The Evolution of China's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy

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Abstract

"Wolf warrior" diplomacy, a term derived from a series of popular Chinese patriotic action films, encapsulates a new assertive and confrontational style of Chinese diplomacy that emerged prominently in the late 2010s. This style has been characterized by an assertive defense of China's national interests and a proactive stance in international relations, marked by confrontational rhetoric and the strategic use of social media. The evolution of wolf warrior diplomacy can be traced through three main stages: the pre-pandemic period (2012-2019), the pandemic period (2020-2022), and the post-pandemic phase (2023-present). This paper employs critical discourse analysis to examine the speeches and public statements of Chinese officials, revealing wolf warrior diplomacy as a strategic communication effort that emphasizes China's diplomatic presence, global engagement, and assertive positions on sovereignty and regional stability. The findings highlight the complex interplay between nationalism, digital diplomacy, and China's broader geopolitical strategy under Xi Jinping's leadership.

Keywords: wolf warrior diplomacy; digital diplomacy; China; pandemic.

1. Introduction

Rapid technology breakthroughs have transformed the modern world, and one important and dynamic aspect of international relations is the digital diplomacy. The convergence of technology and diplomacy has led to a reorganization of methods for global involvement, as countries are now using digital platforms to promote their interests and foster a favorable worldwide reputation. China's rise to prominence in the world economy has come at the same time as it has increased its diplomatic presence, particularly in the digital sphere. The Chinese government has quickly acknowledged the spread of the internet and the prominence of social media as major avenues for communication. It has made strategic use of these platforms to communicate diplomatically and interact with audiences around the world as well as those living abroad. Consequently, a range of platforms, such as Twitter/X, Facebook, and Instagram, alongside others (even developed for the internal use of some countries), have been integrated into the diplomatic practices of Chinese representatives.

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Even though the general public is not able to access the Twitter/X platform in China, diplomats and other official institutions, along with state-affiliated media, have made a name for themselves in the new digital landscape. They use platforms like Weibo, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to spread various messages, respond to events that have an impact on the media and internationally, and advance China's foreign policy goals in an effort to cultivate a positive image through soft power. In this setting, we witness the rise of *wolf warrior* diplomacy, a diplomatic approach unique to China.

The term *"wolf warrior"* originates from a series of patriotic action films that have achieved significant popularity in China. These movies feature protagonists that engage in battles both within and outside the borders of China against foreign adversaries to safeguard the nation's interests. The inaugural installment of the film series premiered in 2015, accumulating a substantial revenue of over $76 million or 545 million yuan, as reported by CNN [1]. Building upon this success, the sequel was released two years later and swiftly attained the status of the most-watched film in China. The film's motto encapsulated the sentiment that those who oppose China will face consequences even when located at a considerable distance.

A similar approach between these movies and China's diplomatic approach emerged in 2019, when Zhao Lijian, then serving as an adviser at the Chinese embassy in Pakistan, initiated a critique of the U.S. government on the former Twitter, now X platform. In his posts, Zhao affirmed that the U.S. lacked the authority to accuse China for purported human rights violations, given the existence of their own internal challenges such as racism, income inequality, and gun violence within the United States borders. This incident exemplifies a convergence between the assertive rhetoric employed in the "wolf warrior" films and the confrontational style adopted by Chinese diplomats, reflecting a proactive stance in defending China's interests and deflecting criticisms.

After that, Zhao's strategies on Western internet platforms (which have been forbidden in China) have been emulated by an increasing number of Chinese diplomats serving overseas. Following Zhao's example, Hua Chunying, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who currently has approximately 680 000 followers on her 2019-created Twitter/X account, has adopted an assertive tone in her posts, accusing mainly the United States of fabricating stories about China and conspiracy theories in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic – thus, among other factors, leading to a deterioration of the sino-american relations.

2. Stages in the evolution of *wolf warrior* diplomacy

Regarding the wolf warrior diplomacy, its main characteristics are part of a much wider strategy of the Chinese government. In fact, for a better understanding of this type of diplomacy it is necessary to look at its 3 main stages of development, starting from the reorientation in diplomacy in the prepandemic period, which is particularly characterized by the shift from the diplomacy of Deng Xiaoping, "hide and bide", to Xi Jinping's more direct approach. In the Chinese state-media, it has been argued that this new rhetoric does not change China's distinctive diplomatic style, only that it is less subtle than Deng's style.

The easiest approach to understand this argument is to consider the period following 2010, when China's economy surpassed Japan's to take the second place in the world behind the United States. China also saw a significant

increase in confidence and an assertive foreign policy, veering somewhat from Deng's dictum. However, the term itself is considered by Beijing a racist label put by the US.

Following our research, we concluded that the *wolf warrior* diplomacy developed through 3 main stages, as follows:

- The pre-pandemic stage, spanning from 2012 to 2019;
- The pandemic stage, covering the years 2020 to 2022;
- The post-pandemic phase, commencing in 2023 and extending to the present.

2.1 The prepandemic stage

The origins of *wolf warrior* diplomacy are closely linked to the gradual confidence China has regained in its own strengths after the long "century of humiliation" and are marked by the popularity of social media, to which China has also moved extremely quickly. As Kwak, Lee, Park and Moon note, Twitter, with its ability to quickly convey succinct information, has become an attractive medium for politicians to engage with their target audiences. Chinese diplomats and nationalists, taking advantage of Twitter's brevity, began to use the platform to assertively promote China's interests and counter criticism, marking a departure from traditionally reserved Chinese diplomatic rhetoric. The concise nature of the Chinese language, as Benney explained, allows for more content-rich posts compared to English, facilitating complex and detailed discourse within the 140-character limit [2]. This feature was particularly advantageous for Chinese officials seeking to convey strong nationalistic sentiments and effectively counter Western narrative.
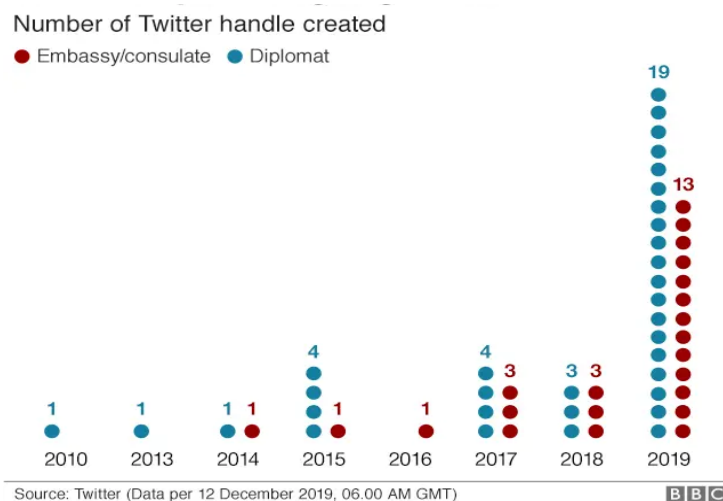
Figure 1: Evolution of Twitter accounts created by China's representatives

Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-50832915

As polarization has intensified with the growing use of social media, the first *wolf warriors* have turned to using Twitter as their primary way of communicating with the rest of the internet world. The structure of the platform

has allowed Chinese diplomats to gain support among domestic and international followers through the retweet function. Incidentally, 2010 is also the year Lijian Zhao, the most famous wolf warrior, created his Twitter account.

In early 2013, the release of a confidential directive, recalled in Peter Martin's book, "Document No. 9," took aim at "Western constitutional democracy" and "universal values," signaling a departure from liberal ideologies. This period coincided with the foundation of the idea of the 'New Silk Road' and the 'Maritime Silk Road', later known as the 'Belt and Road Initiative', which represented a departure from Deng Xiaoping's policy [3]. The dramatic shift in Chinese foreign policy, marked by assertiveness including territorial assertiveness and geopolitical ambitions, created a context in which diplomats had the task of reassuring foreign counterparts in the context of a more tense political atmosphere. In terms of the popularity of this type of diplomacy, prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, *wolf warrior* diplomacy has seen a natural evolution relative to the activity of diplomats online, with an increase in March and a decrease in May, revealing a complex interplay between nationalist currents and forces in the Chinese political landscape.

Tracking these developments, we can notice that this type of diplomacy did not emerge amidst the pandemic, although it has developed considerably during this period. The phenomenon began to gain popularity in June 2020, peaking in 2022, when internationally it had its strongest impact. (Figure 2)
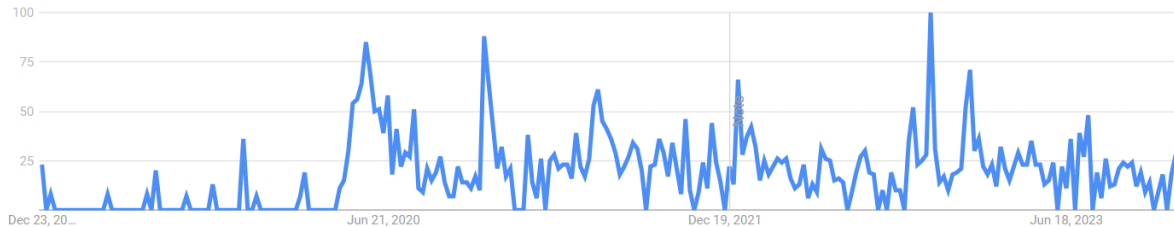
Figure 2: Trends in Google searches for the phrase "wolf warrior diplomacy" from 2019-2023. Source: Google Trends

It follows from this that this type of diplomacy is consistent with Xi Jinping's vision for China, promoting nationalism and having a preference for a more assertive foreign policy. Despite the fact that *wolf warrior* diplomacy was prominent during the pandemic period, this trend did not represent the Chinese government's main policy speeches and discourses.In the pre-pandemic period, we also discuss China's assertive tendencies, which can be traced back to the early 1980s, when nationalist forces led political movements against China's reform and opening-up. During this period, foreign-invested firms were particularly targeted, reflecting deep-seated anxieties about foreign influence. Protests against Japan and opposition to reformist leadership perceived as pro-Japan illustrate the enduring nature of nationalist sentiments within Chinese society. In the decades that followed, other manifestations followed, including protests during the 1990s, concerns about China's technological dependence and global economic position in the 2000s [4].

At the same time, we note that there are not many academic papers devoted to the study of *wolf warrior* diplomacy in the pre-Pandemic period, one of the only studies dedicated to this topic being published in 2019 by Yun Jiang, in which he discusses the terminology of the "wolf warrior" concept, as well as some fundamental elements of this type of diplomacy, such as the antagonistic nature of the practitioners, which are not consistent with Xi's rhetoric of cooperation for "mutual gain", highlighting the contradictory nature of Chinese foreign policy [5].

Before the onset of the pandemic, the strategy of the *wolf warriors* manifested itself as a proactive and assertive approach to foreign policy, characterized by a combination of diplomatic rhetoric, economic influence and assertive behaviour on the world stage. Rooted in a desire to assert China's growing influence and challenge perceived Western hegemony, the war wolves sought to project strength and confidence in China's role as a rising global power. This strategy was exemplified by the assertive behavior of Chinese diplomats, who used confrontational language and tactics to defend China's interests and to confront perceived offenses from other nations, particularly Western powers.

Beyond diplomatic exchanges, this strategy has expanded to include economic coercion and propaganda efforts designed to shape global narratives. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has leveraged its economic resources to expand its influence and cultivate strategic partnerships with countries around the world. At the same time, Chinese state media propagated narratives that portrayed China as a responsible global player and countered negative perceptions propagated by Western media.

2.2. The evolution of wolf warrior diplomacy throughout the pandemic period

The pandemic period has drawn increasing global attention to China, leading to a shift in perceptions of the nation's diplomatic behaviour. An interesting insight into Chinese diplomacy during the pandemic was the emergence of what came to be known as "mask diplomacy". Seizing the opportunity to present itself as a responsible global player, China provided medical supplies, including masks and ventilators, to several countries.

However, for a comprehensive understanding of this approach that also transcends the digital diplomacy segment, it is necessary to first understand China's domestic efforts during Covid-19. Political power decisions on outbreak management initially raised questions - a relevant example is the debate on coronavirus as early as the 7th of January 2020, and the information only appeared in the Chinese media after the 20th of January, after almost three weeks [6]. This delayed response highlighted problems with the centralization of the political system, particularly in terms of information distribution and decision-making.

The centralization of the political system, as directed by Xi Jinping, has become a significant factor in the mismanagement of the effects of the pandemic. This internal crisis has highlighted the need for a balance between local autonomy in decision-making and central leadership decisions to effectively address the epidemic. However, the centralizing agenda of Xi Jinping's government has distorted this balance, as demonstrated by the delayed response in January. The mismanagement of the epidemic has exposed the consequences of the centralization of political power, creating challenges in coordinating preventive action across a wider area of the country.

Simultaneously, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) initiated a political campaign to ensure regime stability.

Xi Jinping has set up a working group to manage the response to Covid-19, focusing on political coordination and soft power influence. This group, led by Premier Li Keqiang and Deputy Premier Wang Huning, included key policy advisers responsible for propaganda, security and international influence. The composition of the group suggests a primary policy objective: to coordinate propaganda efforts and influence international public perception of China's response. This pyramidal approach aimed to distract attention from the authoritarian regime of the leadership, which prevented an adequate and timely response to the crisis . Despite criticism from within China, the regime managed to shift domestic attention to regime survival through propaganda efforts. Majority public opinion, initially supportive of China's position in the trade conflict with the US, turned against the government because of perceived shortcomings in its handling of the crisis [6].

Examples of China's efforts in the sphere of mask diplomacy include several. A case study by Kowalski highlights the results on the China-Czech Republic-Serbia relationship. The Covid-19 pandemic caught the Czech Republic at a time of significant reconfiguration of its policy towards China, marked by deteriorating relations between the two nations. Issues such as security risks associated with collaboration with Huawei, concerns over the situation in Taiwan, broken investment promises and changes in the Czech Republic's domestic political dynamics have contributed to strained relations between the two countries. The Czech Prime Minister at the time, Andrej Babiš, in response to a blackmail attempt by the Czech authorities over Taiwan, initially announced a request that China change its ambassador to Prague. This incident came amid Milos Vsytrcil's visit to Taipei with a 90-strong delegation to promote business cooperation.

On a similar note, the campaign started on Twitter by the wolf warriors in response to perceived challenges from democratic regimes, namely #whatisdemocracy and #whodefinesdemocracy (Figure 3), is interesting and an obvious attack on the global discourse on democracy. The challenge to Western liberal democracy comes in response to rising tensions, particularly with the US, and is aimed, in China's view, at promoting multi-polar global governance. In this way, the labels predominantly used by Chinese foreign missions or diplomats active on Twitter reflect China's broader geopolitical strategy of asserting its ideological sovereignty and presenting its political system as a legitimate and effective alternative to Western models.
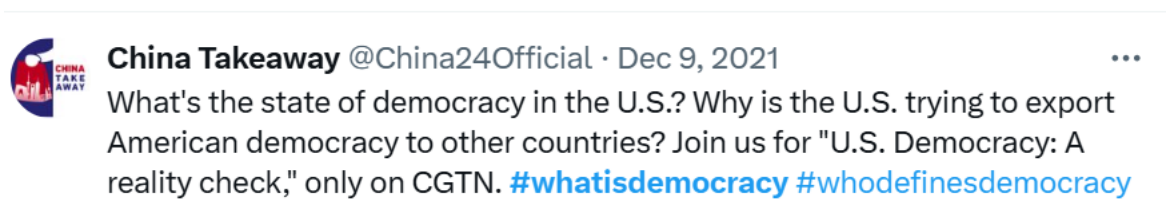
Figure 3: Twitter campaign started by China-affiliated accounts

Source: https://x.com/China24Official/status/1468807759906975747

This rhetoric of China digitally aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes the role of ideas, identities and discourse in shaping international relations. By questioning who has the authority to define democracy, Chinese actors aim to destabilize the normative power of the West and highlight the relativity of political concepts that are

often presented as universal. This approach allows China to advocate for a more pluralistic and culturally contextualized understanding of governance.At the same time, this campaign functions as a tool to promote the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Chinese political system. By juxtaposing China's economic success, social stability and rapid development with the perceived shortcomings of Western democracies, Chinese wolves use these hashtags to argue that democracy is not a universal model. This narrative is rooted in a realist perspective that prioritizes state sovereignty and the pursuit of national interests over ideological conformity. It reflects China's strategic goal of asserting its model of governance as a viable alternative, capable of achieving similar, if not superior, results compared to Western liberal democracies.

By participating in global social media debates, Chinese diplomats are engaging in what some academics call "soft balancing" against the West. This involves using non-military tools to challenge and undermine the influence of a dominant power [7]. These labels allow Chinese diplomats to frame the discourse on democracy in a way that highlights the inconsistencies and failures of Western democratic practices, such as political polarization, social inequality, and ineffective governance. In doing so, they seek to erode the moral high ground often claimed by Western states and create a more favourable international environment for China's rise. This engagement in discursive power politics reflects a broader strategy of shaping international norms and narratives to align with China's national interests and promote a more multipolar world order.Analysis of the Chinese government's information campaign around the 2021 Democracy Summit reveals a sophisticated and multifaceted strategy aimed at shaping the global discourse on democracy. Key differences in network metrics around state-sponsored accounts, bots, and other accounts point to a highly organized and centrally controlled effort to propagate the China narrative. State-sponsored accounts functioned as predominant super-spreaders with high out-degree centrality, disseminating core messages, while bots amplified these messages through high in-degree centrality, indicating significant retweet activity. Identifying non-state-sponsored accounts that mimic state-sponsored behaviors highlights the complex nature of this campaign, revealing a network of influencers that help to support and amplify the desired narrative.This campaign highlighted the strategic use of high-profile spokespeople, Chinese news agencies and influential accounts such as Youth Group to drive a distinct narrative against the US. In addition, China's localized campaign strategies, coordinated through diplomatic offices and in collaboration with local entities, emphasize a comprehensive approach with tailored subcomponents designed to resonate with specific national audiences. By harnessing local discontent with the US, particularly among countries excluded from the Democracy Summit, China has effectively promoted its anti-American rhetoric, demonstrating calculated use both globally and locally.Ultimately, the effectiveness of this approach depends in particular on how it aligns with broader geopolitical trends, bilateral relations and the evolving dynamics of global health governance. As a multi-faceted strategy, the 'mask diplomacy' reflects the complex interplay between state diplomacy, public diplomacy and global perceptions.

3. Research on China's *wolf warrior* discourse during the pre-pandemic and pandemic period

3.1Methodology of the research

As an assertive and often confrontational style of diplomacy, *wolf warrior* diplomacy represents a significant shift in China's approach to foreign policy communication. Analyzing the main themes and motives in the speeches of

these diplomats offers critical insights into China's strategic priorities and responses to global challenges. Particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding how these discourses have evolved can elucidate China's efforts to navigate the complex interplay of health crises, geopolitical tensions, and its ambitions for global leadership. Thus, an examination of *wolf warrior* rhetoric is essential for scholars and practitioners of international relations to comprehend the dynamic and assertive nature of China's contemporary diplomatic engagement.Critical discourse analysis (CDA) plays an essential role in understanding the valences of diplomatic communication, especially in the context of analysing wolf warrior diplomacy. Through this method, both ideological elements and cultural contexts that shape diplomatic discourse can be identified. By analysing the speeches and public media statements of Chinese diplomats, this method allows researchers to identify the predominant themes of Chinese diplomacy and the style adopted by the official in the practice of international relations. Beyond the themes identified, this type of analysis reveals meanings, subtle connotations and rhetorical strategies used by diplomats. In CDA, word clouding is the identification and graphical representation of the most commonly used words in speeches, serving as a valuable visual tool to highlight the frequency and importance of certain terms and expressions used in diplomatic discourse. This representation is useful in the present endeavour due to the easy identification of language patterns, highlighting words based on their frequency. This technique provides a quick and accessible overview of the subject matter of diplomatic speeches and media statements.

The methodology of CDA involves three stages: description, interpretation and explanation. Unlike other approaches, this method does not involve the use of rigid data collection and analysis procedures, allowing flexibility for researchers. One of the recognized advantages of this type of analysis is its economic viability, the accessibility of open source materials and its ability to link qualitative and quantitative research methods [8]. In other words, CDA investigates the interconnectedness of ideology, society and language, exploring how words are used to influence thought, convey ideas and enhance audience understanding. Political speeches, such as those of political leaders, are used to promote political concepts, sustain power dynamics, and gain legitimacy with the public through the use of specific linguistic tactics. Against the backdrop of China's emergence to global power status, politicians' discourses contribute significantly to shaping the country's image, reinforcing the ideological superstructure through discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is the main approach used to reveal the ideologies embedded in language. The concept of "critical discourse" was introduced by Fowler and further developed by Fairclough, who proposed a framework that highlights the generation, dissemination and acceptance of discourse as products of social practices. Discourse analysis therefore reflects key aspects of these practices [9].

Furthermore, in the sphere of content analysis, a significant contribution to the field is made by Hwalbin Kim, who discusses two methodological approaches to content analysis of social media platforms: big data analysis using keyword-based analysis or automated computational analysis, and coding or traditional sampling methods. Previous studies have focused on traditional media content, but there is limited research on applying probability sampling methods to social media content.

In this paper, we have collected speeches published by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we further analyzed them using the CDA method and the word clouding technique to reveal details of the messages conveyed and identify the main themes prevalent in diplomatic communication. The analysis focuses primarily on issues of

classification, formation and transformation, examining discourses at both the macro and micro levels to uncover China's image and goals as conveyed at the diplomatic level by officials.

To achieve this, a total of 460 public speeches from 2018-2021 were analyzed, of which 205 represent speeches by China's spokespersons and the remaining 255 represent official communiqués by China's officials (president, ministers, etc.). The texts will be analyzed by the two categories separately, and finally together, to reveal the main trends identified, as well as patterns in diplomatic communication. The public speeches were published on China's official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

3.2Main results

Following the research, we have identified the presence of the terms "China", "foreign ministry", "remarks" and "Chinese" in officials' speeches, which reflects the central focus on China as a topic of discussion. These terms indicate a sense of authority and assertiveness in international interactions. At the same time, the repeated use of the words 'countries', 'cooperation', 'international' and 'relations' underline China's emphasis on global engagement, collaboration and diplomacy. These terms project a diplomatic image, suggesting a willingness to work with other nations and promote international relations.

On the other hand, we note the presence of terms such as 'Taiwan', 'Hong Kong', 'human rights', 'sovereignty' and 'independence', which indicate the discourse around controversial issues that are seen as China's 'internal affairs'. The choice to use these words marks a defensive positioning by China, particularly on regional issues, human rights concerns and territorial integrity.

Given the pandemic and post-pandemic period under review, we also note the predominant use of terms such as 'security', 'law', 'stability' and 'health', which indicate China's focus on stability and control, both internally and externally. The recurring mention of 'one China', 'principle' and 'firm' underlines China's unwavering stance on its policies, possibly indicating a defensive stance in response to challenges to its established doctrines. The focus on contemporary issues is reflected in the use of the terms 'Covid-19', 'response' and 'global' in speeches, highlighting China's involvement in global issues. The term 'democracy' appears with relatively less frequency, possibly indicating a nuanced or defensive stance in discourse around democratic ideals. Also of interest is the use of the terms "Xinjiang", "China-US" and "Japan", indicating areas of particular international attention for China. (Figures 4, 5)

Figure 4: Word clouding following the CDA conducted

No.	Word	Frequency
1	China	1063
2	foreign ministry	615
3	remarks	392
4	chinese	387
5	countries	352
6	Taiwan	301
7	international	278
8	Hong Kong	264
9	government	209
10	affairs	205
11	cooperation	203
12	relations	185
13	people	173
14	rights	160
15	development	157
16	interests	128
17	human	127
18	spokesperson's	127
19	state	124
20	region	123

Figure 5: 20 of the most frequent words used by the *wolf warriors*

4. Discussion

The presence of terms such as "China", "foreign ministry", "remarks", and "Chinese" in the official speeches of Chinese representatives underscores a central focus on China itself, reflecting a sense of authority and assertiveness in international interactions. This vocabulary choice aligns with the principles of wolf warrior diplomacy, where assertiveness and a strong nationalistic tone are emphasized. By frequently invoking these terms, Chinese officials not only highlight their country's pivotal role in international affairs but also project a narrative of self-assuredness and leadership. This approach can be interpreted as a strategic effort to reaffirm China's position on the global stage, conveying an image of a confident and powerful nation ready to defend its interests and assert its viewpoints.

Simultaneously, the recurrent use of words like "countries", "cooperation", "international", and "relations" points to China's emphasis on global engagement and diplomatic collaboration. This lexicon projects an image of willingness to work with other nations and foster international relations, suggesting that alongside its assertive stance, China is also keen on portraying itself as a cooperative global actor. The dual focus on assertiveness and

collaboration is a hallmark of modern Chinese diplomacy, where the aim is to balance strong nationalistic rhetoric with a commitment to global partnership. This duality in communication underscores China's strategic intent to be seen as both a formidable power and a responsible stakeholder in the international community.

On the other hand, terms such as "Taiwan", "Hong Kong", "human rights", "sovereignty", and "independence" signal a defensive positioning by China, particularly concerning its internal affairs and regional issues. The deliberate choice to highlight these terms indicates a proactive effort to address and counteract criticisms related to these sensitive topics. This defensive posture is characteristic of *wolf warrior* diplomacy, where Chinese officials vigorously defend the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The focus on these issues also reveals an underlying sensitivity and readiness to confront any challenges to China's established doctrines and policies, suggesting an uncompromising stance on matters deemed crucial to national unity and stability.

In the context of the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the prominence of terms like "security", "law", "stability", and "health" indicates China's prioritization of stability and control, both domestically and internationally. The frequent mention of "one China", "principle", and "firm" further underscores China's unwavering stance on its core policies, particularly in response to external challenges. The inclusion of contemporary issues through terms such as "Covid-19", "response", and "global" reflects China's active engagement in global health and security discussions, emphasizing its role in addressing worldwide crises. Meanwhile, the relatively infrequent appearance of "democracy" suggests a nuanced or defensive stance in discourse surrounding democratic ideals, highlighting a possible area of contention in China's international narrative. Additionally, the focus on terms like "Xinjiang", "China-US", and "Japan" indicates specific areas of international attention and concern for China, where strategic interests and diplomatic tensions are prominently at play.

Overall, this research reveals a complex and multifaceted approach to China's strategic communication, characterized by a strong diplomatic presence, a commitment to international collaboration, and an assertive defense of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The future of this type of diplomacy is likely to continue evolving in response to global challenges and shifting geopolitical dynamics. China's digital diplomacy, driven by the principles of wolf warrior diplomacy, will probably maintain its assertive and proactive stance, while also seeking to enhance its collaborative image on the global stage. This dual approach will be crucial in navigating the intricate landscape of international relations, as China continues to assert its influence and respond to both opportunities and challenges in the digital era.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of China's diplomatic discourse through the lens of *wolf warrior* diplomacy reveals a profound manifestation of *sinocentrism*, wherein China positions itself as the central and indispensable actor in global affairs. This perspective is articulated through an assertive and authoritative rhetoric that emphasizes China's leadership and pivotal role in international interactions. By consistently highlighting themes of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity, Chinese officials reinforce a narrative of national pride and resilience against external pressures. This strategic communication not only serves to defend and promote China's

core interests but also seeks to reshape the global order to reflect China's values and priorities. Consequently, wolf warrior diplomacy emerges as a vehicle for advancing a sinocentric worldview, whereby China's historical and cultural preeminence is reasserted in the contemporary international arena. As this diplomatic style continues to evolve, it is likely to further entrench China's centrality in global discourse, challenging existing power structures and redefining international relations in accordance with China's vision.

With Xi Jinping's rise to power, we can clearly see the emergence of the *wolf warrior* or assertive diplomacy, which is in line with his vision and theory of 'big country diplomacy', reflecting China's active global role in open ideological confrontation with the West.

In China, the term *wolf warrior* is a label that Chinese officials vehemently reject. These diplomats, whose comments and actions frequently revolve around controversial issues such as Xinjiang, Taiwan and Hong Kong, act within the framework of China's "core interests" as described in official discourse. These actions are a significant departure from traditional diplomatic norms, marking a new dimension in China's foreign policy.

At the same time, in dealing with controversial issues, one can see how diplomats consistently use rhetoric that portrays China as a victim, seeks to deflect criticism, and justifies their counterattacks as defensive and patriotic. Despite this consistency, at the official level, diplomats have refrained from advocating or acknowledging the term wolf warrior to describe China's diplomacy, and it is not mentioned in China's public speeches. On the other hand, we note that in China's state-run news agencies, the term is often used to counter Western perceptions, defending China's interests. However, the perceived label of wolf warrior is seen as a racist Western approach to describe the approaches of Chinese diplomats, as often reflected in Global Times articles.

The concept of *"telling China's story properly"* is at the epicenter of Xi Jinping's political philosophy, based on foreign propaganda or *wai xuan*, carefully covered in the media. According to Xi, in order to promote China, *wai xuan* must include concepts, categories, innovative expressions accepted both internally and externally by other states in the digital age .

This objective can be seen as an attempt to create interaction-based communication in the sphere of public diplomacy in order to attract external audiences. The constant attempts to improve China's image globally through soft power is also reflected in the harmonious blending of panda diplomacy and media, which is also identified in the daily Twitter posts of diplomats. All these are built to attract comments, retweets, followers, to engage external audiences in discussion, but also to simultaneously promote a peaceful and friendly image.

The *wolf warrior* diplomacy is associated with Xi's vision - the 'anti-China hostility' motive is frequently encountered, along with ongoing concerns about ideological threats from the West. Economic coercion, diplomatic incidents and aggressive rhetoric further exemplify the *wolf warrior* approach.

To sum up, the manifestation of *wolf warrior* diplomacy implies a departure from traditional diplomatic norms and a preference for assertive, combative rhetoric. The suggestive interaction between China's state media agencies such as Xinhua News, China Daily etc. and wolf warrior diplomats contributes to the propagation of China's anti-US message. Present in various forms, this type of diplomacy shows a period of onset and rise in

popularity as China's confidence in its own powers grows, and shows a decline in the post-pandemic period as relations with other states and international organizations deteriorate, a consequence of hostile discourse online.

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