

Exploring the Influence of the Chinese Spokesperson's Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Foreign Ministry's Press Conference

Zhaohan Zhang*

School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: zhaohan.zhang2@durham.ac.uk

Abstract. The changing of Chinese people's attitude towards the US can be explained from many perspectives and theories, which can also be interpreted by discourse analysis. By comparing the values Chinese people take to judge other countries and the function of linguistic techniques of spokesperson's speech, this article aims to explain how the Chinese spokesperson's speech influence people's attitude towards the US may. This research shows how may the Chinese official press conference actively influence the domestic opinion towards another country. The result shows that the changing of people's opinion towards foreign country is not singly depended on the realistic behaviour or strategy but can also be reshaped by political discourse independently.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Chinese Foreign Ministry Press Conference, China-US Relationship.

1. Introduction

The China-US relationship has become a popular academic topic in recent decades. The multiple studies in this area contain many discussions about Chinese citizens' attitudes towards the US. According to many scholars, the Chinese people's attitudes towards the US have deteriorated during the trade war between 2018 and 2021 [1-8]. Among these studies, those by Huang and Wang, Zhang, and Wang, which examine attitudes expressed on Weibo (China's Twitter equivalent), agreed that there has been a general trend of deterioration [6, 9, 10]. It is easy to locate evidence for this change; for instance, by selecting a topic and searching for that hashtag on Weibo; or by selecting a media blogger and searching through their blogs for this hashtag in 2020 and 2021. The "top hot comments" that emerge can show the variations in attitude. For example, this research selected the topic "COVID-19" and chose a famous media blogger (CCTV News). Then, it selected a blog in 2020 and another in 2021 that include the terms "China" and "America". Comparing the top-10 comments in these two blogs (both of which relate to the Chinese government's spokesperson Zhao Lijian replying to US comments on the pandemic in China), it was found that only five of the top-ten comments in 2020 were aimed directly at insulting the US, while nine of the top-ten comments in 2021 were expressing direct anger or insults at the US [11-12].

However, before 2018, according to the works by Guan, Tingley, Romney, Jamal and Keohane and Zhang, Liu and Wen, Chinese Weibo users held more rational and positive attitudes towards the US, and nationalist sentiments were not favoured on Weibo [13-14]. Scholars have offered different explanations for this changing attitude. Some believe it is a result of the US policy towards China (e.g. the trade war), the hostile practices of the US (e.g. blaming China for the virus), or China's rising national power [1, 3-4]. Other scholars blame the changing attitudes on the rise of Chinese nationalism [7, 10, 15]. Mattingly and Yao's study argues that it is government propaganda and official reports that are shaping the rising nationalist sentiments and changing attitudes, an argument that is also discussed in the studies by Huang and Wang and Wang [9, 6, 16]. However, Fu argues that young internet users are not so easily manipulated by national propaganda, but are instead part of the process of attitude construction that may be guided by government propaganda [2].

As the main channel by which the Chinese government announces its diplomatic attitudes and foreign policies, this research will study the press conferences of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in an attempt to explain the changing attitudes among China's internet users [17]. However, scholars also argue that current studies lack analyses of press conferences as a form of political discourse and

practice [18-19]. Thus this research will try to explain how the spokesperson's speeches at the Foreign Ministry's press conference influence China's internet users' attitudes to the US, applying critical discourse analysis to the speeches' construction of the national image. The paper will start with a literature review of national image to systematically describe citizens' attitudes towards a certain country, followed by the two elements involved in the construction of national image: Chinese people's values and the communication strategies employed by the spokesperson. Then, the methodology used in this research, critical discourse analysis, will be presented. The discussion part of this research consists of discourse analysis of a spokesperson's speech relating to the China-US relationship. Finally, the article will discuss how the Foreign Ministry's press conferences influence China's internet users' attitudes towards the US by constructing different national images for China and the US.

2. Literature review

2.1 Chinese values applied to evaluate a nation

The values people use to make judgements of a country are vital components of the construction of a national image. Thus, this part will focus on introducing some central values or standards that Chinese people use to judge a government or nation. Unlike the commonly held stereotype, communism no longer has a significant influence on shaping Chinese values and ideologies, Maoist communist values are no longer promoted by the government or taken seriously by ordinary people [20-22]. Instead, Neo-Confucianism, core socialist values, and the Chinese Dream are regarded as more up-to-date ideologies that guide Chinese values. Traditional Confucianism is no longer regarded by many scholars as a harmful and backward relic of feudalism, but rather a new source of legitimacy and a potential way of identifying China's unique political system [20-28]. Thus, this research will proceed in line with studies of Neo-Confucianism, core socialism, and Chinese Dream values, which will be introduced below.

The first value is also the basis of the following values: non-personal centred humanism. According to Solé-Farràs, Chinese people believe the legitimacy of governance originates from its continuous reforming and improvement of people's living standards, which echoes the "national liberation" of Mao's era and the "pragmatic economic improvement" of Deng's era [23-24]. This proposition is supported by Gow [26]. However, Solé-Farràs also argues that Chinese people define the concept of "self" according to its interaction and relationship with others/society [24]. The utilitarianism of an individual will not be accepted if it is against the interest of the whole society. Gow adds that while everyone is a member of society, the interaction with society is not based on self-will but on moral obligation, which expresses itself as etiquette and convention at the social level [26]. Yan expands this principle to the international level, arguing that if a specific nation's interests are placed above the common interest of international society, then international norms will inevitably be violated, leading to violence and chaos [22].

The second value is pragmatic moral/ideological standards. Yan notes that Chinese people stress the results of a policy or ideology rather than its legitimacy; while people in the US care more about the process of democracy than the result of any given policy, Chinese people believe that legitimacy comes from the result of governance, rather than from the policy-making procedure [22]. Yan argues that the different Chinese understandings of democracy and equality are manifestations of this value [22]. Chinese people place the principle of justice above democracy, which means that if the outcome of a policy or ideology is to the benefit of society and supported by the majority, then the policy or ideology is perceived as being "democratic". By contrast, some policies that emerge from democratic procedures (such as the US Congress' authorisation of the invasion of Iraq) can lead to chaos in international society, are therefore not favoured by Chinese people. Yan's explanation of how the Chinese perceive equality is supported by the study of Gow, who found that Chinese people focus on the outcome of equality, rather than on ensuring equality at the outset [22, 26]. As people are born with genetic and social differences, to insist on absolute equal social competition would be akin to

enforcing the law of the jungle. According to Chinese values, people with advantages ought to help those with disadvantages; consequently, strong countries should assist weaker countries, rather than exploit them [22, 26, 28]. Solé-Farràs concludes that Chinese people's ideology-/policy-related values are pragmatic, and are based on the pursuit of achieving harmony "by all means", which leads to the third value below [24].

The third value relates to the ultimate goal of achieving harmony. It can be seen from the first two values that Chinese people place great importance on social stability, which can be best encapsulated in the concept of "harmony" [24]. Yan asserts that a nation ought to constrain its own freedom to achieve harmony in international affairs; similarly, Gow states that individual freedoms should not violate the rights of society [22, 26]. For Solé-Farràs and Yan, rites (international norms) are the foundation of civility as they can guide people's behaviour [22, 24]. If rites do not restrict freedom, then the freedom is meaningless and uncivilised since it draws human society back to chaos. Furthermore, scholars such as Deng and Smith, Ambrogio, and Yan all highlight the principle of achieving international kingship by achieving harmony within its domestic affairs [20, 22, 25]. This principle originates from the Neo-Confucian discipline of being an "Inner Saint and Outer King", which implies power in international society derives from harmonious governance at home.

The fourth value relates to a demand based on the third value: governments should govern through humane authority rather than hegemony. Solé-Farràs, Deng and Smith, and Yan all cite that this definition of ways of ruling form part of Chinese values [20, 22, 24]. Solé-Farràs and Ford argue that Chinese people regard humane authority as the foundation of social harmony [21, 23]. To conclude, rule by hegemony refers to governance established by violence and conquering, which usually relates to deterrent strategies towards neighbour countries [20, 22]. By contrast, humane authority means governing based on the will of the people and cultural traditions; the absence of either any element will make the rule illegitimate. Humane authority usually means employing benevolent diplomacy towards one's neighbours in the expectation that recipients of such benevolence will accept the leadership of humane authority [20, 22].

The fifth value concerns an emotion termed "patriotic worrying". For Wang, Shi and Liu, Gries, and Callahan, this emotion has mainly been constructed in the Chinese imagination by the "century of humiliation" under the invasion and exploitation of Western imperialists [27-30]. Wang believes that "humiliation discourse" can trigger Chinese people's nationalistic emotions [29]. Callahan uses the concept of "patriotic worrying" in relation to the country's perceived humiliation [27]. Callahan asserts that patriotic worrying reminds Chinese people of their duty to contribute to the country to ensure that there is no return to the humiliation [27]. According to Callahan's argument, this patriotic worrying brings legitimacy to the Chinese government and its policies [27]. Shi and Liu agree with this implication of patriotic worrying, adding that the humiliation of other third world countries may also trigger this familiar emotion among Chinese people [28].

This research believes that most Chinese people hold these five values and principles when judging a nation and constructing their images. However, Li and Chitty argue that the ways in which the media and government reports shape the agenda and their forms of expression are also crucial components of the construction of national images; hence, the expression of different emotions by the media or the government may influence people's judgements. In the next section, I will present the primary expression techniques used by Chinese spokespersons and their implications [31].

2.2 Chinese press conferences: purpose of expression strategies and audience

As introduced in the first part of the literature review, the ways in which reports edit and express a particular message also play an essential role in constructing national image. This study selects the press conferences of the Chinese Foreign Ministry as its research objects (see Methodology). This part will review the studies on the expression techniques employed by the Foreign Ministry and discuss the purposes and impacts of these different forms of expression.

A representative of research on the impact of press conferences is Bhatia [19]. In this study, Bhatia points out that the press conference acts as a medium of political information that makes political

practices "possible" [19]. Moreover, Bhatia notices that the language and expressions used in press conferences are highly diplomatic and controlled so as to construct social-political ideologies [19]. In the work of Gu, the forms of expression used within press conferences are related to the construction of national image [32]. Gu also argues that statements and actions can also affect the image shaped by press conferences [32]. This idea is expanded into analyses of different expression strategies by scholars like Liu and Shi, Zhou, and Wu [17-18, 33-35].

Liu and Shi introduce the strategy of "political advice", as the expression of superiority [33]. The authors believe that advice given within the public political arena is almost always aggressive; the advice given at press conferences is more likely to be a ritual, which conveys a sense of the advisor's superiority [33]. When the advisor advises another country to take some course of action, this behaviour is regarded as moralising and usually ambiguous by the advice recipient, which strengthens the sense of superiority [33]. Chinese people consider advice as a more polite way of expressing an idea than direct ordering, especially when the proposal is intended to benefit another party [33]. This occupation with moral stance is also discussed by Zhou, who points out that spokespersons can express 'dismissive and authoritative' attitudes by positioning themselves on the moral high ground [34].

Wu introduces the strategy of dissociation. A spokesperson may employ this strategy when dealing with a questioner who uses a particular term (term1); the spokesperson then uses a different term (term2) with a similar meaning to replace the original term in the following debate and discussion [18]. Wu describes the dissociation strategy as 'remodelling our conception of reality' to resolve contradictions or paradoxes [18]. According to Wu's analysis, the spokesperson may tend to criticise the standpoints of opponents who use term1 in such a way as to persuade the audience that the opponents' argument is unconvincing [18]. Critics of the strategy of dissociation accuse their opponents who use it of distorting or blurring the original term, or of broadening or narrowing the meaning of the original term [18]. By offering another term through dissociation, the spokesperson not only leads the conversation according to his/her will, but also implies that the opponent's standpoints are questionable because they might be incorrect [18]. Countries with questionable standpoints are not deemed to be qualified to join further discussions because they are irresponsible and accused of having bad character [17].

Wu's study introduces the strategy of direct criticism or personal attack. This strategy differs from dissociation in that direct criticism seldom constructs a new item but significantly strengthens the sense of accusation [17]. Wu discusses several types of direct criticism: directly attacking the morality and faith of opponents; accusing opponents of low intelligence or lack of experience; questioning opponents' motivation; and pointing out inconsistencies between opponents' past and present statements [17]. Wu concludes that direct criticisms and personal attacks are aimed at excluding opponents from the debate from the outset by highlighting their irresponsibility [17]. Wu and Zhou both agree that direct criticism is a strategy employed to silence opponents and neutralise their arguments [17, 34].

Another common strategy applied by spokespersons is declaring a standpoint to be indisputable. Wu's study on this strategy points out that declarations of indisputability are aimed at strengthening the legitimacy of an argument [35]. This strategy can be used for self-defence as it can often cut off any undesired discussion. Wu argues that by declaring a standpoint to be indisputable, the spokesperson is trying to integrate the standpoint into a body of so-called "natural knowledge", "basic moral standpoints", or "international norms" that should not be negotiated [35]. Questioning indisputable statements might lead to accusations that one lacks intelligence or experience, similar to those introduced in the previous paragraph.

Wu concludes that declarations of indisputable statements are usually combined with other strategies such as direct criticism and dissociation to stimulate a shared feeling among a domestic audience [17]. Wu's other studies both follow the idea that the actual receiver of the Chinese press conference is not the journalist who asks the question or the opponents involved in the debate, but rather the Chinese people [18, 35]. Liu and Shi's study also points out that China's political advice is

filled with Chinese moral values and judgments that appear vague to foreign countries but are familiar for Chinese audiences (e.g. recommendations to achieve harmony) [33]. Gu's study points out that national press conferences are important tools for shaping the national image among domestic people by telling them what is right or wrong through a debate of statements [32]. Thus, this research believes that analysis of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's press conferences may shed light on how China's internet users' attitudes are influenced. The research method (critical discourse analysis) will be introduced in the Methodology section below.

3. Methodology

The data for this research comprises the texts of the official press spokespersons' speeches between 2020 and 2021, obtained from the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the texts include discussions about China and the US, they concern different issues and are randomly selected from the given period. This research believes that the texts from the Foreign Ministry are the expression of official power and ideology and that the Foreign Ministry's press conferences are the occasions when ordinary people become audiences of the official discourse. Therefore, analysing the texts of the spokesperson's speeches can provide insights into how the national images of the US and China are re-constructed and how the attitudes of China's internet users are changed. Stone Tatum proposes that random selection from a group of texts sharing certain conditions can be more representative as it avoids the author's subjective judgement and can expose 'what the deviance, extremity or atypicality is deviating from' [36].

CDA is a critical approach to discourse analysis which aims to deconstruct the hidden ideological influences and power relations within discourse. Proponents of CDA view discourse not only as a reflection, but also as a device that can influence or shape reality. In the concluding part of Bhatia, the author recommends CDA as a useful tool for analysing political press conferences because 'it allowed for the realization of the interdependency of language and ideology; ideology and socio-cultural practices; and socio-cultural politics [19]. It also allowed the research to excavate meaning from underneath the surface level of utterances, enabling more accurate and informed interpretations of press conference statements'. In CDA, language and texts are no longer simple mediums that transfer messages or reflect reality; instead, language and texts themselves are viewed as kinds of power/ideological practices [36-41]. Language and texts directly influence people's lives by justifying concepts and phenomena until they become "common sense" according to the ideology behind the discourse. The power relations conveyed in the texts may also come to be justified and regarded as possible or usual [41-42]. Van Dijk further explains that this process of justification requires the understanding and usage of people's (those who are controlled) own values, standards, or wishes [41]. The shared common values and standards of a group of people can be called an ideology; it tells the group what is good or bad, and guilds the group's behaviour [41-42].

The influence of political discourse has been discussed by several scholars [37, 43-45]. As Chilton concludes, all kinds of political practices (including violence) are operated through the form of language and discourse; thus politics is indivisible from discourse [43]. Wodak argues that discourses are the essential parts of political practice, without which the human understanding of politics and society will cease to exist [44]. Thus, this research believes the analysis of specific texts (discourse) will shed light on how a Chinese Neo-Confucianist ideology is conveyed within the construction of the national image, and how political power justifies this reshaping.

CDA has been applied to texts in the area of politics and international relations by several scholars, such as Milliken, Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk [39-41, 45]. From the perspective of text organisation, as the verbs, adverbs, and adjectives attached to nouns are the direct expressions of the ideology behind the text, these should be the first focus [40, 45]. Wodak also argues that linguistic techniques, such as forms of address, speech acts, and allusions, can also express the will of discourse [45]. In addition, Fairclough asserts that there should also be a focus on the relationship between the

text and other texts (or social discourse, e.g. when quoting another speech or mentioning other social discourse) [39]. The working process of Political discourse CDA is shown in Figure 1.

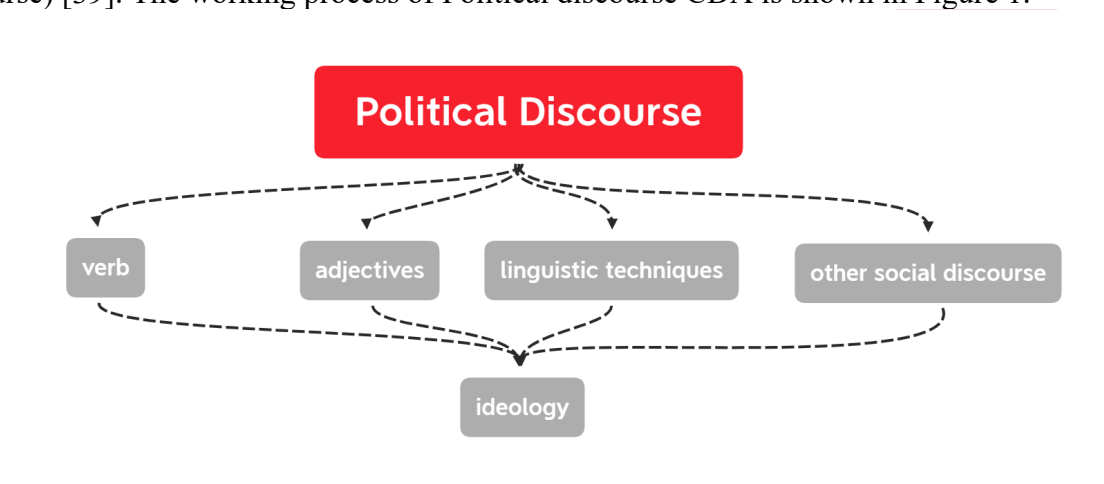


Figure 1. The model of CDA to political discourse

4. Discourse Analysis

In the Q&A on December 10th 2020, the spokesperson Hua Chunying replied to a question about Pompeo and Trump's criticisms of China regarding the COVID-19 pandemic [46].

Shenzhen TV: US Secretary of State Pompeo again accused the CPC of unleashing the novel coronavirus. US President Donald Trump mentioned the "China virus" again yesterday when he forwarded a tweet on record COVID-19 deaths in Germany. How does China comment on this?

Hua Chunying: COVID-19 is the common enemy of mankind. **The WHO and the international community are clearly opposed to linking the virus to specific countries and regions** and against stigmatization. **I believe everyone has noticed** that some recent international studies believe that the novel coronavirus had spread overseas before the outbreak in China, and the timeline was repeatedly moved ahead. This confirms once again that the traceability of the virus is a complex scientific problem, and it is up to scientists to carry out international scientific research and cooperation on a global scale.

Now the cumulative cases in the United States have exceeded 15 million, an increase of more than a million within a week, which means that one in every 22 Americans is confirmed. Deaths in the United States have edged towards 300,000. More than 3,000 new cases were added yesterday. **The United States accounts for 4.2 percent of the world's population, but the number of confirmed cases accounts for 22.2 percent of the world**, more than five times the number of cases per million people in the world. I note that **reports in the United States** say that the pandemic has evolved into a **humanitarian disaster in the United States**. In order to **cover up their incompetence** in coping with the pandemic, some US politicians have tried their best to label the virus and politicize the pandemic, engage in political manipulation on the origin of the virus, spread political viruses and lies, and try to dump the blame and shirk the blame. **As you can see, the United States is now the greatest emitter of the virus**. It turns out that relevant actions by the U.S. side is neither scientific nor moral, **harmful to everyone**. We **urge** the relevant US politicians to respect the facts, respect science, stop stigmatizing and politically manipulate the pandemic situation, focus their minds and energy to fighting the virus in their own country, and **do their best to safeguard the safety and health of the American people**. **China is willing to provide the American people with the help and support we can to fight the epidemic**.

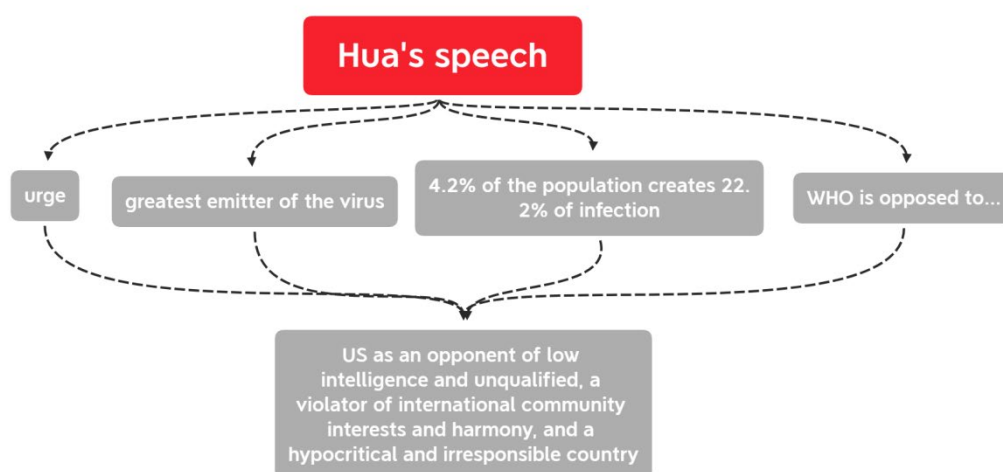


Figure 2. Working process of CDA towards Hua’s speech

The analyse towards Hua’s speech is partly shown in Figure 2. At the beginning of Hua's speech, she highlighted: 'The WHO and the international community are opposed to linking the virus to specific countries and regions' [46]. This is an indisputable declaration that implies a consensus among the international community regarding the need not to link the virus to certain nations. By doing so, Hua not only refuted Trump's accusation but also directly attacked the US image, by implying that the US government lacks the intelligence to know of such common sense ideas [17, 46]. A strategy of indisputable declaration was also evident in Hua's second paragraph, when she said, 'As you can see, the United States is now the greatest emitter of the virus', which Hua went on to demonstrate by citing the data, as will be discussed later [46]. The use of the expression 'As you can see' served as a way of framing another indisputable standpoint of China that 'the greatest virus emitter is the US'. Similar to the first declaration, the second declaration also aimed to undermine the reliability of the US while constructing the US national image as the emitter of the virus.

In the second paragraph, Hua listed data about the US pandemic, including the number of infections and deaths, to demonstrate that the 'US is the greatest emitter of the virus' [46]. Making comparisons between the US and other countries, Hua stated: 'The United States accounts for 4.2 per cent of the world's population, but the number of confirmed cases accounts for 22.2 per cent of the world' [46]. This was intended to underline that the pandemic in the US was more severe than in other nations, and was having a significantly adverse impact on the global pandemic. Based on the Chinese values that highlight the importance of the common good, the behaviour of the US in the pandemic is viewed negatively since its vast numbers of infections harmed the common interest by impeding the international community's efforts to contain the pandemic [24, 26].

Hua (2020) also highlighted that according to 'reports in the United States', there is a 'humanitarian disaster in the United States'. By using reports from the US, Hua [46] was highlighting for the Chinese audience the humanitarian disaster in the US and implying that the US government was violating the Chinese value of "rule by humanism" and "achieving international kingship by firstly achieving harmony within its domestic affairs". According to the value of "non-personal-centred humanism", the legitimacy of governance originates from maintaining and improving citizens' lives [26]. Hence, the legitimacy of the US government was being challenged here as it had failed to tackle the domestic pandemic. Hua's speech also conveyed a second irony, namely, that the US government was not sufficiently qualified to judge other countries' pandemic conditions since its own domestic conditions were such a mess [46]. It was reasonable to highlight this irony to a Chinese audience because Chinese values require a country to achieve domestic harmony before judging other countries' affairs. Hua also criticised the US government for politicising the virus to 'cover up their incompetence' [46]. This served to further construct a hypocritical image of the US because Chinese values demand pragmatic policies. Based on Chinese values, a good government is one that implements pragmatic solutions for

domestic problems, rather than using ideologies or political practices (e.g. politicising the virus and its origin) to escape its own responsibilities.

Hua argued that as the virus is 'harmful to everyone', the US government should 'do their best to safeguard the safety and health of the American people', underlining that 'China is willing to provide the American people with the help and support we can to fight the epidemic' [46]. Here, Hua's statement constructs an image of China as an internationally responsible country given its willingness to help, which fits the Chinese values of "rule by humane authority" and "maintaining harmony" [46]. This form of benevolent diplomacy towards the US is evidence of Chinese humane authority [20, 22], as Chinese assistance was being offered to fight the pandemic. Thus, Hua's statement implied that China was willing to achieve harmony in the international community by helping other countries in need, which aligns with the Chinese value of "strong countries ought to assist weaker countries" [22, 26, 28, 46]. These last two sentences also constitute political advice offered to the US, which places China in a superior position to the US. While creating an image of the US as being irresponsible, Hua's speech also portrayed China as being internationally responsible and superior to the US [46].

It is notable that in Hua's speech, the spokesperson did not reply to questions about the Chinese "relationship" with the virus. Instead, the spokesperson focused on criticisms of the US [46]. Additionally, while the names of Pompeo and Trump were mentioned in the question, Hua's criticisms targeted the image of the US rather than certain politicians [46]. Hua's speech not only dismissed the accusation by disqualifying the US from the debate, but also shaped the US as an opponent of low intelligence and unqualified, a violator of international community interests and harmony, and a hypocritical and irresponsible country; meanwhile, China was presented as an internationally responsible and generous country that was superior to the US [46].

5. Conclusion

This research focuses on explaining how the speeches delivered by the spokespeople of the Chinese Foreign Ministry at press conferences influence China's internet users' attitudes towards the US by constructing the national images of the US and China. National image refers to people's cognition of a certain country, which is strongly influenced by the media and the style and content of official reports and their agenda-setting. The official reports shape people's cognition of a certain nation by containing evaluations of a nation's behaviour according to domestic values. The communication techniques adopted by the spokespeople can also influence the emotions of the audiences. Thus, this study applied critical discourse analysis for a more accurate understanding of the meanings underneath the text.

For the discourse analysis, speeches relating to five different topics were selected related to China and the US from late 2020 to 2021. By incorporating into the analysis consideration of Chinese values and speech strategies, several findings were made. Firstly, Chinese spokespeople seldom reply directly to accusations levelled against China by explaining the country's policies; instead, they tend to criticise the US and undermine the US's reliability, trustworthiness, and authority. Secondly, the Chinese spokespeople tend to criticise the US as a whole, rather than reply to the specific standpoints of individuals. This serves to extend the criticism beyond the questioner to negatively construct the image of the whole US nation. Thirdly, the Chinese spokespeople frequently use the strategy of dissociation when being questioned about universal values, such as democracy and human rights. This is intended to neutralise the severity of the accusations made against China and justify the Chinese political practices with reference to universal values. Finally, the Chinese spokespeople commonly associate the Chinese standpoint with the international community's interests to shape China as a representative of international will and the US as a violator of the international community's order and interests. To conclude, the Chinese spokespeople aim to construct negative images that undermine positive impressions of the US people held a decade earlier. Thus, this research believes that the foreign ministry spokespeople contribute to the construction of a negative US image

and a positive Chinese image, and further shapes the increasingly negative attitudes of the US among China's internet users.

In future studies on Chinese people's changing attitudes towards other countries, this research suggests that scholars also analyse other media or reports on foreign affairs, as there might be other sources of information that employed in the process of image construction, particularly given the developments of new technologies and forms of media. Furthermore, in order to build a more specific testable model for measuring the impact of press conferences on changing attitudes, this research suggests that future scholars apply quantitative discourse analysis methods, such as by using Python to calculate the frequency of certain phrases, or using Corpus Linguistics to assist with the building of a model.

References

- [1] Boylan B M, McBeath J, Wang B. US–China relations: Nationalism, the trade war, and COVID-19[J]. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2021, 14(1): 23-40.
- [2] Fu J. Angry youth or realistic idealist? The formation of subjectivity in online political participation of young adults in urban China[J]. *Journal of Sociology*, 2021, 57(2): 412-428.
- [3] Glaser B, Flaherty K. US-China relations in free fall[J]. *Comparative Connections*, 2020, 22(2): 25-32.
- [4] Huang H. From “The moon is rounder abroad” to “bravo, my country”: how China misperceives the world[J]. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2021, 56(1): 112-130.
- [5] Karabell Z. Anti-American Century?[J]. *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, 2020 (17): 56-65.
- [6] Wang Y. Analysis on the Evolution of Online Public Opinion on Sina Weibo Platform “Sino-US Trade Dispute”[C]//2020 4th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2020). Atlantis Press, 2020: 1052-1060.
- [7] Yuan N. Reflections on China–US relations after the COVID-19 pandemic[J]. *China International Strategy Review*, 2020, 2(1): 14-23.
- [8] Zhu Z. Interpreting China’s ‘wolf-warrior diplomacy’[J]. *The Diplomat*, 2020, 15: 648-658.
- [9] Huang Z A, Wang R. Exploring China’s digitalization of public diplomacy on Weibo and Twitter: A case study of the US–China trade war[J]. *International Journal of Communication*, 2021, 15: 28.
- [10] Zhang D. Digital nationalism on Weibo on the 70th Chinese national day[J]. *Zhang, Dechun*, 2020: 1-19.
- [11] Weibo. Zhao Lijian insists that the epidemic tore down the new clothes of the king of American democracy [EB/OL]. Posted on Weibo by CCTV News, 2020.9.11. [2021-09-04]. <https://weibo.com/2656274875/Jk9cxCkdv?type=comment>
- [12] Weibo. Zhao Lijian asks why can’t we go to the United States when tracing the source of the epidemic [EB/OL]. Posted on Weibo by CCTV News, 2021.7.19. [2021-09-04]. <https://weibo.com/2656274875/KptBc5hZV?type=comment>
- [13] Guan Y, Tingley D, Romney D, et al. Chinese views of the United States: evidence from Weibo[J]. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2020, 20(1): 1-30.
- [14] Zhang Y, Liu J, Wen J R. Nationalism on Weibo: Towards a multifaceted understanding of Chinese nationalism[J]. *The China Quarterly*, 2018, 235: 758-783.
- [15] Zhong Y, Hwang W. Why Do Chinese Democrats Tend to Be More Nationalistic? Explaining Popular Nationalism in Urban China[J]. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2020, 29(121): 61-74.
- [16] Mattingly D, Yao E. How Propaganda Manipulates Emotion to Fuel Nationalism: Experimental Evidence from China[J]. Available at SSRN 3514716, 2020.
- [17] Peng W. Strategic maneuvering by personal attacks in spokespersons’ argumentative replies at diplomatic press conferences: A pragma-dialectical study of the press conferences of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs[J]. *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, 2017, 6(3): 285-314.
- [18] Wu P. Confrontational maneuvering by dissociation in spokespersons’ argumentative replies at the press conferences of China’s ministry of foreign affairs[J]. *Argumentation*, 2019, 33(1): 1-22.

- [19] Bhatia A. Critical discourse analysis of political press conferences[J]. *Discourse & Society*, 2006, 17(2): 173-203.
- [20] Deng J, Smith C A. The rise of New Confucianism and the return of spirituality to politics in mainland China[J]. *China information*, 2018, 32(2): 294-314.
- [21] Ford C A. *China looks at the west: Identity, global ambitions, and the future of Sino-American relations*[M]. University Press of Kentucky, 2015.
- [22] Yan X. Chinese values vs. liberalism: What ideology will shape the international normative order?[J]. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2018, 11(1): 1-22.
- [23] Solé-Farràs J. *New Confucianism in twenty-first century China: The construction of a discourse*[M]. Routledge, 2013.
- [24] Solé-Farràs J. A Discourse Called China and the PRC's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy[J]. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 2016, 21(3): 281-300.
- [25] Ambrogio S. Moral education and ideology: The revival of confucian values and the harmonious shaping of the new Chinese man[J]. *Asian Studies*, 2017, 5(2): 113-135.
- [26] Gow M. The core socialist values of the Chinese dream: Towards a Chinese integral state[J]. *Critical Asian Studies*, 2017, 49(1): 92-116.
- [27] Callahan W A. Dreaming as a critical discourse of national belonging: China Dream, American Dream and world dream[J]. *Nations and Nationalism*, 2017, 23(2): 248-270.
- [28] Shi W, Liu S D. Pride as structure of feeling: Wolf Warrior II and the national subject of the Chinese Dream[J]. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 2020, 13(3): 329-343
- [29] Wang Z. The Chinese dream: Concept and context[J]. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 2014, 19(1): 1-13.
- [30] Gries P H. *China's New Nationalism*[M]//*China's New Nationalism*. University of California Press, 2004.
- [31] Li X, Chitty N. Reframing national image: A methodological framework[J]. *Conflict & Communication*, 2009, 8(2).
- [32] Gu C. Mediating 'face' in triadic political communication: A CDA analysis of press conference interpreters' discursive (re) construction of Chinese government's image (1998–2017)[J]. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2019, 16(2): 201-221.
- [33] Liu F, Shi W. Political 'advice' in Chinese public discourse (s)[J]. *Acta Linguistica Academica*, 2019, 66(2): 209-228.
- [34] Zhou L. Moral stance taking as a device of covert aggression in Chinese political language use[J]. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 2020, 36: 100415.
- [35] Wu P. "I Have No Comment": Confrontational Maneuvering by Declaring a Standpoint Unallowed or Indisputable in Spokespersons' Argumentative Replies at the Regular Press Conferences of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs[J]. *Argumentation*, 2019, 33(4): 489-519.
- [36] Stone Tatum D. Discourse, genealogy and methods of text selection in international relations[J]. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2018, 31(3-4): 344-364.
- [37] Blackledge A. *Discourse and power*[M]//*The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*. Routledge, 2013: 642-653.
- [38] Doty R L. Foreign policy as social construction: A post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines[J]. *International studies quarterly*, 1993, 37(3): 297-320.
- [39] Fairclough, N. (2014). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. In *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 9-20). Routledge.
- [40] Milliken J. The study of discourse in international relations: A critique of research and methods[J]. *European journal of international relations*, 1999, 5(2): 225-254.
- [41] Van Dijk T A. Structures of discourse and structures of power[J]. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 1989, 12(1): 18-59.
- [42] Van Dijk T A. *Discourse and ideology*[J]. *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*, 2011: 379-407.
- [43] Chilton P. *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*[M]. routledge, 2004.

- [44] Wodak R. Preface: The power of language in political discourse[J]. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 2004, 3(3): 381-383.
- [45] Wodak R. Politics as usual: Investigating political discourse in action[M]//*The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*. Routledge, 2013: 551-566.
- [46] Hua, C. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on December 10, 2020 [EB/OL]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs [2021-09-04]. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1839270.shtml