarly, Zhao Lijian also preferred to use "we" to narrow the distance between China and other countries when conducting propaganda. For example, the tweet in Z3c "We believe that … the sun will warm us all", expressed that China, Japan and South Korea would overcome the difficulties together and are confident that they would usher in "spring" together. Also, in the face of the United States' "accusations" against China on treating Africans differently during the epidemic, Zhao Lijian also made a statement that, as is shown in Z8 and Z9a, the Sino-African friendship can't be "wrecked" and it was "unbreakable", "we" (referring to the people of China and Africa) fought side by side during the epidemic, and "we" also advised the United States to pay more attention to the deterioration of the epidemic in its own country;

In the two tweets of Hua Chunying in H17 and H18a and the two tweets of Zhao Lijian in Z5 and Z6a, the meaning of "we" in their words went further. Using "we" to refer to countries or all human beings in the world, Zhao's tweets mainly call for cooperation with the world, like "to deal with the epidemic and… to save more lives", "to fight racism and prejudice", but Hua's "we" in the tweet followed by "win" indicated that only a united and cooperative world can win the battle against the pandemic. Among them, Hua Chunying also issued "HUMAN" and "VIRUS" in English capital letters. On the one hand, they highlighted the antagonism between humans and viruses, and highlighted that the common enemy of "we" as human beings was virus; on the other hand, the time of this tweet was after the frequent "accusations" of China by the United States, so it also implied that China was not the enemy but the virus; in a tweet in H35, Hua used "we" for the last time, summarizing "The most important thing we could learn from COVID19 is that the life and health of people in different countries have never been so closely connected". She used "we" to refer to all people in different countries suffering from the pandemic, expressed that our lives and health have never been so inextricably linked. In several publicity campaigns in April and May, Hua Chunying did not emphasize China alone, but integrated China into the world for discussion, and used the fear of loss of life and health hazards, the two threats that all mankind faced together in this pandemic, to resonate with the audience, so that the discourse recipients and China are psychologically unified as a camp, and form the common understanding that we should jointly respond to the pandemic, rather than "attack" each other.

In addition to using "we" to narrow the distance with the audience, Hua Chunying also used "you" three times to refer to the United States, who opposed the United States and the "we" camp. The first use of "you" appeared in the debate between Hua Chunying and Morgan Ortagus, who is the administrator under the leadership of Pompeo. In H10, Hua satirized US President Trump's inconsistent attitudes towards China, stated China's policy practices since February, and used "what have you done since then" to compare China's policies and actions to clearly ridicule the US's ineffective response to the pandemic; another time was on H32a, when the United States "blamed" China for the out-of-control of the pandemic, Hua Chunying quoted economist Jeffrey D. Sachs of Columbia University to prove that what the United States did was so improper, and satirized the US's condemnation as the restoration of the "McCarthy era". At the end, Hua added a comment "You have done enough. Have you no shame?" to directly "accuse" the United States, and the capital letters "ENOUGH LIES" were used to enhance the tone, to make people feel angry, and to portray the United States as emblematic symbols of "shamelessness" and bearing a "mouthful of lies". Zhao Lijian also used "you" twice in his tweets about the United States. The first time was "five consecutive tweets" by Zhao Lijian in Z2, which questioned the transparency of US information in both Chinese and English; the second time using "you" was to placed "someone" who claimed China's exports are "toxic" on the opposite side, and such "toxic" remarks are defined as a "political virus".

4.1.2 Modality systemic analysis

Modality can be divided into low, medium and high degree. In the text of Hua and Zhao, "will" was used most frequently to indicate a moderate degree of possibility or willingness, totalling 20 times; followed by "can" for six times, the low-degree modalities indicated possibility and tendency; in the end, the least used by the two spokespersons was "must", which means command and imperative and was used only once respectively.

Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian both used "will" to express their inclination and willingness in many situations. For example, Hua Chunying used "... will provide masks" and "... will send medical expert" in H3a to express China's willingness to provide masks and other medical supplies for Italy which was short of medical resources; the meaning of "China will never retreat in the fight against COVID19" in H14 expressed China's determination to respond to the pandemic and will not shrink back. Similarly, Zhao Lijian has repeatedly used the phrase "China and ...will strengthen cooperation to overcome the outbreak" to express the profound "friendship" between China and Russia, Pakistan, and Africa, and to express the willingness to cooperate with these "partners" to fight the pandemic. The sentence "Friendship and mutual trust will emerge stronger in our joint battle against COVID19" in the text was said by Hua after expressed her willingness to provide assistance to Italy. "Help and Mutual Aid will deepen the friendship between the two countries". "Hope all (countries) will support the UN and WHO's coordinating work to win the battle". The "will" in the above two sentences was used to express China's call for all countries to work together to resist the virus. Finally, with the phrase "Apart, humanity will suffer more. Together, we will win", Hua Chunying expressed the view of the

possibility of mutual benefit or people would lose if divided, and the call for the cooperation of all mankind.

Hua's tweet in H11a that "China launched… global aid platform. We hope these platforms can not only help our Chinese nationals, but all people suffering from COVID19". The use of "can" in the sentence expresses China's ability and sense of responsibility. China has developed online medical consultation products, not only for Chinese people, but also for expressing its willingness to help all people affected by the virus in the world. In H22a, "… we can battle COVID19" and H22b "Only … in solidarity can we win the battle!" Both sentences used "can", expressed the same meaning and still acted as an appeal to the world to unite and secure the victory against COVID-19 together.

Hua Chunying quoted the dialogue between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros in H21, "Virus is a common enemy and must be defeated with unity". Zhao Lijian also quoted what UN Secretary-General Guterres said in Z6a "… we must fight racism and prejudice". This was the only two uses of "must" in their Twitter promotion. As a high degree modal verb, "must" has the purpose of showing that the speaker imposed his own subjective thoughts and wishes on the recipient. Its discourse has a demanding, imperative or commanding tone and attitude. Compared with "will" and "can", the discourse of "must" lacks affinity, and it gives the recipient a condescending attitude of the sender of the message. In terms of China's status as a developing country and its desire to strive for world leadership, it is not appropriate to use this command discourse for propaganda. Therefore, the

"must" words used in Hua and Zhao's Twitter promotion did not come directly from the mouth of the two, or started with China, but were quoted from the words of higher status and more influential UN officials in the world. Although China has borrowed their words to express its own ideas, it did not make people feel that China uses a tough and commanding tone for propaganda. What China conveys was more like an expression that all our countries and people were united under the banner of the United Nations and WHO. Everyone "must" obey the guidelines set by them, and cope with difficulties together.

On the one hand, the frequent use of a certain vocabulary can tell the speaker's propaganda tendency, for example, using "we" to express unity and friendship, and "you" to express opposition and hostility, so that the audience can intuitively know who is a "friend", who is the "enemy"; on the other hand, the frequency of use of modal auxiliary verbs can also allow researchers to judge the intention and attitude of the speaker, such as "must" to express determination, "will" to express possibility. From Hua Chunying's frequent use of "will", it can be analysed that Hua wishes to express that China would provide help and is ready for a partnership in fighting against the COVID-19 with other countries. Discourse analysis was a suitable analysis method when analysing the speeches of politicians in public places, because politicians often hope to tell the audience his political aspirations and ambitions through speeches, so as to gain public approval and support. As a result, they often deliberately arrange some modal verbs and personal pronouns to imply or express one's own or their country's political intentions, in order to realize the political purpose of uniting and drawing one's camp, as well as dividing and opposing the "enemy" camp.

4.1.3 Evidentiality analysis

In the text, both Hua and Zhao used statements that reported "facts", proved "facts" or implied "facts" to state the "facts" of China's actions during the pandemic, as well as responding and countering the US's "untrue" remarks about China, and stated that when propagandizing China's pandemic prevention and anti-pandemic work, they will "naturalize" certain statements into "facts", even some controversial statements (Schneider, 2013).

In terms of stating "facts", both Hua and Zhao often use certain cases of experts and politicians that are beneficial to China, or supportive speeches or "evidence" of China as arguments to support their views. For example, H5a "Dr. Robert Redfield: Some cases that were previously diagnosed as Flu in the US were actually COVID19", Hua quoted the US CDC Director Dr. Redfield to "prove" and "implied" that China might not the first place of the virus to refute the American politicians' claim that COVID-19 is called "Chinese Virus". Similarly, in H9b, Hua Chunying cited the 2015 WHO naming rules for viruses "WHO ... saying that disease names may NOT include geographic locations & should avoid causing offence to any national, regional, or ethnic groups" to prove the inappropriateness of the US "stigmatization" of China. Also, the quoted words "The message from China was absolutely clear" by Lancet editor-in-chief Horton prove that China has not concealed the report and the information is very transparent.

In addition, Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian often used "implying" methods to state controversial "facts", and this kind of discourse often appears in "conspiracy theories" against the United States. Among them, H9a "... CDC Director admitted some were actually COVID19. American people need and deserve more detailed, transparent explanation". H18b "… Where is freedom and transparency when Captain Crozier was dismissed for a letter to save thousands of lives and medical workers fired for talking about working conditions?" H29 "Why not ask US experts to locate when the virus first started in the US?", and "The US keeps calling for transparency and investigation. Why not open up Fort Detrick and other bio-labs for international review? Why not invite WHO and international experts to the US to look into COVID19 source and response?" These tweets all jointly "implied" the opacity of the information about the US epidemic and the concealment of the truth and the "possibility" of the virus being "leaked" from the United States, guiding the public to turn their attention to the United States and to doubt the US biochemical bases instead of accusing China. Zhao Lijian also used "suggestive" words and "conspiracy theories" to "fuel the flames". In Z2, he used five consecutive tweets and four consecutive questions to doubt the United States and asked the United States with three strong imperative sentences "Be transparent! Make your data public! The US owes us an explanation!" Zhao Lijian's Twitter remarks aroused a lot of controversies afterward. In response to the controversy he caused, Zhao expressed an indifferent attitude, and he also explained on news conference on April 7 that the reason he said those words was "a reaction to the stigmatization of China by some American politicians a while ago. It reflects the indignation of many people in China about these stigmatizations".

In the publicity of the pandemic, Hua and Zhao also transformed many of the will and demands of the Chinese government in the form of declarative sentences or imperative sentences into "common sense" and "facts" that the world should abide by. For example, first of all, Hua's "Cooperation is the only right way to win the battle" in H10. "… the international community needs solidarity and cooperation more than ever" in H13 and "now is the time for unity, of the whole world!" in H18a, " … Only when the world fight in solidarity can we win the battle!" in H22b and Zhao's tweet in Z5 " … mankind is a community with a shared future … We should unite … international cooperation to save more lives". Words such as "cooperation", "unity" and "solidarity" are frequently used to express China's appeal for cooperation, and to convey to the world that cooperation in response to the virus was the "common sense" that mankind should abide by. At the same time, it has shaped China's willingness to cooperate with each other. Second, in H12, Hua's tweet "The responsibility and contributions of the Chinese people deserve respect instead of smears". In H20a, "China… has responded openly, transparently and responsibly …", "CPC is open, transparent and responsible in COVID19 response" in H29, and the words "China supports WHO in reviewing global response to COVID19 in an open, transparent and inclusive manner..." in H33c conveyed the "facts" that China and CCP were the "responsible", "transparent" and "open" part during this epidemic. Finally, H31 said that "The choice is NOT between the US and China, but between LIES and FACTS, bullying and Cooperation, unilateralism and multilateralism". In this passage, Hua directly put the US and "lies, bullying, unilateralism" with equal signs, and regarded China as a representative of "facts, cooperation and multilateralism".

4.2 CGTN and China Daily

CGTN (China Global Television Network) and China Daily, one is China's largest

state-run English radio and television under the control of China Central Television (CCTV),

and the other is China's biggest state-run external publicity English newspaper. Since their

inception, they have undertaken the main task of English publicizing to foreign countries, and

their branches spread across all continents of the world ("China is spending billions on its

foreign-language media", 2018).

The biggest feature of CGTN and China Daily on Twitter was that they had a variety of

forms. There were live broadcasts; the number of people online every time was around 4,000

to 10,000. The content of live broadcast was mainly to show the Chinese government work

meeting of national pandemic defence and pandemic prevention and government control.

Produced "Facts Tell" and other video series, responded to or discussed some of the verbal

attacking and accusations by the United States; the self-questioning picture and text form, and

the soft propaganda in the form of comics. The comic objects are directed at the virus in the

early stage, and later targeted at the United States. They mock the United States in a

humorous and exaggerated form (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4).

Compared with Hua Chunying's tweets, which did not use sharp words and would not

directly attack and respond to individuals in the early stage, CGTN has been targeted since the

outbreak response. Each issue of the "FactsTell" series of videos will respond to or criticize the

comments of a certain politician or news in the United States. From Tom Cotton to Pompeo,

even Trump is directly named and slammed. This situation of direct discourse attack on senior

US officials and even the president on the TV media was uncommon in China's media attitude

after the Mao Zedong era. Judging from the title of each video of "FactsTell", when describing

the remarks of these high-ranking officials in the United States, they were portrayed as

deceptive words such as "false information", "rumours", "lying". On 23rd March, after Trump

frequently used "Chinese virus" to attack China, the video released by CGTN was directly

named "When Trump lies, people die", and listed the data of the deterioration of the US

epidemic. Apparently, CGTN satirized that Trump was the culprit that caused the virus to

spread out of control in the United States

In addition, CGTN and China Daily had used comics to satirize the United States'

anti-epidemic and epidemic problems many times, and had achieved good results. Painting

publicity has always been a common propaganda technique of the Communist Party of China.

Since the Mao Zedong period, Soviet-style propaganda pictures have been painted on the

walls of buildings and streets, which have been used in conjunction with propaganda slogans,

which has achieved a good publicity effect in the revolutionary time. Until now, this "tradition"

has remained, such as the series of pictures of the "Chinese Dream" that are often seen on the

street, but its painting style has changed from the Soviet style to the Chinese style (Mittler,

2008). When China used Twitter to advertise on the Internet outside the firewall, in face of

foreign countries, mainly English-speaking netizens, the comic posters drawn by CGTN and

China Daily adopted American style and used exaggerated humour to carry out political

propaganda. In the early stage of the publicity, the poster on 9th March showed a cartoon of

"China as the leader, leading South Korea, Italy, Japan and Iran to fight against the COVID-19

virus in the form of tug of war". This comic would also frequently appear in the subsequent

publicity; the main meaning of this cartoon to the outside world was that China plays a leading

role in the fight against the epidemic. The most ironic are the three comics about vilified Trump:

The first comic depicted the image of Trump's stigmatizing China, accompanied by the text

"the fighting against coronavirus needs science not stigma"; the second comic depicted that

the pandemic in the United States has rapidly deteriorated just because of Trump's negligence

and failure to pay attention to the virus; the last comic showed no mercy and directly processes

Trump's figurative art into the King and the Joker of playing cards, with the text of "King or

Joker?".

(Figure 2: CGTN propaganda cartoon"king or joker")

In addition to these comics, CGTN also produced a satirical Pompeo video game-like

cartoon on May 20: "Pompeo credibility test", which showed in the form of a game how

Pompeo lost his credibility by "lying", this video has received a good response in the comment

area. The entertaining political propaganda is in distinct contrast with the serious propaganda

that the Chinese Communist Party has always used. Some foreign netizens used some

astonishing words to express their feelings in the comment area, they were surprised that this was also Chinese propaganda.

5. Conclusion

In order to protect China's vested interests in the world, senior Chinese officials are increasingly attaching importance to "soft" methods such as building China's international discourse, because the military intervention, economic sanctions and other means used by previous powers are no longer suitable for the international context of globalization, and the value of flexible strategy will become increasingly prominent. For building a discourse system and seek more international discourse power, successive Chinese governments have made efforts, and the focus of the work is mainly reflected in building external publicity.

Like many western political terms in the past, such as "democracy", "freedom" and "human rights", the concept of discourse power has been internalized after entering China, the official definition is "the right to formulate standards, the right to interpret and define world affairs," that is, China hopes to have its own set of discourse systems to reflect rights, to protect or obtain more international interests, and to be accepted by the international community, including "to use discourse to shape China itself and other countries", "to use the words to explain diplomatic and international behaviour" and the right "to apply China's own interpretation of major international issues". This suggests that China, as an emerging

economic power, has the right to use its own language to shape its own good international image, or to use language to achieve political goals of shaping, dividing and influencing rivals. Therefore, with the rapid improvement of China's national strength, Chinese leaders will inevitably pay attention to the issue of "discourse power", hoping to obtain the international "discourse power" commensurate with China's strength and to promote the development of China's international cause.

From the historical point of view, China has experienced a long and complicated process in pursuing discourse power. Since the "reform and opening up", the continuous accumulation of comprehensive national strength has enabled China to acquire some ability to compete for discourse power corresponding to its international status. However, in the official view, Chinese discourse is still in a "dark corner", and the strengthening of the discourse power also means the rejuvenation of the nation. Thus, Xi called on the party and the media to strengthen the building of international communication capacity and strive to build an external publicity media flagship with high international reputation. Under the guidance of this thought, the implementation of "discourse power" strategy is reflected in the field of network publicity. The Communist Party of China (CPC) hopes to win the narrative war through the spread of the Internet to maintain its firm rule in China. Chinese scholars' views on China's discourse power are similar to those of the Chinese government. This dissertation also classifies many scholars' discussions according to the arguments of "deficit", "contrast" and "gap". Chinese scholars believe that China's discourse power is "weak", so the Chinese government hopes to establish and expand China's overseas influence through the practice of discourse power

strategy, so as to narrow the discourse power gap with developed countries in Europe and the

United States. However, some foreign scholars believe that China's discourse power has

nothing to do with being "weak", but the lack of narrative ability and narrative skills that hinder

China from realizing its vision of enhancing its discourse power and need to be improved.

According to the debates of scholars, based on the "discourse power" of China as the

breakthrough point, the meaning of "discourse power" of China and China's pursuit of

"discourse power" process is analysed, discussed and summarized, using the method of

systemic discourse analysis to analyse China's network advertising discourse, to observe and

to deduce the characteristics of the current strategy of "discourse power". During the

COVID-19 pandemic, China has launched an online campaign on many overseas social media

platforms, especially Twitter. Online propaganda belongs to the category of new public

diplomacy; China envisages direct contact with the people of the target countries through

online publicity. At the same time, some overseas aid is used to build the national brand and

win the target people's trust in China, so that they are willing to be "united" with China. And in

the process of publicity, they often deliberately arrange some modal verbs and personal

pronouns to imply or express the political intention of the country, in order to "unite and reach

out to the people and countries that share China's political aspirations and are suffering from

COVID-19", or "to tarnish America's image, divide America's political influence, and highlight

antagonism and hostility." For example, Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian often use "we" and

"you" to highlight the antagonism between China and the United States in their propaganda

campaigns, hoping to "unite all who can be united" to fight the pandemic and isolate the U.S.

government for its weak response to the pandemic. Moreover, the use of modal auxiliary verbs such as "must" means determination, and "will" means possibility. Hua's frequent use of "will" indicates that China will be willing to help and ready to cooperate with other countries in the fight against the COVID-19.

Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian also translated many of the will and requirements of the Chinese government into "common sense" and "facts" that the world should follow in the form of declarative or imperative sentences, depicting China as a cooperative and responsible power, and portraying some western powers, such as the United States, as irresponsible and incompetent in the face of the pandemic. Because negative events generally affect reputation levels more quickly than positive events, it is much easier to destroy reputation than to build it (Mogensen, 2015). Its purpose is to maintain the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party at home, improve China's international reputation abroad, and destroy the international reputation of enemy countries (Yang and Chen, 2020). In addition, the diversification of CGTN and China Daily, the "de-ideological" publicity, the increased use of text-image, video propaganda, live broadcast, satirical cartoons and other supporting methods in the pandemic promotion also brought a sense of change to the outside world that Chinese media is more "flexible" than before.

COVID-19 has given the Xi Jinping administration an opportunity to expand China's influence and "discourse power," but the sudden, centralized, politicized publicity (propaganda) has failed to bring the desired effect to China. Far from being widely accepted by the targeted

publics, the stories of China actively helping other countries in the fight against COVID-19

brought negative speculation about China, and the COVID-19 publicity has further

exacerbated the mutual political misunderstanding between China and the United States. The

reasons for this are: first of all, Chinese propaganda is too eager and intense, and with a

strong official and Communist tinge, which unsettles the public of foreign targets, a. Although

the forms of publicity have changed, such as the addition of cartoons and videos, some of

them are still focused on political propaganda, which is likely to cause resistance from foreign

audiences. Secondly, China's political discourse is characterized by "sloganization", with short

writing and neat sentences, such as text-image and #FactCheck series (see Appendix 4). As

for foreign audiences, such expressions are confusing, lacking in substantive content and

persuasiveness. Therefore, China should distinguish internal propaganda from external

publicity: abandoning empty jargon, introducing China with pragmatic and vivid words,

adopting the expression methods and elaboration modes favoured by the target publics, and

providing convenience for the audience to decode.

The construction of international "discourse power" itself depends on others' judgment

and attitudes towards their own discourse. Whether it represents power or not, other political

entities can choose to accept or ignore discourse (Sun, 2018). The international discourse

system is a complex system of mutual influence, and the discourse behaviour and "discourse

power" of any political entity are constantly adjusted and balanced. The purpose of

establishing China's own international discourse system is to help China better carry out

discourse propaganda. In addition to providing legitimacy and justification for their actions,

China's place in the system of international discourse must depend on their ability to provide a more reliable vision of the interests and order of other "stakeholders"." The extent to which the interacting parties conform to the basic requirements of global ethics determines not only the degree of mutual recognition and dependence between China and the other subject, but also the sensitivity of the entity to the discourse and power of others. Therefore, for Chinese discourse researchers and policy makers, how to make use of social media to create policy agendas and hot topics, how to transform domestic and foreign social media similar to Twitter into a tool of China's diplomatic publicity, and how to put forward international discourse that is more convincing, more targeted, more attractive and more acceptable to the targets publics, instead of the "confrontation" and "accusation" proposition that frequently aggravate differences and enmity, is the possible focus of future research on China's "discourse power".

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7. Appendix

Appendix 1: Hua Chunying (@SpokespersonCHN)

H1: 06/03/2020

Dr. Aylward, head of the China-WHO joint mission on COVID19, said China's counterattack can be replicated, but it will require speed, money, imagination and political courage. Thanks for your professionalism, devotion, sacrifice and objectiveness. We are ready to share and give.

H2: 07/03/2020

We are together in the global fight against COVID19.

H3: 10/03/2020

H3a: State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi called with his Italian counterpart Luigi Di Maio: China will provide masks and other medical supplies to Italy. Our sister cities/provinces & businesses will also step in to help. Fight on, Italy! We're with you!

H3b: In face of the spreading COVID19, some are still obsessed with the superiority of its own ideology?! VIRUS KNOWS NO POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY. What is imperative is to work together to fight against COVID19 to save and protect as many people as possible and secure an early victory!

H3c: Our sympathies go to all countries suffering from COVID19. In this darkest hour, we need trust, support and cooperation to defeat the disease and disperse darkness.

H4: 11/03/2020

Chinese medical experts have set off for Italy, carrying medical supplies to support people there fighting against COVID19. They're ready to share their experience as well.

H5: 12/03/2020

H5a: Dr. Robert Redfield: Some cases that were previously diagnosed as Flu in the US were actually COVID19. It is absolutely WRONG and INAPPROPRIATE to call this the Chinese coronavirus.

H5b: Science is the best weapon against COVID19. Protecting people's lives depends on science-based measures. Face up to truth & facts. No more politically-motivated attacks & senseless blame game! Please heed CDC experts' advice and the world's voice.

H6: 14/03/2020

We met after 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China, and again we meet against COVID19 in Italy. We are family, we are together.

A drawing — Tutto Andrà bene (Everything will be fine) by Aurora Cantone

H7: 17/03/2020

President Xi told PM Conte via phone that China firmly supports Italy and has full confidence in its victory. China feels what Italy's going through and will send more medical experts & supplies. Friendship & mutual trust will emerge stronger in our joint battle against COVID19.

H8: 19/03/2020

China has been updating the US on the coronavirus and its response since Jan. 3. On Jan. 15 the US State Department notified Americans in China US CDC's warning about the coronavirus. And now blame China for delay? Seriously?

H9: 20/03/2020

H9a: Why not send a WHO expert group to US to investigate? US CDC estimates this

season flu has so far sickened at least 36 million people and killed 22,000. CDC Director admitted some were actually COVID19. American people need & deserve more detailed, transparent explanation.

H9b: In 2015, WHO issued Best Practices for the Naming of New Human Infectious Diseases, saying that disease names may NOT include geographic locations & should avoid causing offence to any national, regional, or ethnic groups.

H9c: US officials said they offered $100 million to China and other countries. We thank the American people for their kind help. But as a matter of fact, we haven't received $1 from the US government. By the way, has the US paid its dues to WHO?

H9d: US officials say that China demands a few American journalists to leave in its countermeasures because China fears what they write about the pandemic. If so, then what is the US afraid of when it asked 60 Chinese journalists to leave by March 13?

H9e: If the US is truly confident of the supremacy of its political system, why are they so afraid of the Communist Party of China and Chinese media?!

H10: 21/03/2020

On Jan 25 President Trump tweeted to appreciate and thank China's efforts & transparency. The same day US StateDept started to withdraw its consulate in Wuhan. On

Feb 2 the travel ban was applied to China. What have you done since then? Scapegoating China doesn't help.

On Mar. 13 three leading Chinese experts held a video conference with over 300 US scientists & specialists to share experience on COVID19. The know-how they shared will help save lives in the US. Virus is the REAL enemy! Cooperation is the only right way to win the battle.

H11: 22/03/2020

H11a: China launched WeDoctorGCPC, AliHealth and Baidu Ask Doctor global aid platform. We hope these platforms can not only help our Chinese nationals, but all people suffering from COVID19.

H11b: Heard about the story of plugging ears while stealing bell? Is this the so-called freedom of information? Don't the American people have the right to know the truth? Will self-deception and smearing China help with epidemic response?

H11c: Indeed, saving lives is more important than saving face! Be honest and responsible!

https://www.thedailybeast.com/white-house-pushes-us-officials-to-criticize-china-for-coronavirus-cover-up

H12: 30/03/2020

Chinese companies are working around the clock to make more medical supplies for those suffering from COVID19. The responsibility and contributions of the Chinese people deserve respect instead of smears.

H13: 02/04/2020

Fully agree. No country could face this pandemic alone, and the international community needs solidarity and cooperation more than ever. Hope all will support the UN and WHO's coordinating work to win the battle.

H14: 03/04/2020

Zakharova China will never retreat in the fight against COVID19, as it concerns the life of the people. Work together to win this "Battle of Moscow" against virus. Victory belongs to all

mankind! Победа будет за нами!

H15: 06/04/2020

H15a: Accusing China of cover-up is a kind of blackmail. Suspected cases were reported on 27Dec. Reuters cited CCTV reports on 31. We formally notified WHO on 3Jan&closed Wuhan on 23. US closed its Consulate on 26& borders to China on 2Feb. Blameshifting can't make up for lost time.

H15b: China was the 1st to report the unknown virus and strove to contain it. As the Lancet editor-in-chief Horton said, "we knew in the last week of Jan that this was coming. The message from China was absolutely clear".

H16: 07/04/2020

"Timeline of China releasing information on COVID-19 and advancing international cooperation" released.

FACTS speak louder than words.

http://xhnewsapi.zhongguowangshi.com/share/news?id=421786296885248&from=groupmessage&isappinstalled=0

H17: 08/04/2020

As UN spokesman said, it's clear that WHO, under Dr Tedros' leadership, has done tremendous work on COVID. WHO is showing the strength of the intl health system. We need

solidarity and cooperation than ever to win the fight!

H18: 09/04/2020

H18a: Yes, now is the time for unity, of the whole world! This is a war between HUMAN and VIRUS. No one could be excluded. Apart, the humanity will suffer more. Together, we will win.

H18b: Welcome to China anytime and talk to anyone in the streets to enjoy the freedom. BTW Where is freedom & transparency when Captain Crozier was dismissed for a letter to save thousands of lives and medical workers fired for talking about working conditions?

H18c: China is the 1st to report and share virus data with WHO and other countries. WHO joint mission including 2 US experts already visited Wuhan and commended China's efforts. When will Washington invite joint international expert team to the US for investigation?

H19: 10/04/2020

WHO warned about the risk of human-to-human transmission of COVID19 as early as 10 Jan in its note of guidance and urged precautions even though initial Chinese studies at that point had found no clear evidence of that route of infection.

H20: 12/04/2020

H20a: COVID19 is an unknown virus to mankind. China was the first to report it and has responded openly, transparently and responsibly and put it under control in about 2 months.

H20b: The US was formally notified in early Jan, US experts were in China in late Jan and its consulate in Wuhan closed on Jan 25. The US shut down border to China on Feb 2. Unfortunately, two months on, the US has the most infections and deaths.

H20c: China with 1.4 billion populations and a land of 9.6 million km² has contained the epidemic. Come on and stay strong the US!

H21: 19/04/2020

State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke with @WHO Dr. Tedros

- Supporting WHO is supporting multilateralism. Groundless attacks against WHO find no support

- WHO is needed to continue its key role to combat COVID19

- Virus is a common enemy and must be defeated with unity

H22: 20/04/2020

H22a: Medical supplies from China were delivered to Moldova on a Russian aircraft. Only by joining each other, we can battle COVID19.

H22b: Any country hit by COVID19 is the victim and suffers. Our common enemy is the VIRUS! Only when the world fight in solidarity can we win the battle!

H23: 21/04/2020

H23a: Facts and truth about China's fight against COVID19.

https://covid-19.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202004/21/WS5e9e2c62a3105d50a3d17880.html

H24b: Wuhan and Los Angeles had a video link-up on reopening the cities and resuming business. Wuhan University and Ohio State University also had a conference on management during COVID19.

H25: 23/04/2020

China has decided to donate additional $30 million in cash to WHO to support its global fight against COVID19, in particular strengthening developing countries' health systems. China already donated $20 million in cash to WHO on March 11.

H26: 24/04/2020

Beijing Municipal Government linked up with its 26 sister cities of 21 countries. China's best practices in containing COVID19 were shared. This is the Chinese way to push forward cooperation.

H27: 25/04/2020

H27a: Lisang Dagat, a song from Chinese Embassy in the Philippines, lyrics by Chinese

Ambassador, dedicated to those contributed to the fight against COVID19, with special thanks

to China Medical Expert Team. We sang together & we all fight together!

H27b: What a playbook. Have a look!

https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/24/gop-memo-anti-china-coronavirus-207244

H28: 27/04/2020

Pompeo on FOX again accusing China of COVID19 cover-up. But who is spreading

disinformation? Isn't it clear enough as disclosed by NRSC Memo and Grayzone? Stop playing

the political game. Better save energy on saving lives.

H29: 29/04/2020

CPC is open, transparent & responsible in COVID19 response. 2 US experts were in

China on WHO-China joint mission in late Jan. Why not ask US experts to locate when the

virus first started in the US? American people need answers. The world also has right to know.

The playbook for Blaming China has been exposed. Better stop and take back its

systematic and organized attack, slander and defamation on China.

Secretary Pompeo ✔
@SecPompeo

The CCP needs to be transparent as the world seeks answers to #COVID19 and its origins. We don't know the history. We haven't been able to get our team on the ground to do the work that it needs to do. #China has a responsibility to cooperate.

H30: 01/05/2020

Scientists are speaking out based on facts. With CNN on 27, Mr Horton said the world should be grateful to China and WHO. Just now, he again stressed blaming China for COVID19 is unhelpful, wrong and factually untrue.

H31: 06/05/2020

The US is pressuring other countries in smear campaign against China. The choice is NOT between the US and China, but between LIES and FACTS, bullying and cooperation, unilateralism and multilateralism.

H32: 07/05/2020

H32a: Renowned Columbia University economist Jeffrey D. Sachs said US administration's big lie that China is the cause of America's problems reminds one of the McCarthy era. "You have done enough. Have you no shame?" Indeed, ENOUGH LIES.

https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/05/opinions/trumps-anti-china-theory-implodes-sachs/index.html

H32b: Confirmed cases in the US surged from 1 to 1 million in less than 100 days. What

has the US government done? WHO sent out a clear warning. Some countries heeded the call

and took action. But not the US. Why?

Confirmed COVID-19 cases in the US surged
from 1 to 1 million in less than 100 days.

**What has the US government
done over the 100 days?**

JAN 23 • Wuhan locked down
US confirmed case: 1

FEB 2 • US closed its border to China
US confirmed cases: 11

MAR 13 • US declared national emergency
US confirmed cases: 1264

APR 8 • Wuhan lifted the lockdown
US confirmed cases: 400,000

MAY 7 • China reported no new local cases
for 4 days and no new fatalities for
22 days.
US confirmed cases: > 1.2 million

H32c: What happened to Dr. Helen Chu, Capt. Crozier, Dr. Rick Bright and many others?

Why was time data on January cases deleted from Florida Health Dept website? How much

more truth was buried? Blame-shifting won't bring back lost lives.

H33: 08/05/2020

H33a: The US keeps calling for transparency and investigation. Why not open up Fort

Detrick & other bio-labs for international review? Why not invite WHO and int'l experts to the

US to look into COVID19 source and response?

H33b: China didn't act fast enough over COVID19? Let FACTS and TRUTHS tell the story.

Who didn't act fast enough, China or the US? It's as plain as day. Just count the numbers and

compare.

H33c: China supports WHO in reviewing global response to COVID19 in an open,

transparent and inclusive manner according to IHR at an appropriate time after the pandemic

is over and hopes the US will also give its support and cooperation.

H34: 10/05/2020

24 LIES & FACTS about COVID19

https://twitter.com/SpokespersonCHN/status/1259376944400891904

H35: 24/05/2020

H35a: In the face of COVID19, those attempts to attack or blackmail WHO are lacking in

basic humanity and will be rejected by the international community.

H35b: History should be written with facts, not tainted by lies. The global narrative about

COVID19 should reflect reason and conscience. Humanity has an obligation to leave behind

an objective and truthful account as part of its collective memory.

H35c: The most important thing we could learn from COVID19 is that the life and health of

people in different countries have never been so closely connected.

Appendix 2: Zhao Lijian (@zlj517)

Z1: 05/03/2020

Z1a: Confirmed cases of COVID19 were first found in China, but its origin is not necessarily in China. We are still tracing the origin.

Z1b: COVID19 is our common enemy. Don't understand why some think anyone should apologize.

WHO has said many times that stigma is more dangerous than the virus itself.

Z2: 12/03/2020

Z2a: CDC Director Robert Redfield admitted some Americans who seemingly died from influenza were tested positive for novel coronavirus in the posthumous diagnosis, during the House Oversight Committee Wednesday.

Z2b: CDC was caught on the spot. When did patient zero begin in US? How many people are infected? What are the names of the hospitals? It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!

Z2c: Some influenza deaths were actually infected with COVID-19, Robert Redfield from US CDC admitted at the House of Representatives. US reported 34 million cases of influenza and 20,000 deaths. Please tell us how many are related to COVID-19?

Z3: 20/03/2020

Z3a: If someone claims that China's exports are toxic, then stop wearing China-made masks and protective gowns, or using China-exported ventilators. This way you will stay clear from the virus. Political virus is more terrible than COVID19!

Z3b: By the logic of Pompeo, is US blocking information by expelling 60 Chinese reporters? Are they afraid of dirt being dug up? If US is so transparent, why not invite WHO experts to investigate how many COVID19 cases there are among 20000 people who passed away during flu season?

Z3c: FMs of China, Japan, ROK held a successful special video conference on COVID19. Spring has arrived in many places in our countries. We believe that breeze will disperse clouds and the sun will warm us all.

Z3d:"China's seeking approval to kill patients to stop the spread of the virus?" This rumor has been debunked by fact-checking resources. This is not the first time the source website spreads junk news & misinformation of COVID19.

Z4: 22/03/2020

Z4a: US CDC admitted some COVID19 patients were misdiagnosed as flu during 2019 flu season. 34 million infected & 20000 died. If COVID19 began last September, & US has been lack of testing ability, how many would have been infected? US should find out when patient

zero appeared.

Z4b: Pakistan PM Imran Khan & Army Chief Gen Bajwa highly appreciated China as responsible and determined nation fighting COVID19. Both asked Pakistanis to follow Chinese experience. Thanks to PM Khan & Gen Bajwa! I wish Pakistan could defeat COVID19 ASAP.

Z5: 23/03/2020

COVID19 epidemic once again proves that mankind is a community with a shared future. In the face of COVID19, how terrible the virus is, and how fragile the life is. We should unite to deal with the epidemic and carry out international cooperation to save more lives.

Z6: 24/03/2020

Z6a: The world explicitly opposes linking COVID19 with any specific country or region & opposes stigmatization. UN Secretary-General Guterres said "it is shameful to see increasing acts of racial discrimination & prejudice as we fight COVID19, we must fight racism & prejudice".

Z6b: Many in the U.S. opposed the use of "Chinese virus", saying that it is bald-faced racism & xenophobia, & it will expose certain people under the risk of racism & violence. The challenge of COVID19 needs to be tackled with joint efforts, instead of fear-mongering.

Z6c: It was U.S. that started the argument about the origin of COVID19. U.S. first used

"Chinese virus" & "Wuhan virus". On March 6, Pompeo used "Wuhan virus". Since then, some US politicians have been using these terms to stigmatize China, causing strong opposition in China.

Z7: 08/04/2020

The Chinese medical team has completed its job and returned to China. Its work to help fight against COVID19 in Cambodia has been applauded by the Cambodian people. Stay strong, Cambodia!

Z8: 13/04/2020

Z8a: The Chinese government has attached high importance to the health & safety of foreign nationals in China. We treat them equally and reject any discriminatory measures in our outbreak response.

Z8b: It is immoral & irresponsible to sow discord when we need solidarity. We urge U.S. to focus on COVID19 at home & stop driving the wedge between China & Africa.

Z8c: China & Africa have always been good friends, partners & brothers. At our most difficult times, Africa provided & voiced its support, and we repaid its kindness when #COVID19 hit Africa. China-Africa friendship remains unchanged

Z9: 14/04/2020

Z9a: As response to US' attempt to undermine China-Africa relations, I would say our friendship with Africa is unbreakable. We stand together to fight COVID19. Smearing or wedge-driving would never succeed.

Z9b: Chinese team of medical experts arrived in Moscow. Russia gave China firm support at our trying time. As comprehensive strategic partners, China & Russia will strengthen cooperation to overcome the outbreak.

Z10: 18/04/2020

Be the first to follow @cidcaofficial, China International Development Cooperation Agency. It's responsible for delivering aid to developing countries.

Z11: 07/05/2020

Fake! Old tricks again! The video obtained by @HJS_Org has nothing to do with Wuhan Institute of Virology researchers. It was never posted at its website. It was clipped from a science documentary.

Z12: 13/05/2020

Z12a: Ethiopia & Djibouti were among the first African countries that China sent COVID19 experts to. The dedication & professionalism of the experts have been highly commended. Djiboutian PM granted 12 Chinese experts Independence Day Medals to honor their contribution.

Z12b: China has sent 5 teams of experts to Africa, held 30 video conferences with Africa since the outbreak of COVID19. Over 40 Chinese medical teams have shared their experience with 20,000 local medical workers through 400 training courses.

Z13: 15/05/2020

China appreciates the resolution adopted by Senate of Pakistan to thank China for supporting Pakistan during the pandemic. We will never forget Pakistan pooled resources to help China when China was hit hard. We are good brothers sharing weal & woe.

Z14: 19/05/2020

China has co-sponsored the draft resolution backed by 120 countries at the 73rd World Health Assembly. We hope the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus and will be implemented accurately and comprehensively.

Z15: 20/05/2020

Z15a: Regarding President Trump's letter to Dr. Tedros, we think the US should focus on beating COVID19 rather than give an ultimatum to the organization that leads global epidemic response.

Z15b: Some Western countries demand priority for tracing the origin of the virus, but the vast majority of countries believe the containment and control of COVID19 is need of the hour.

Politicizing the origin of the virus has no audience.
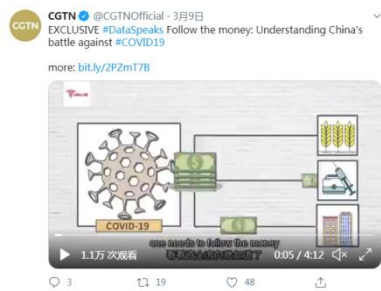
Appendix 3: CGTN (@CGTNOfficial)

1. The examples of videos publicity

"FactsTell" series

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1264919150863896576

"Dataspeaks" series

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1237060583209525248

Counterattack and irony videos toward the US

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1236904550935810048

2. The examples of live broadcast publicity

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1263079849440075776

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1256841309198749698

3. The examples of Graphic promotion

"FactCheck" series

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1261249973531766794

"FightTheCOVID19" series

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1239929367091761152

4. The examples of comic's publicity

Tug of war with viruses

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1236820443656404995
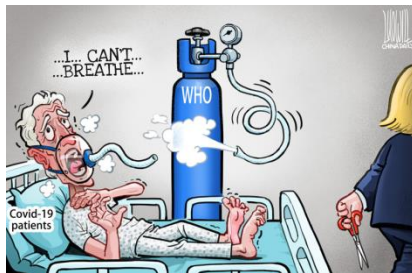
Pompeo credibility test

https://twitter.com/CGTNOfficial/status/1263183963222233089
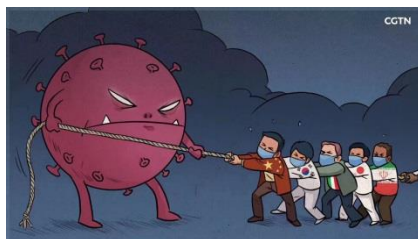
Appendix 4: China Daily (@chinadaily)

1. The examples of ChinaDailyCartoon series:

Cutting the lifeline:

https://twitter.com/ChinaDaily/status/1267501163961696263

Punching Bag:

https://twitter.com/ChinaDaily/status/1265035164893106176

2. Documentary

Foreign media discredit China's routines: the political game behind the COVID-19 data report

https://twitter.com/ChinaDaily/status/1267048180463489026