

Towards a Long-Term Sino-US Relationship: Implications and Potential Solutions of the Future Chinese Media Strategy for Global Speech Power

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the US-China public opinion confrontation primarily from the standpoint of how China might manage its image-building and global discourse intervention given its ongoing quest for global speech dominance. From the Chinese perspective, there are problems to be solved, including the inconsistency of the content of the world's media, the focus on one ideology over others, the hostile nature of diplomatic responses, and the fragility of the state-owned media platform. In light of China's comparative weakness with the US in the war for hearts and minds, this essay explores China's potential remedies. It concludes that China may aim to increase the weight and proportion of global discourse while also carefully utilising foreign culture and propaganda language. China may simultaneously intensify unfavourable public perceptions of its rivals based on algorithms learned from global platforms, while also working with mainstream media to advance its global coverage and conform to its overall policy objective.

Keywords

Public Perception, US-China Relations, Sino-US Public Opinion, Speech Power, Discourse Intervention

1. Introduction

The following milestones are suggested in accordance with the aims of China's 14th Five-Year Plan and the ambitious goal for 2035: Long-term (through 2035) goal is to create a strategic edge in the media industry (Tang, 2013; Winslett,

2016; Zeng & Li, 2012; Li, 2012). Medium-term goal is to create a strategic balance in the global image over the next eight years (Karneev & Pyatachkova, 2020; Li et al., 2019; Raess, 2021). The secret to achieving the goals is for China to build its own supportive global discourse and acquire an advantage in the public opinion contest (Chang & Lin, 2014; Servaes, 2012).

According to our prior research, there is a significant disparity between China and the United States in terms of their respective shares of worldwide public opinion, with China's representation in global discourse being only one-fifth that of the United States (Chang & Lin, 2014; Servaes, 2012). China only makes for 12% of the linked global conversation, while the US accounts for 68% of it (Shi et al., 2011; Stockmann, 2011; Tai, 2016). The official international television channel owned by the Chinese government, CGTN, has 2.57 million subscribers compared to CNN's 12.8 million, and it averages 120,000 views per day vs. CNN's 1.55 million (Mou et al., 2011; Phalen & Algan, 2001; Shi, 2008).

The ratio of positive to negative public opinion, however, is similar between China and the US, with positive public opinion in China being 0.5% higher than that in the US (2.59% vs. 2.09%) and negative public opinion in China being 2% lower than that in the US (10.69% vs. 13.73%) (Qi, 2020; Raess, 2021). China has yet to develop its sources of voice and modes of communication in the arena of public opinion, but the United States continues to have a solid foundation for its global discourse in establishing a negative image of China (Stockmann, 2011; Tai, 2016; Tang & Iyengar, 2011).

The US-China public opinion is concentrated on international social media platforms as well as mainstream media in a worldwide communication channel (Lei, 2011; Lu & Pan, 2021; Mou et al., 2011). Similar volumes of information about general attitudes and important Sino-US topics are shared on Twitter and in the mainstream media. Twitter is 30 times greater than Facebook and substantially greater than YouTube and Instagram (Chang, 2021; Chung, 2019; Hong, 2011; Karppinen, 2015). Twitter is also heavily involved in discussions over Hong Kong, the South China Sea, Taiwan, Tibet, Microchips, and the Trade War (Qi, 2019; Ramirez, 2012). While the public opinion dynamics of mainstream media fluctuate and shift more frequently, Twitter's public opinion data is rather stable over time (Moon & Li, 2010; Qi et al., 2022; Sommella, 2019).

Twitter has an impact on how both sides express themselves and decide on their strategies in the context of the political dialogue between them (Arsentyeva, 2021; Ha, Yang, et al., 2021b; Pang, 2015). The "evil" reputation of the Chinese government, the anti-China sentiment, and its policies are passed down to American political figures attributable to the vast number of accounts created on Twitter, and they also possess a stronger discourse power (Chung, 2020; Meng, 2019; Noor et al., 2021). It is challenging for China's traditional and online media to benefit from this Twitter game of public opinion (Guo et al., 2015; Ha, Ray et al., 2021a; Meng, 2019).

This study consists of four different parts. The first section discusses the fundamental challenges and aligns the primary research of US relationship and possible

themes of Chinese media strategy and how it remains an essential subject to be discussed in contemporary research and scholarship. The second part draws on our earlier research and investigations to explore the intriguing results and illustrate the differences between Sino-US public perception. The third part delves into another crucial topic and concern of our time: the objective contrasts between China and the United States. The final section highlights the possible consequences of the preceding findings, particularly their significance for prospective policymaking of the Chinese media strategy for the next stage. The study's conclusion highlights significant challenges and potential adjustments to future national policies that the Chinese department of propaganda may seek to implement.

Previous research has revealed crucial information that accounts for both an equitable distribution of media texts and the worldwide mainstream media. Twitter has become one of the most significant internet media tools for Sino-US issues (Moon & Li, 2010; Qi et al., 2022; Qi, 2019; Ramirez, 2012). In addition, this study discusses the role of social media in facilitating political discourse as it relates to the most significant issues of the current five-year plan and Chinese officials' emphasis on the development of global soft power and specific tasks that call for strong international communication skills and a favourable global image among their target audiences. This study offers an analysis of the perception of a global audience, which is vital and crucial for studies that are pertinent to Chinese media, global discourse, and speech power rivalry.

2. Words of Frequency

On the one hand, the dominant opinion of China and the United States in the worldwide arena of public opinion is dominated by fragmented and heterogeneous content, leaving less room for themes of shared concern and dialogue (He et al., 2020; Page et al., 2008; Xie, 2008). Despite overlap between those most common words, the ratio only accounts for a third of the total. On the other hand, China and the United States currently occupy a prominent role in each other's respective worldwide public opinion (Feng & He, 2015; Jin et al., 2022; Wang & Womack, 2019). Vaccinations, the United States, Joe Biden, and Beijing are the most frequent terms in public opinion messaging pertaining to China, while the most frequent terms in public opinion messages referring to the United States are China, corporations, vaccines, and Bitcoin. Additionally, there was a strong ideological rivalry on particular subjects (AlKhatib et al., 2020; Gueorguiev et al., 2020; Zhou & Moy, 2007). Human rights and quarantine were the most often used keywords in searches on the themes of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong. The US side exploits the ideological rivalry between subjects on all sides and China in the US-China public opinion playing field to make Western values such as democracy and freedom (Crean, 2019; Lin, 2021; Suglo, 2021).

3. Significant Objective Differences

Analysis of the discursive characteristics and behaviour of both sides reveals

that American politicians tend to bring the two countries into a “decoupled” state of relationship and a reconstruction beginning with the former President Donald Trump, while the Chinese side tries to maintain the current state of relationship (Liff, 2019; Pervaiz et al., 2019; Weiss & Dafoe, 2019). Both sides attempt to make their own speech the dominant discourse and participate in a heated argument as usually demonstrated in diplomatic situations because the aims of relationship rebuilding and relationship maintenance are different from one another (McCourt, 2020; Myrick, 2021; Yeung & Quek, 2022). The results of the game theory payoff matrix also demonstrate that cooperation offers the best combination of benefits for both players, but in the event that the US side deliberately chooses conflict, the best course of action for China’s interests is to embrace a comparable level of confrontation (Bell & Quek, 2018; Lee, 2012; Lu et al., 2020). China should be prepared to formulate a long-term plan to counter confrontation with the US at the same level and expedite the appropriate layout as the confrontation between the US and China becomes more common in the post-epidemic age (Huang & Wang, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Massot, 2019).

4. Implications on Policies

4.1. Propaganda Language

There are still numerous issues in the Chinese media when it comes to playing global debates (Chow et al., 2019; Khun & Thant, 2019; Poister, 2019). The majority of its translation is at the locutionary level (Jia & Lu, 2021; Qi, 2022b; Yang, 2020). Lack of precise meaning transmitting and literal translations of propaganda materials intended for domestic audiences do little to help draw in overseas audiences and raises concerns about the trustworthiness of the information. Additionally, political and linguistic errors in translation run the risk of being used against them by international press (Liang et al., 2019; Qiao, 2021; Stroik et al., 2019). For example, the English interpretations of a phrase in the 100th anniversary speech of the founding of the Communist Party of China sparked considerable controversy, with Xinhua News Agency’s release having a more subdued tone and the global headlines eventually adopting the translation “heads bashed bloody”, which appeared to signify an aggressive and violent image, adding the fuel of the myth of the Chinese threatening (Fang et al., 2022; Fang & Sun, 2019). Even between several official Chinese media wings that try to spread propaganda over the world, such translations are frequently discordant with one another (Li, 2016; Pan, 2016; Shen, 2012). As such, the foremost task of Chinese media could be to deepen the propaganda training of language and culture and perhaps to increase the employment and investment of foreign propagandists.

4.2. Local Hostile Cultivation

The CCP may back some anti-American groups and organisations given the ac-

tive voice of reactionary Chinese-language media concerning China that is supported by forces and funds outside of China (Hsieh & Niou, 2005; Incerti et al., 2021; Qi, 2022a). On the one hand, it might increase long-term propaganda training programmes and short visits to China by journalists from developing nations (Guan & Liu, 2020). On the other hand, it might work along with competitor US organisations and draw on their in-depth narrative of already-existing social concerns in the US as well as its existing audiences there, such as prejudice, immigration, environmentalism, and groups who have experienced trauma (Tan, 2011). The US and China both have a significant interest in employing these groups, notwithstanding the possibility that misusing their doctrine could undermine conventional wisdom and hasten the trend toward a full-scale conflict between the US and China.

4.3. International Hostile Cultivation

On the one hand, democracy and freedom are essential to the US in building its moral foundation (Nam, 2019). The U.S. undermines China's moral foundations in numerous ways by connecting China with moral traits including threats, deception, betrayal, subversion, degradation, tyranny, and oppression in order to strengthen its position against China (Allen, 1999). On the other side, China might not be paying attention to these problems. China may be interested in areas where the US has long been chastised by the international community, such as fighting conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan. China may employ specialised material to establish a defensive position and rationalise the inevitable conflict by spreading the notion that the US is prone to falling into the Thucydides trap, undermining the moral foundation of the discourse on the US (Wu et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2021).

4.4. Media Platform Engineering

By creating an international communication matrix and strengthening its capacity to influence public opinion in favourably on both internal and global issues, China may concentrate on developing new mainstream media (Ramirez, 2012; Wu, 2020). The communication benefits of online media like TikTok might be emphasised to increase the number of sources of voices, while priority should also be given to the communication power of online media in terms of people's livelihoods and daily lives (Luo, 2019; Moradinasab et al., 2018; Qi, 2019). It would be in China's best advantage to accelerate and develop technologies such as 5G communications, virtual reality, and computing, and to follow the trend of media content formats shifting from 2D to 3D, from single-sensory stimulation to fully immersive, multisensory experiences (Ju et al., 2020; Li et al., 2010). The merging of digital humans and virtual netizens, live streaming, virtual culture, and all other interactive, next-generation media platforms may be of special interest to China, given its current situation, which hardly influence of powerful, globalised media platforms like Twitter.

4.5. Globalization of Chinese Internet Companies

Global digital infrastructure may also be prioritised. For instance, growing the market for digital TV, satellites, fiber-optic cable, and data centre networks would be advantageous (Anderson, 2020; Baum & Potter, 2019). Low-cost bundles that combine local channels would also be introduced, influencing the news industry and mainstream media. China seeks to hasten the internationalisation of internet businesses by encouraging more overseas users to become active users. This would boost the visibility of overseas netizens and open up more media venues for their opinions. In addition, it may increase funding for technology regulatory R&D and set up rules for managing digital security. Additionally, it might strengthen the way that foreign platforms regulate their material and take prompt action to stop the exposure and spread of sensitive information regarding China in order to increase the overall favourable impact of public opinion (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 1989; Baum & Potter, 2008).

5. Conclusion

In order to assess public opinion and provide light on how China and the US constructed their respective global image competitions and media strategies, this article evaluated media data from various international social media platforms. The findings of this analysis suggest that China is in a weaker and more vulnerable position overall than the United States. China is only one-fifth the size of the United States in terms of the total number of voices. Additionally, the global image race has rapidly moved away from the established mainstream media channels and into more technologically advanced media platforms. From that vantage point, China might develop its media and digital technology, notably homegrown industry behemoths like TikTok.

This study has three limitations: data integration, sophistication of the influencing elements, and uncontrollability. First of all, given the length of the data collection process, this study's survey of data collecting reveals that the global public opinion about Sino-US linked themes is extremely diversified and its coverage, interconnection with each other is less integrated. Finding and coding the data and determining the worldwide public opinion are difficult processes. Second, the study's variables have demonstrated a complex association with one another. This involves a wide range of issues, including political, economic, cultural, social, and technological ones. It is challenging to identify these factors in order to foretell and forecast the upcoming political move in terms of Chinese engagement in the international conversation. Third, since the battle for public opinion is an ongoing activity. Numerous uncontrollable aspects in this evolution could have an impact on the overall evaluation of the potential Chinese solution and movement in the years to come.

Nevertheless, this survey has gathered a substantial amount of information about global public opinion regarding China and the US. Considering the cur-

rent state of the world and critical concerns that audiences would deem significant, it is noteworthy. By outlining potential remedies that the Chinese state-owned media and its global media strategy might pursue in the future with the goals of interfering in the global discourse and competing for global speech power, this study aids in the formulation of policy. It offers strategic recommendations for a significant economic and worldwide player that are still applicable to all literatures concerned in the establishment of global discourse, image construction, and Chinese media strategy. Future research may examine this area from the viewpoint of media representation, media texts and propaganda, and the worldwide distribution mechanism.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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