

Two Strategies to Cope with the US Diplomatic Boycott-- Educational Exchange and Public Diplomacy

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Abstract. Recently, the US used "human rights issues" as a pretext to conduct a "diplomatic boycott" of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. The political show, based on ideological bias and outright lies, would end up being a farce that will go down in Olympic history as a laughing stock [1] because it has long been the consensus of the international community to depoliticize sports. And China would take this crisis as an opportunity for development, the country would clarify its real situation of human rights, convey its real principle, and win wide support, by relying on the educational exchanges between the two countries and the diplomatic strategies targeted at different populations in the United States.

Keywords: Diplomatic boycott; Public diplomacy; Beijing Winter Olympics; Educational exchange.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the United States holds the discourse hegemony. The Biden administration's defense budget remains focused on China as the primary strategic challenge [2], and some western countries use the media and think tanks they control to smear China [3]. According to a Chinese think tank, the recent "diplomatic boycott" of the Olympics is also a plot by the US against China. [4] Chinese people are undaunted because we believe that the government could turn crises into opportunities. Chinese people should learn from this crisis, and by strengthening educational exchanges and developing a general diplomatic strategy that targeted Americans, to change the stereotypes of the American people, and gain more support.

2. American Diplomatic Boycott

On December 6th, 2021, the White House announced a "diplomatic boycott" of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics due to China's ongoing human rights abuses and genocide in the Xinjiang region. The so-called "diplomatic boycott" stipulates that while government officials of these countries will not attend the event, the athletes' scheduled attendance will largely remain intact. [5] The United States took the Xinjiang issue as a pretext and led a few countries to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. As Zhao Lijian, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said at the press conference on December 7th: "It was a political intrigue, such behavior not only seriously violated the principle of 'politics is not connected to sports', but also affected the cooperation in important areas between the two countries." [6]

3. China Turning the Diplomatic Boycott into Two Developing Opportunities

This boycott has brought China opportunities for development. Through this incident, China could not only realize that there are barriers to communication with other countries; but also understand that strengthening non-government diplomacy is also one way to gain more understanding.

3.1 Improving Discourse Power

It has long been the consensus of the international community and the common aspiration of the international sports community to depoliticize sports and support the Beijing Winter Olympics. [7] As Luo Siyi, a British scholar said in an interview with Beijing Daily, "the so-called "diplomatic boycott" attempted by the US has been a complete failure; but for China, the success of the Beijing

Winter Olympics has had a real impact on the world. It is a great opportunity to break the hegemony of American discourse and enhance the country's international discourse power.” [8]

First of all, the Chinese government can take this opportunity to improve its discourse system, clarify the current situation of human rights with its discourse system, correctly explain and spread the great achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and dilute the stereotypes of other countries on China. And only when the Chinese media pay attention to the use of words that are easy to be accepted by the outside world, the barriers in language communication among different countries would be broken down and China's voice can be understood and accepted by more people. [9]

Secondly, if China wants to develop its international discourse power and compete with western media, it should make good use of the opportunities brought by information technology to strengthen positive publicity on the Internet, to show our humanitarian acts which have been made to promote the development of Xinjiang, and the principle of "politics is not connected with sports" we adhere to.

Finally, as Marx pointed out in *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* that "theory can master the masses as long as it persuades people; thorough theory, however, can be persuasive. To be thorough is to get to the bottom of things." [10] It means only the facts can persuade the masses. This tells us that when we spread China's voice to the world, we should always speak with objectivity and authenticity. Take this “diplomatic boycott” for example, if China’s media can make full use of the Internet to spread the real situation, the American population would understand the real principles of China and maintain the Sino-US cultural exchanges.

3.2 Strengthening Non-Government Diplomacy

"Amity between the peoples holds the key to state-to-state relations, and amity between the peoples lies in mutual understanding." Although the US government and some anti-China forces continue to smear China and break relations for their political interests, holding sports events is still an opportunity to consolidate friendly relations among countries. According to some recent poll data, quite a several American respondents believe that people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and the US should be maintained, and sports exchanges are an important part of it between countries. Since official diplomatic channels are blocked, we should practice public diplomacy and people-to-people diplomacy. Strengthening educational exchanges between China and the United States, and implementing diplomatic strategies targeted at different populations in the United States, to gain more understanding and support from the American people.

4. Coping Strategies for the US Diplomatic Boycott

I come up with two strategies to cope with the US diplomatic boycott. One is strengthening educational exchange between the two countries, because education is an important way to dilute misunderstandings; and the other is conducting different diplomatic strategies aimed at both the common people and the elites, to get more American masses’ support for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

4.1 Educational Exchange between China and the US

As one of the most important factors in Sino-US relations, the educational exchange has resumed and been expanded drastically since the end of the 1970s as a result of China's adoption of reform and its strategy of opening to and normalizing diplomatic relations with the United States. [11]

Knowledge and understanding are keys to successful foreign policy. For the United States and China, if they want to further increase cooperation and reduce conflict, each side's actions must be based on accurate knowledge and understanding of the other. But given the many differences between the United States and China, ranging from people’s lifestyles to political ideas, this goal will not be easy to achieve. Sometimes this understanding needs to be achieved through education.

Educational institutions have a huge role to play in this process, schools can provide outstanding students with opportunities to study abroad and those international exchange associations also can help all students go to foreign countries in which they want to study. Academic research can lead to insights through lucubrating the culture, economy, technology, or policy of the country the researchers are interested in, which can mitigate the negative effects of today's rapid but superficial flow of information. The Japanese media considered that only Americans who know Chinese history and politics can fully understand the latest information, and so can Chinese who know American history and politics. [12] But I think this claim is too strong, anyone who is willing to learn about any field of knowledge in the other country can understand Chinese or American culture, customs, ideas, and policies. Everyone can be the communicator of civilization because knowledge exists in every aspect of people's daily life. Maybe some common people cannot understand the other country's information thoroughly, but I believe that if everyone knows a little more, the gap between the two countries can be narrowed a little more and the understanding can be deepened a little more.

On November 15th, 2021, the latest Open Door Report, [13] which is a very specific and authoritative report on the status of international students studying in the United States, was published by the Institute of International Education in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State. This report shows that despite the number of Chinese students enrolled in higher education in the United States dropping from the previous year, it still accounted for 34.7 percent of all international students in the US. [13] It means that in the future, China will have a large number of top talents who have studied in the US in almost all fields, and they all have a deep understanding of American culture. Although there are still lots of problems between two countries, misunderstandings caused by differences between culture or policy will be fewer and fewer.

But the number of American students studying in China is much fewer than that of Chinese students enrolled in the US, so to attract more American students to China, we should strengthen the cooperation with American universities and educational organizations, and provide students with perfect services. Deepening the cooperation between universities, maintaining the advantage of short-term credit programs, and promoting the development of long-term degree programs are also good ways to solve this problem. Educational institutions strengthen the establishment of student groups or alumni networks in China. [13] More American students studying in China will help us promote correct Chinese culture and policy, thus no matter common people or elites in the US will reduce their misunderstanding of China.

4.2 Diplomacy Aimed at Different Groups in the United States

People are the main part of a country. So weakening the stereotypes of the American people and winning their trust and support is the basis for the development of Sino-US relations. This paper divides the American people into two parts: the common people and the elite, and adopts different diplomatic strategies for these two different groups.

4.2.1 Public Diplomatic Strategies Aimed at American Common People

For common people, Chinese people should make good use of mass media for public diplomacy.

First of all, create political ads and buy commercial breaks and space to release necessary political messages to the public. For example, in response to the recent US diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics under the pretext of human rights issues, China can make relevant political advertisements to publicize its long-standing principle of "unity of all ethnic groups" and "the people run the country" and the strategy of "large-scale development of China's western region". To tell the American people that what China is doing in Xinjiang is not an act of human rights abuse or genocide, but for the development of the region.

Secondly, news events are created to attract media attention and increase exposure rates. It can make news by comparing the opening ceremony, various training facilities, eating and drinking conditions, and the fairness of the judgment between the Tokyo Olympic Games and the Beijing Olympic Winter Games, to attract the attention of media and the discussion of netizens, increase the

exposure of the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games, and improve the expectation of people around the world for the Beijing Olympic Winter Games.

Thirdly, using celebrity influence to lift visibility. For example, in 2008, the Olympic organizers invited Deng Yaping to serve as the image ambassador of the Olympic bid, and invited lots of Chinese stars to sing "Beijing Welcomes You" together, these acts were all used celebrities' international popularity to promote the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. For the publicity of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, the organizers chose Yao Ming as one of the ambassadors because of his popularity. NBA Commissioner David Stern once claimed Yao Ming as an important cultural milestone in the development of the NBA, the pride of China, the best gift China can give the NBA, and a bridge between Chinese and Western cultures, so Yao Ming served as the Olympic ambassador will attract more American's attention and improve their expectations to the Beijing Winter Olympics. Sports exchanges are an important part of international people-to-people exchanges.

Moreover, Chinese people can also run their media and minority media, set up websites, and provide gifts or produce communication materials that can be distributed to foreign people or media for free. We can spontaneously make a series of promotional videos about the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games and then share them on the established website for foreign friends to enjoy, or distribute some accessories related to the Winter Olympic Games to the people or media of all countries for free, to achieve the effect of publicity.

Last but not least, we can operate social media accounts and make use of various social platforms for publicity. We can set up an official account named "Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games" on various social platforms, where we can introduce the mascots and ambassadors of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, introduce all aspects of the Games so that people around the world can understand the Winter Olympic Games and achieve the effect of publicity. We can also release videos about the conditions of athletes' eating, drinking, transportation, and training to reassure people from all over the world and let them know that China adheres to the principle of "politics is not connected with sports" and treats athletes from all over the world in a friendly and equal manner, to build China's good image.

4.2.2 The Second Track Diplomacy between Elites

For American elites, we can adopt "the second track diplomacy", that is to say, the exchanges between elites or scholars are used to promote the exchanges between China and the United States, so as consolidate the friendly relations between China and the United States. At present, it is difficult to ease the political conflicts between China and the United States through official channels, but we can ease the tension between China and the United States and promote the development of friendly relations through academic exchanges between Chinese and American elites. In the case of the U.S. diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics, the second track diplomacy can do what official diplomacy cannot. It aims to provide a platform for dialogue between non-governmental organizations, businesses, and academia. [14] In the think tank exchange, Chinese and American elites can discuss and consult on the relationship between politics and sports, the thoughts of the masses, and the prospect of Sino-US relations. Such exchanges help foster a good personal relationship between Chinese and American scholars and then help both sides understand each other's ideas.

The American people's wrong perception of China's human rights and Chinese culture and development philosophy can be changed through academic exchanges between Chinese and American scholars. By publishing relevant articles in international journals, Chinese and American scholars can give each other a correct understanding of the culture and ideas of the two countries, thus changing the stereotypes of the masses. Through exchanges between Chinese and American elites, China will clarify the current situation of human rights issues, change people's stereotypes and win more support.

In short, China needs two different diplomatic strategies for the common people and the elite. For the common people, it is necessary to use mass media to spread true information; For the elite, we

should use think-tank exchanges to change prejudices on both sides and establish friendly personal relations.

5. Conclusion

Recently, the US once again smeared China under the pretext of human rights abuses. Such action is not conducive to the healthy development of Sino-US relations. Ignoring the U.S. government's political bias and vicious repression, China has focused on educational exchanges and public diplomacy, using mass media and think tanks to win the support of the American people. We couldn't jump to conclusion that one side is right, the other is wrong, and different countries have different ideas and strategies. What the Chinese consider is being neither humble nor pushy, which means the Chinese government should not invade other countries and not be afraid when confronted with aggression. I believe that people all over the world love peace, and what all people want are a happy family and a prosperous country. So all countries need to make proper foreign strategies, maintain friendly relationships with other countries and finally build a better world.

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