

Social Media Perspective on National Image: A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Constructing a positive national image is increasingly important for China with its rising status in the global arena. Up to now, images of the China have been largely explored as the Other, rather than as the Self. This paper examines national image shaped in social media and its communication route. It focuses on a discourse analysis of Weibo posted by the China's Ministry of National Defense. The study adopts corpus based critical discourse analysis as a methodology by combined qualitative and quantitative methods and tools for the analysis of 2947 microblogs 170818 words collected from Python web-crawling. The analysis, at micro level examines the national image in the light of image theory, and lexical collocations constructing the image. This study reveals that a confident, peaceful and affable national image is conveyed by MND Weibo and social media is a new platform for prompt and direct interaction between the public and government department. The new mode of communication has changed the traditional form of propaganda, and has further enabled a wider range of national images to be disseminated and expressed in a more three-dimensional manner.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, CDA, national image, social media, image theory, MND

Introduction

This study focuses on social media representations of national image of china in Weibo, Chinese twitter between 2015 and 2020 by employing methodologies from corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA), two linguistic approaches. Baker (2000) merges corpus linguistics and critical discourses analysis. Corpus linguistics is "the study of language based on examples of real-life language use" (McEnery and Wilson 1996: 1); critical discourse analysis can be defined as "[a]n approach to the analysis of discourse 1 which views language as a social practice and is interested in the ways that ideologies and power relation are expressed through language" (Baker and Ellece 2011: 26).

Social media plays a pivotal role in the 21st century, and rise of internet has brought a tremendous change in the world for last twenty years. Similarly, the popularity of the internet has achieved a global significance and social media such as Weibo has eliminated the communication distance between countries, broadened people's access to information, and profoundly changed the way people consume information. Weibo, commonly known as Chinese Twitter or microblog,

is a platform for instant sharing, disseminating and accessing information based on user relationships. From its inception in March 2006 when Evan Williams and Bizastone created the first microblog community - the prototype of Twitter - to its current status as a global "node-sharing instant messaging network" microblog has developed for the last 11 years.

In China, the emergence and development of Weibo has also led to a new era of social media in the country. The opening of Weibo service to the public in October 2009 marked the arrival of microblog era for Chinese netizens. The year of 2010 has been referred as the "the first year of Weibo era" due to its rapid development. So far, there are four major microblogs in China - Sina Weibo, Tencent Weibo, Sohu Weibo and Netease Weibo, but Sina Weibo owns the largest market share and is one of the most influential social networking platforms in China, with more than 500 million users, and its fast flow of information and strong aggregation of topics make it a significant platform for discussion of public issues in China.

The use of Weibo has since become trendy, and it has rapidly become an indicative internet platform with popularity unrivaled by any other traditional media. Looking back at the history of mass media of communication, it took 38 years for radio to reach 50 million users, 13 years for

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television, and four years for the Internet to experience popularity, while Weibo took just 14 months (Li, 2011). In addition to the minutiae of everyday life for netizens, the strong focus on current events - is one of the distinctive characteristics of Weibo. The Weibo community, linked through retweets and comments, emerges as an epoch-making platform for the dissemination of information and the collision of opinions.

On the one hand, the timeliness of access to information, the activeness of information communication and the easiness of use make Weibo full of a huge amount of new information and news, so that the breadth of information is guaranteed; on the other hand, Weibo also has the superiority of openness for expressing and exchanging ideas, as all microblogs posted by users can be commented on or retweeted by anyone, and all users' comments can be replied to. Moreover, with the hot topic mechanism, a popular news posted will receive a large number of retweets, comments and replies, thus verifying the authenticity of the news and analysing the impact of this news, and the depth of information is also guaranteed. The information, news or opinion related to China's domestic and international current affairs is conveyed in a "civil form" through Weibo, influencing other countries' perceptions and evaluations, and helping to shape China's national image. In this way, both social and technological conditions have laid the foundation for the "self-imagination of China's image by the Chinese people".

Chinese scholars also have different definitions of the concept of national image. Xu (2000), an early researcher on the issue of national image, believes that national image is the image of a country formed in the international news flow, or the image presented by a country in the news reports by the news media of other countries. Guan (2000), which formally defined the concept of national image for the first time in Chinese academic circles, arguing that "state image is a comprehensive body, which is the overall evaluation and recognition of the nation itself, its behavior, its activities and its achievements by the external and internal publics of the state.

Sun (2003) proposes that national image is a combination of the internal and external public's perceptions of the country's political (including government credibility, diplomatic capability and military readiness), economic (including financial strength, fiscal strength, national income, product characteristics and quality), social (including social cohesion, security and stability, national morale,

national character), cultural (including scientific and technological strength, education, cultural heritage, customs and habits, etc.), and social (including social cohesion, security and stability, national morale, national character, etc.).

The image of a country is fundamentally a matter of perception and evaluation of the state of the country's image in terms of science and technology, education, cultural heritage, customs and values, and geography (including geography, natural resources, population size, etc. Sun (2003) points out that the image of a country fundamentally depends on the comprehensive national power of the country, but it cannot simply be equated with the actual state of the country; it can be shaped to some extent. Liu (2002), the image of the state is "a relatively stable overall evaluation of a country by the public in the international community", and is "a projection of the objective state of the country in public opinion, that is, a comprehensive reflection of the public's impressions, perceptions, attitudes and evaluations of the state, and the sum of the public's emotions and will towards the state" (Liu, 2002).

While discussing the image of China, and her contribution towards the building an economic zone, Afzaal (2020) remarks that "China can use towards achieving her goals to enrich regions of Asia – East to West, and vice-versa – while simultaneously attempting to match the growing economic challenges of the 'Middle Kingdom' itself". Through these rapid growths, China has developed her name in the economic giants, and certainly, the rapid growth of China has reduced poverty (Zahid Khan, Guo Changgang & Muhammad Afzaal, 2019).

There is a misconception that the image of the state is something external, superficial and formal, and that as long as it is achieved at this level, it is a success; that is not true. In fact, the image of the state is not just an external 'image', but a unity of content and form. In this unity, the content is the core and foundation, which determines the form and is expressed through the form. Without content, the form has no basis; without content, the form of expression is bound to be erratic and cannot give a clear impression.

In short, in international communication, the mainstream public of a country perceives and evaluates the general image of other countries, and the formation or construction of a national image is the result of interaction between sovereign states. National image is a kind of influence reflecting the comprehensive national power of a country, which is abstract and difficult to quantify with numbers

and figures. National image is one of the important manifestations of national soft power, and the basis on which national image can be shaped is national soft power, which can influence each country's foreign policy or diplomatic approach, and a country's status in the international arena also affects the realization of national soft power. The image of the country cannot be shaped without media communication and technological means of communication.

National Image Communication under Social Media

Kaplan & Heeelin (2010: 60) define social media as a set of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideas and technologies of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The study on national image under social media has long moved beyond the concept of social media as a channel tool to the focus on discourse analysis. Van Ham (2002) believes that competition in geopolitics and power in modern societies has been shifted to competition of nation image, national branding and influence in post-modern society. Castells (2011) also concludes that the field of communication, including the new media and horizontal networks of communication in the new technological environment, has now become a major field of power relationships.

In the era of new media, the competition for soft power between countries intensifies and as an important part of the country's "soft power", the role of national image gains prominence in the international arena, and the important performance of fighting for the interests of the country makes every country pay more and more attention to it. Countries use a variety of communication channels, tools, and strategies to shape their national image. Every country wants to create a good national image in the minds of its audiences, because a positive national image can unite people internally and win their hearts and minds, and increase national cohesion externally, creating a favorable environment for national development.

In the face of the new communication landscape, the construction and dissemination of national image, its enhancement and improvement have also developed many new forms and characteristics. With the advent of the Web 2.0 era, new public diplomacy based on new media has emerged around the world, and the power of social media in particular is not to be underestimated. This is why countries are paying more and more attention to the seemingly casual medium of social

media, with terms such as "microblog diplomacy" and "new media diplomacy" constantly appearing on the internet and in the press. Western countries, such as the United States, have opened accounts on social media and using social media to communicate with foreign countries, setting off a new round of national image reshaping and communication around the world. The new media discourse has changed the rhetoric of political culture and the accompanying paradigm shift in the discourse of national image.

With the advent of Weibo, a relatively free and independent media platform has emerged, and many first-hand news and information not available in the traditional media, and even the triggers for major events, have come from grassroots groups using Weibo. At the macro level, Weibo has triggered an evolution in the media landscape and a development in the structure of social organization; at the micro level, it has allowed people to receive information, think about issues and communicate and express themselves in ways that have been heavily influenced by Weibo, unleashing the expression of social discourse.

As stated above, the study focused on the social media representation of national image of China, thus Corpus based CDA is used as a theoretical underpinning of this study. CDA can be defined as "discourse analysis with critical stances", which concerns "real and often extended instances of social interaction that take a linguistic form or a partially linguistic form" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258). CDA views "language as discourse and as social practice" (Fairclough, 2001: 21) and focuses on exploring the linkages between language, ideology and society (e.g., van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Baker (2006: 1) précises a combined corpus linguistic and discourse analysis approach as: [u]sing corpora (large bodies of naturally occurring language data stored on computers) and corpus processes (computational procedures which manipulate this data in various ways) in order to reveal linguistic patterns which can enable us to make sense of the ways that language is used in the construction of discourses (or ways of constructing reality).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has grown rapidly over the last decade of the 20th century, and is a relatively new area developed in language study in which discourse is treated as "a form of social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Wang (2014) presented a holistic study on the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of visual semiosis to unveil the critical images embedded in discourses". Previously, Van Dijk (1998) theorizes CDA as a

theoretical framework that examines texts to unveil the discursive foundations of supremacy, prejudice and disparity, and how these bases are produced, upheld, and altered within explicit dogmatic, social, social, and past contexts. Huckin (1995, p. 95) defines CDA as “a highly context subtle, autonomous tactic which takes an ethical stance on social issues with the aim of improving society”. Since the success of CDA is measured by its effective contribution to change, Van Dijk (1993b) criticizes the scholars who support and take the side of power’s elites all the time, and points out that CDA “should not worry about the interests or perspectives of those in power, who are best placed to take care of their own interests anyway” (p. 253).

While elaborating the concepts of CDA, Hunston (2000) argues that corpus linguistics has an important role in grammar, applied linguistics, translation, stylistics and forensic linguistics to unveil the linguistic features. In addition, McEnery (2005) uses corpora to examine speakers using swearing and bad language and to trace changing attitudes towards swearing and other forms of bad language. Fairclough (1992) considers CDA as a concept which can be applied to reveal the hidden motives of discourses. Baker (1996) provided a merger of CDA with corpus linguistics and promotes the corpus assisted discourse studies while employing the quantitative aspects of analysis to avoid biasness in the analysis. The analysis can be employed by numerous approaches while working in the domain of discourse analysis, one of them is to use corpus linguistic techniques to discursively analyze texts or communicative events. Such an approach is sometimes referred to as Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) (Partington, Morley, & Haarman, 2004). Thus, the aims at the following research questions

- (1) What national image has been constructed in the discourses of Weibo?
- (2) How discourse is used to construct a national image on social media?

Theoretic Framework

Many studies have demonstrated that corpus methods can benefit discourse studies (e.g. Baker, 2006, 2010; Baker et al., 2008; Baker et al., 2013; Baker & McEnery, 2015). This paper draws on two methods for analysis: established corpus linguistic methodologies, critical discourse analysis and the application of image theory on the tweets taken from social media. Partington (2008) argues that corpus assisted discourse studies’ (CADS) provides a theoretical context to uncover non-obvious meanings that are not open, in most cases, to direct

observation. Baker et al., (2008) presented the description of overall steps involved in the combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. These steps are further elaborated by Hardt-Mautner (2009) and enhances the theoretical loops holes in the analysis part while merging CL with CD. First step is to formulate or design research questions, because the method depends upon the main research questions of the study, (Hardt-Mautner, 2009). Secondly, the building of corpus based on the keywords and main research questions of the study. Repetitiveness of the corpus improves the validity of the research; therefore, keywords are to be set before data collection, Baker (2008). Third step is to examine the context by reading about the history, politics, and culture of the topic under investigation. Such information enables the researchers to set the scene for further analysis. Then, application of corpus tool for the analysis, and using some keywords, high frequency words, concordances to examine the significance of targeted words. In addition, making a qualitative concordance analysis for some of the lexical patterns, and identifying some potential sites for possible discourses. Finally, checking whether the outcomes refer to some theoretical frameworks or not, i.e. utilising some CDA notions to interpret and explain the results. But, this study added one more step while employing an image theory to the corpus to identify the national image embedded in the social media.

Image Theory

At present, there is no consensus on the definition of "national image" among scholars, but both Chinese and foreign scholars have defined the concept of national image from different disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives. Boulding (1959), an economist and representative of the new institutional economics in the United States, who was the first to introduce the concept of “National Image” and is recognized as the founder of national image theory, emphasizes that national image is not the same as the facts of the nation. He points out that national image comes in three dimensions. The first is the objective geospatial dimension of the country, i.e., the geographical image of a country; the second is the external “hostile” or “friendly” attitude towards it; and the third is the external judgement of “strength” or “weakness” of a nation (Boulding, 1959). Although Boulding's paper has become a classic in the study of national image, it does not provide a clear definition of national image from a conceptual perspective.

After Boulding, similar research occurred in the field of international relations, gradually leading to the development of "Image Theory". In addition to national image, similar concepts such as "national prestige", "national attractiveness", "national reputation" and "national branding" are also used in different disciplines. Martin & Eroglu (1993) defines national image as the sum of descriptive, inferential, and informative beliefs about a specific country, which is a multidimensional construct. Ndalahwa (2007) argues that the image of a nation is a total of assessments of perceptions and feelings about a country, the overall impression that a person forms based on all variables and factors of that country. Afzaal (2020) argues that "discourse analysis addresses the issues pertaining to questions of political identity, social and political discursive practices, the construction of political hegemonies and agenda setting".

In addition to defining the concept and connotation of "national image" from philosophical and psychological perspectives, some Western scholars have also included national image in the field of branding research, arguing that national image is national brand. Jaffe & Nebenzahl (2006) analyses the interplay between brand, country and product image, pointing out that the country of origin benefit in business is a concrete reflection of the country brand image in the minds of consumers. They argue that a good country-of-origin image provides greater competitive advantage and influences consumers' attitudes and recognition of products and services (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001).

Data Collection and Method

The China's Ministry of National Defense (MND), which aims to convey the voice of the Chinese military to the outside world, publicize China's national defense policy and promote the modernization and construction of the national

defense and military, is a significant and representative part of the national image in the face of economic globalization and intensified international competition. The China's Ministry of National Defense has made a significant contribution to this since the official implementation of the military press conference system in China, and in April 2011, MND held its first press conference, which was formally established as a regular military press release system. However, with the rapid development of the media field in recent years and the advent of the new media era, the ways of military news and information release is facing changes.

On 15 July 2011, the US Department of Defense announced that it was opening up the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook, in a change from its previous strict stance of banning them. Prior to this, the French Ministry of Defense and the Israeli Ministry of Defense had long opened special channels on influential new media sites to expand the military's influence internationally, gain a younger audience and shape the new, young and energetic image of their militaries (Su & Shu, 2012). The European and American militaries are at the forefront of the world in using new media tools to enhance military communication.

For the research of this paper, a collection of microblogs posted by China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) in Weibo was collected by Python web-crawler, starting from May 26, 2015 (the day that MND opened its account and posted its first microblog) to December 21, 2020, with a total amount of 2591 microblogs. The results of Python crawler, as the raw data, were converted into an excel file containing the whole text, posted date and the number of likes, reposts and comments of each microblog of MND (See Figure 1). The following analysis were conducted based on the raw data.

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
微博正文	原始图片u	被转发微	是否为原	发布位置	发布时间	发布工具	点赞数	转发数	评论数
【国防部新闻发言人谭克非就中俄	https://h5	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/15 21:07	微博 weibo	161	21	21
【中央军委主席习近平签署命令	无	无	TRUE	无	2020-12-21 14:58	微博 weibo	96	9	0
【山东舰航母编队航经台湾海峡赴	无	无	TRUE	无	2020-12-21 10:19	微博 weibo	232	22	25
【东部战区新闻发言人张春晖大校	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/19 20:14	微博 weibo	160	34	38
【中央军委举行晋升上将军衔警	http://wx2	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/18 20:16	微博 weibo	302	41	0
【海军新闻发言人刘文胜海军大校	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/17 18:19	微博 weibo	113	15	20
【中央军委主席习近平签署命令	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/17 16:20	微博 weibo	147	18	0
【习近平致电代表党中央、国务院	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/17 10:15	微博 weibo	316	36	0
【中俄关于相互通报发射弹道导弹	http://ww1	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/15 20:43	微博 weibo	226	55	16
【魏凤和同日本防卫大臣视频通	http://wx1	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/14 20:06	微博 weibo	117	17	14
#国家公祭日# 【抗战胜利75周年	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/13 10:51	微博 weibo	586	121	51
【中欧举行第十一次防务安全政策	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/10 23:13	微博 weibo	76	7	0
【第七届东盟防长扩大视频会议	http://ww3	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/10 15:47	微博 weibo	92	14	0
【第十一次中国-东盟防长非正式	http://ww3	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/9 19:10	微博 weibo	86	12	9
【国防部新闻发言人任国强就美	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/8 22:44	微博 weibo	232	25	74
【中国和巴基斯坦举行“雄鹰-IX	无	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/7 17:26	微博 weibo	189	34	24
【我第19批赴黎巴嫩维和多功能	http://wx3	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/6 12:19	微博 weibo	99	4	3
【我第24批赴刚果(金)维和工兵	http://wx1	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/6 12:17	微博 weibo	86	9	4
习近平接见全军思想政治教育工	http://wx1	无	TRUE	无	2020/12/4 19:44	微博 weibo	240	17	16

Figure 1. The Screenshot of Python Crawler Results

Results and Discussion

Weibo is an emerging social platform for information dissemination and communication in recent years. With its widespread use and diversity of users' background, it occupies a vital position in modern media, and is even more significant for dissemination of military news. The China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) has responded to the advent of the social media era by officially opening the account in Weibo on 26 May 2015. The new mode of communication has completely changed the traditional form of propaganda and has had a huge impact on the dissemination of military news. Since then, military press releases have expanded from the traditional regular press conferences to the social media represented by Weibo. Since the launch of MND account in Weibo, MND has, with the advantage of social media, fought one beautiful "initiative battle" after another for national image communication.

According to the collected data, the content of the microblogs posted by MND in Weibo can be divided into four categories:

- 1) release of military news: focusing on the propagation of national defense policies, strategic guidelines and the process of military modernization and construction. This kind of content mostly contains information responded from the official website of MND and restructured from the MND regular press conference;
- 2) dissemination of major military information: this kind of content mainly responds to the public's concern about the hotspots and doubts of military-related events, eliminates public doubts and enables the public's right to know to be

realized;

- 3) popularization of military information: in a concise way to show some current military conditions and information. The most representative ones are the "One Picture/Chart" series, including "One Picture to Understand China's Military Strategy", "One Picture to Understand the British Army", "One Picture to Understand the Army of Kazakhstan", "One picture to Understand Russian Army", etc.;
- 4) establishment of military image: this kind of content is more lively and closer to audience, i.e., mainly focusing on the interaction with netizens. Representative ones include "I want to tell you [...]", "Answer to fans [...]", etc.

The purpose of military information release is to disseminate information, publish opinions and give explanations to the mass media and the public, and to build up a good image of the Chinese military. The main mode of traditional military news release is press conferences on specific topics. However, with the rapid development of new media, the MND Weibo has started to be integrated into regular release of military news. There is a huge difference between the form and manner of military news release through Weibo, as traditional military news is disseminated in one direction, while through Weibo, netizens can comment on or repost such microblogs based on their personal views and opinions, which not only forms an interactive mode of communication, but also further expands the scope and increases the speed of information dissemination, which will ultimately expand the scope of communication continuously.

On 25 May 2015, the Ministry of Defense issued its first Weibo post, as shown below (See Figure 2).

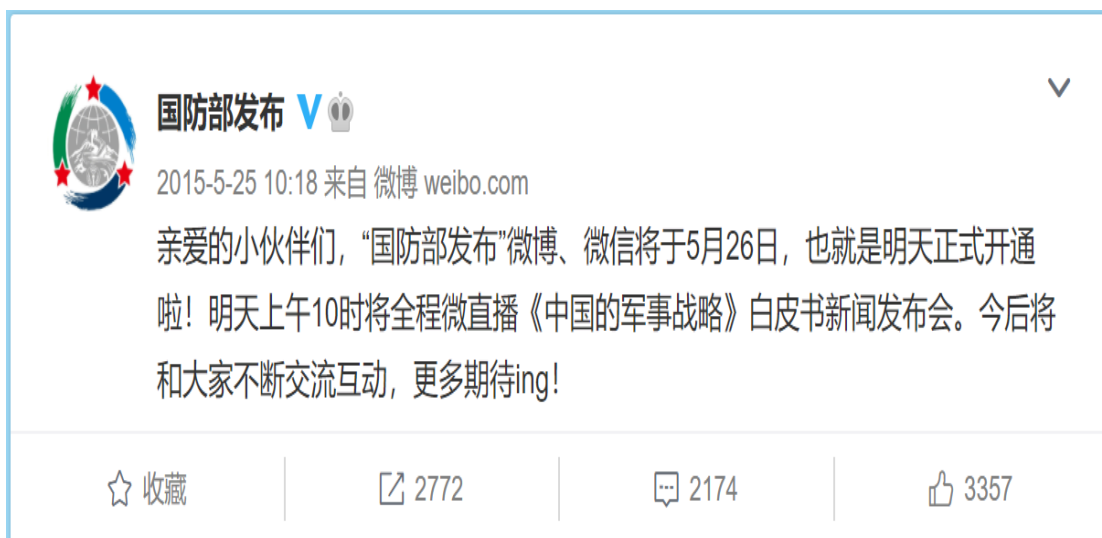


Figure 2. The Screenshot of First Microblog Posted by MND

The Original Version

亲爱的小伙伴们，“国防部发布”微博、微信将于5月26日，也就是明天正式开通啦！明天上午10时将全程微直播《中国的军事战略》白皮书新闻发布会。今后将和大家不断交流互动，更多期待ing！

The Translated Version

Dear everyone, the Weibo and Wechat account of MND will be launched on May 26! Tomorrow at 10 am, the whole press conference on China's Military Strategy will be in the form of live video streaming on Weibo. We will be interacting with you all continuously, so look forward to more!

In three short lines and less than a hundred words, it contains a great deal of information. In summary, the message it wants to convey is threefold:

- 1) to inform and emphasize the time: the next day (26 May), the account of Weibo and WeChat of MND will be officially launched;

- 2) to release a preview: the next morning (26 May), the press conference on China's Military Strategy will be live video streaming on Weibo, which means people who are not able to come to the site can watch the whole conference through their phones or computers;

- 3) to show the attitude: there will be constant communication and interaction with netizens.

The style of this first microblog posted by MND was relaxed and lively, addressing netizens as "dear friends", for example, and talking about the interaction with netizens with "more expectations!". The same style has indeed been maintained in subsequent microblogs. The fact that such a traditional serious department appears on Weibo in such a light-hearted style conveys an affable image of the country.

High-frequency words used in MND Weibo was calculated as shown in Figure 3 (some high rank verbs in word counts, like meet and hold, with no independent meaning, were not included in the results).

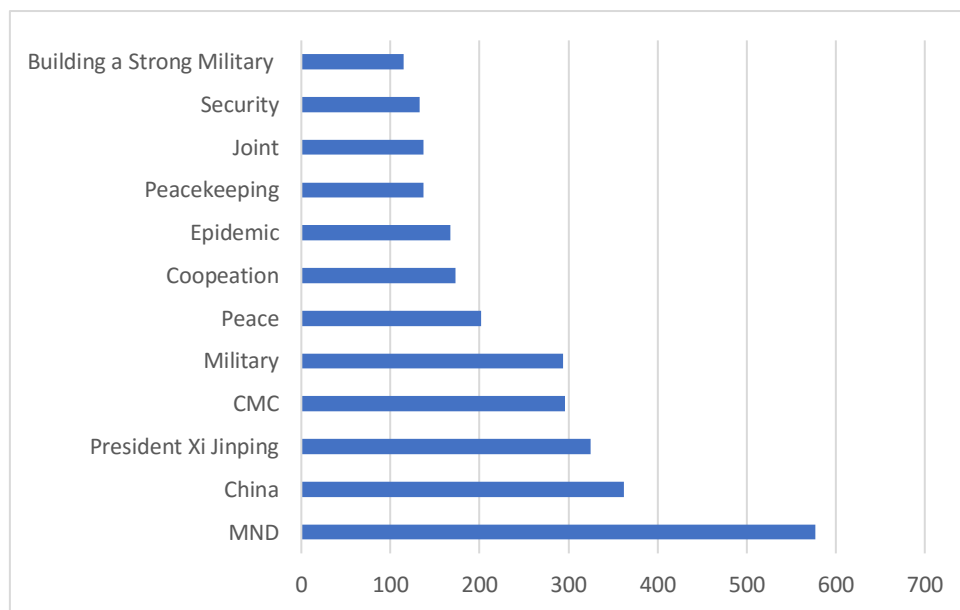


Figure 3. Top 12 MND Weibo Word Counts

According to Figure 3, top 4 frequent-use words is related to the name of the country, president, and the Central Military Commission (CMC) and MND. which shows that the main purpose of MND Weibo is to release information on behalf of the country and enhance national image of China and Chinese Military. At the meantime, top 5 to top 12 words mentioned in MND Weibo, that is military, peace, cooperation, epidemic, peacekeeping, joint, security and building a strong military, indicate the topics that MND concerns. The content of MND

Weibo conveys a peaceful, friendly and inclusive image. Also, regarding to the current situation of COVID-19, epidemic is highly concerned by Chinese government with quick and efficient responsive measures followed, which indicate a trustworthy and responsible image of China. In aspect of military image, results demonstrate that it tries to produce a powerful image for audience.

On the basis of the reposts, comments and likes of each microblog, this study has concluded top 10 high-responded MND Weibo (See Figure 4).

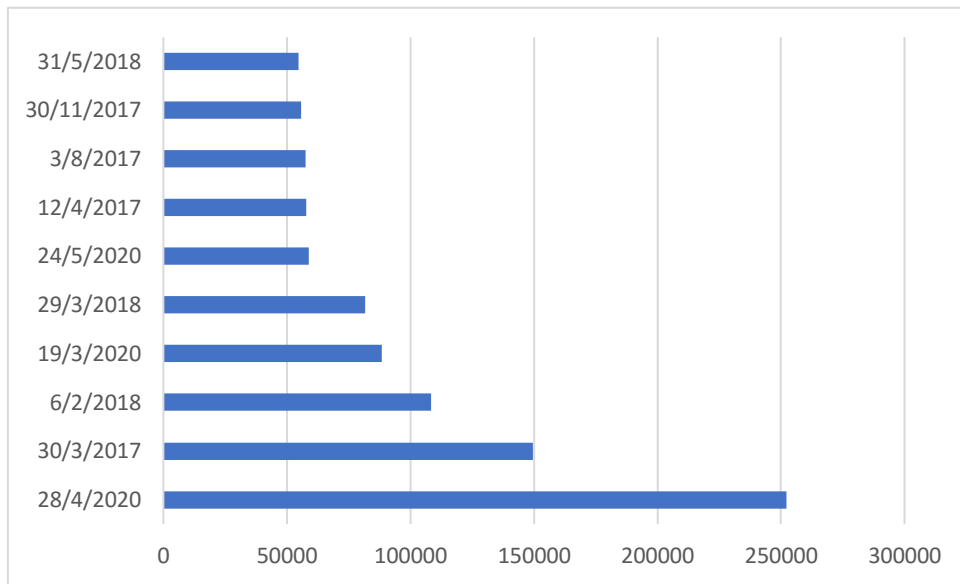


Figure 4. Top 10 high-responded MND Weibo

50% of top 10 high-responded MND Weibo is news releasing and another half is the statement made by MND to response hot topics, content of which ranging from welfare, providing help to other countries, military equipment, military manoeuvre and responses to some actions made by other countries. News often posted synchronously in terms of content and time with official website or traditional media while responses are more likely to

reflect the attitudes. As a result, this study chooses responses as a case study.

Representative type of response in MND Weibo (See Figure 6), which ranks second, received a considerable number of reposts and comments from netizens and had a high degree of heat in online discussion. It has also brought about a hot search list at the time (See Figure 5).

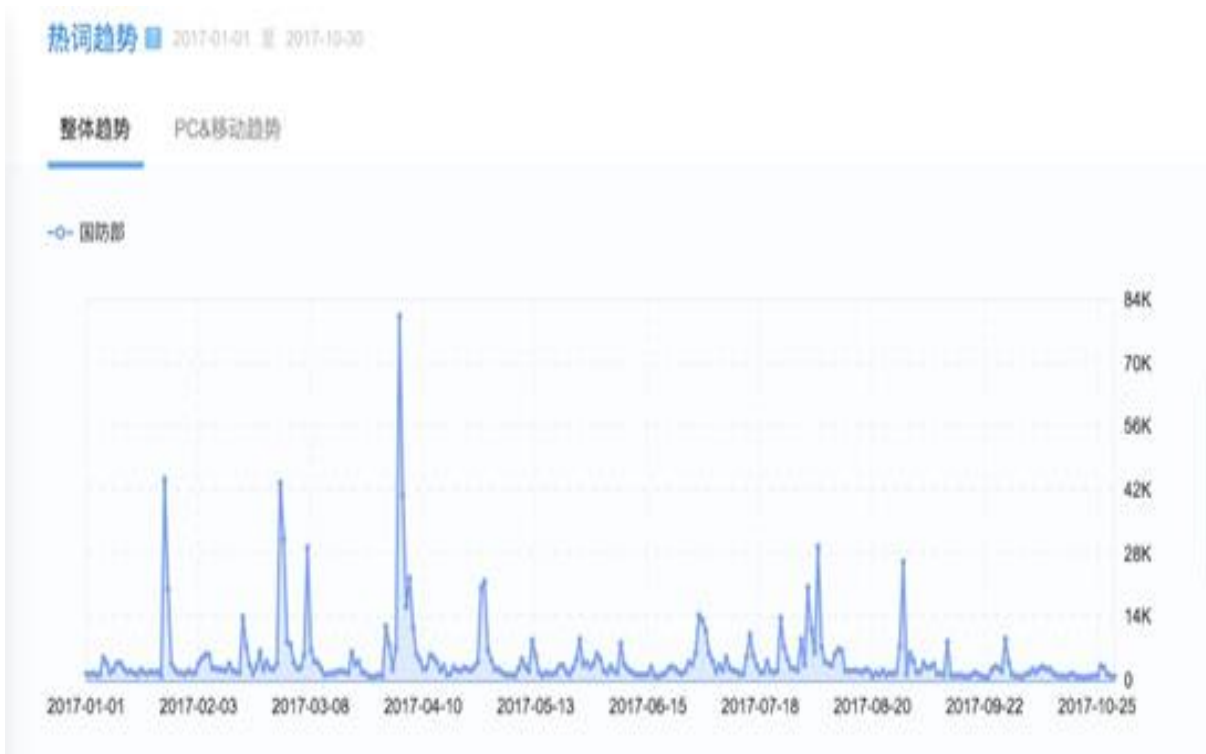


Figure 5. Trend of Weibo Hot Search in 2017

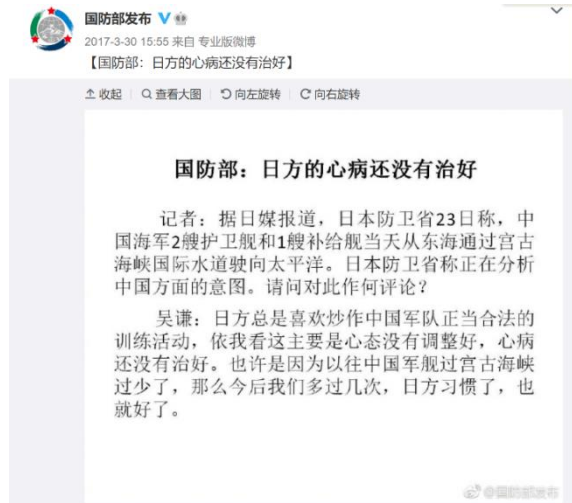


Figure 6. A Screenshot of MND Weibo on 30 March 2017

The Original Version

记者：据日媒报道，日本防卫省23日称，中国海军2艘护卫舰和1艘补给舰当天从东海通过宫古海峡国际水道驶向太平洋。日本防卫省称正在分析中国方面的意图。请问对此作何评论？

吴谦：日方总是喜欢炒作中国军队正当合法的训练活动，依我看这主要是心态没有调整好，心病还没有治好。也许是因为以往中国军舰过宫古海峡过少了，那么今后我们多过几次，日方习惯了，也就好了。

The Translated Version

Question: According to Japanese media, the Japanese Defense Ministry said on March 23 that two frigates and one auxiliary replenishment ship of the Chinese PLA Navy sailed to the Pacific through the Miyako Strait on the same day. The Japanese Defense Ministry said that it is analyzing the intention of the Chinese side. What is your comment?

Answer: The Japanese side always has a particular interest in hyping up Chinese military's legitimate training activities. In my opinion, this is due to the fact that Japan has not come to terms with reality, and has not adopted the right frame of mind. Maybe it's because the Chinese military vessels have not passed the Miyako Strait frequently enough. Then, we should pass the strait more often in the future. When the Japanese side gets used to it, everything will be fine.

The response in this Weibo put forward in a rather humorous way, which not only answer the question, but also state the position. This style of wording drew public attention and was widely accepted by Chinese netizens. Comments on this

Weibo is largely positive, words like "convinced", "praised", "direct" and "uplifted" appeared frequently in netizens. Consequently, such response gave the public a confident national image. Fundamentally, a country's national image depends on its comprehensive national power, but in the context of the rapid development of information technology, the national image has to be established through effective communication channels. Relying on the increasingly mature Web 2.0, MND Weibo conveys a confident and affable national image of China.

Conclusion

This Study explores the shaping of China's national image in social media through MND Weibo, focusing on the image of China as a nation with a profound historical background, a diverse and harmonious culture, economic development, cultural prosperity, social stability, and a responsible nation that adheres to peaceful development, promotes common development, safeguards international justice and contributes to humanity. The national image is an important component of the soft power, and is of great strategic importance in relation to common development and prosperity of the whole humanity. Today, with the rapid development of information and efficient and multi-faceted communication mode of social media, Weibo has become a new platform for commutating the national image. The China's Ministry of National Defense conveys an increasingly confident, peaceful and affable image of the country through Weibo, and will display a more comprehensive image in the future.

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