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# **Analysis on China's Cyber Diplomacy**

## **Introduction**

Cyberspace has become politically important. Underpinned by Web 2.0 technologies, the Internet is not only a means for communication but also the platform for gaining people's support, which will be a more strategically important resource for world politics, with countless online fora, interest groups and social networks in which people can freely discuss and make consensus on certain political issues. Cyberspace is a new meaningful political sphere for international politics. Its growing significance is closely related to the structural transformations of the public sphere. By collecting internet news from Reuters, AFP and Associated Press in December 2014 and utilizing Nye's approach for analyzing soft power, this paper argues that the outcome of China's cyber diplomacy is still limited by the over intervention of the official departments whose strategy is undermining its credibility and validity. This research will be divided into four parts. The first part will discuss the political function of cyberspace with Juergen Habermas' theory of the public sphere and the definition of cyber diplomacy. The second will examine the evolution and the composition of China's cyber diplomacy. The third part will evaluate the outcome of China's cyber diplomacy. The final part is the conclusion.

## **Cyber Diplomacy as a Meaningful Statecraft in the Postmodern Era**

Events and occasions as spheres that are open to all can be seen as public (Habermas 1991, pp. 1). The unrestrained communications in the public sphere would reach a consensus, and subsequently consensus in the

public sphere would become the source of political legitimacy. Café, salons and magazines in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe were the typical examples of public sphere for politics. And the rise of these public spheres was propelled by the development of capitalism without the government's intervention (pp. 57–79). But in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the public spheres for politics came to their end. Their political power was undermined by the rise of mass media and social intervention from governments. The public spheres lost their political criticalness, because people became the consumers and followers under various marketing schemes and propagandas (pp. 141–222). Habermas' view towards the public sphere is rather passive. He believes that the political importance of the public sphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century no longer exists. Nonetheless, the world has changed a lot since the publication of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. The rise of neo-liberalism was followed by the fall of state capitalism. Affected by the changes of economic mode, the government's control in society subsided and civil power rose. Consequently, the rift between governmental authority and civil society has become apparent (Gill 1995, p. 401). Therefore, the public sphere as the intermediary for this rift is being rejuvenated.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as Web 2.0 technologies have been widespread, people are no longer passive receivers of information. Instead, they have become the creators of information due to the networked structure of cyberspace. As a result, the rising political capability of the public sphere is further reinforced by Web 2.0. Public opinion on the Internet becomes very critical on political issues. By setting up interest groups in the online fora, social networks and communication applications, people on the Internet are exerting great impact on the politics of the real world. For instance, the revolution in the Arab world has proved that a people's movement on Facebook could even topple down a regime. And Edward Snowden's whistle-blowing is being supported by the Internet publics who have imposed great pressure on the US government's spying scheme. Moreover, in his remark on social media, Gordon Brown pointed out:

A few years ago the debate was about whether the media controlled politicians or whether politicians controlled media. Now it is about how we are all responding to the explosive power of citizens, consumers and bloggers. The new focus on the environment is the result of that. The Make Poverty History campaign was the result of that. Citizens are flexing their muscle (Ashley cited in 2007, para. 4).

As he indicated, the power relation between the government and civil society is shifting. The individuals are endowed with more power in

21<sup>st</sup> century politics because of cyberspace (Nye 2010, p. 8). If Habermas could witness the Internet's impact on politics when he was writing *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the third structural transformation of the public sphere might appear in the later chapter of his book. People in cyberspace are by no means the consumers of information now. In the age of Web 2.0, citizens can find their public spheres of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the cyberspace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They have become the important source of a government's legitimacy again and the strategic resource for world politics. As a result, cyber diplomacy as a meaningful statecraft comes into being.

Despite a consensus on the definition of cyber diplomacy has not been made hitherto and there might be some variations among different concepts like cyber diplomacy and digital diplomacy, the public diplomacy in the cyberspace, as a means for liaison between the government and the foreign publics as well as the enhancement of the national interest, is recognized by the government and the scholars of international politics. According to the explanation given by the United States (US), "The Department of State's 'cyber diplomacy' encompasses a wide range of U.S. interests in cyberspace" (2011, para. 3). The US "will engage the international community in frank and urgent dialogue, to build consensus around principles of responsible behavior in cyberspace and the actions necessary, both domestically and as an international community, to build a system of cyberspace stability" (The White House 2011, p. 11). Furthermore, from the interpretation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British Government on its digital diplomacy, digital media are "now playing a more important part in achieving key foreign policy outcomes". And the policy teams are directly getting involved with the overseas publics in the digital platforms (2012, pp. 6–8). Moreover, defined by Jan Melissen, cyber diplomacy is the evolution of diplomacy, "linking the impact of innovations in communications and information technology (CIT) to foreign policy and diplomacy" (2005, p. 30). With these explanations, the meaningful substances of this new diplomacy, no matter whether it is called "cyber diplomacy" or "digital diplomacy," can be summarized with the following components: the direction by the government; the engagement with the foreign publics; the pursuit of national interests; and the utilization of the digital devices. Therefore, "cyber diplomacy" is hereafter conceptualized by those four components for this paper, and the meaningless variations of the relevant concepts can be thus declined.

## The Development and Composition of China's Cyber Diplomacy

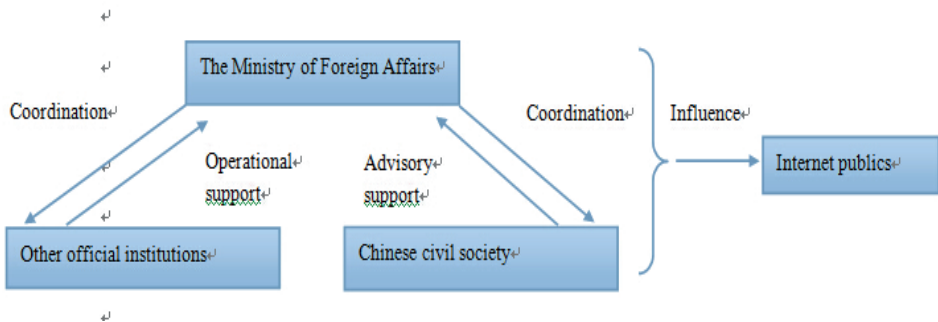
The Chinese government has been transforming the bureaucratic structure for the development of its diplomacy. In 1999, the Information Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up its Bureau of Internet Administration to manage the websites of the ministry. It was the very beginning of the Chinese government's utilization of the Internet. In 2004, when public diplomacy as statecraft was recognized by the Chinese government, the Division of Public Diplomacy was established. By early 2010, the Division of Public Diplomacy in the Information Department was upgraded as the Office of Public Diplomacy, undertaking more responsibilities in organizing China's cyber diplomacy. Its work included organizing the activities for public diplomacy, introducing the Chinese government's foreign policies and attitudes towards the significant international issues to the media, managing the diplomatic fora, coordinating the operations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' inner departments and oversea embassies and consulates and constructing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' websites (Yang 2010, pp. 32–33). The function of the Bureau of Internet Administration was coordinated into this office. By 2013, cyber diplomacy as a meaningful statecraft for the Chinese government was widely recognized (Zhao 2013, para. 4).

China's cyber diplomacy consists of three levels. The first level is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' direct operation, which is the core of the whole. It involves two components. The first are the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its overseas embassies and consulates. It provides a huge amount of first-hand information about China for various cyber media of the world. According to the statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2012 alone, the websites managed by the ministry have released over 190 thousand pieces of information. The themes include the activities organized by the ministry, the work of the government officials and most significantly, the records of the ministry's press conferences, which outline the government's attitudes towards current events in the world. Due to the quantity and quality of the information, the main websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received more than 31 billion page views in 2013. The second component is the utilization of the social media. It provides direct communication for China's cyber diplomacy. On Sina Weibo, the official account of the Office of Public Diplomacy, “外交小灵通” (little messenger of diplomacy), is followed by over 6.6 million users. It has posted more than 11.5 thousand micro-blogs.

On Facebook, the Office of Public Diplomacy is also managing the pages for the government's cyber diplomacy. Besides, many departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also created their official accounts on social networks, participating in China's cyber diplomacy. Other than the activities for shaping China's image in cyberspace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an obligation in coordinating the activities from another two dimensions. As the core of the system, the ministry is not only the actor but also the director in China's cyber diplomacy.

The second level of China's cyber diplomacy are the operations of other official institutions. It is constructed by two administrative components, which provide operational support for China's national image despite their activities representing themselves. The first are the activities of other governmental departments. For instance, the Ministry of Education and the China National Tourism Administration are communicating with the people via their official accounts. Additionally, some governmental organizations like the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy Advisory Committee are also conducting their cyber diplomacy by promoting their activities on their websites. Before carrying out its important activities, these organizations will have to obtain the approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by submitting their agenda and the guests involved (Wang 2009, p. 16). The second component, which exerts greater influence in this dimension, are the activities of the official cyber media, among which the most active ones are ChinaDaily.com, CCTV, Xinhua News and People.cn. For instance, ChinaDaily.com, one of the enforcers of China's public diplomacy, in its official accounts on Twitter, provides various Chinese news information, culture, and foreign policies for the world public. Moreover, ChinaDaily's activities in the real world reinforce its communication in cyberspace. Among those the most important is the annual Beijing-Tokyo forum, which was set up by ChinaDaily and Genron NPO jointly. Since 2005, by investigating the public opinion in China and Japan and promoting genuine dialogues between China and Japan's elites, this forum has been the most significant platform for China's public diplomacy. Its achievements are exhibited on its website regularly. What is more, the activities conducted by one official cyber medium would be strongly supported by other Chinese cyber media. For instance, the Beijing-Tokyo Forum is also supported by the influential media, like Tencent News. Likewise, opinion released by Xinhua Net will also be reposted by other cyber media in China. Cooperation among different Chinese cyber media is strong due to the government's coordination.

The final level is the participation of the Chinese civil society, which mainly provides advisory support for cyber diplomacy. It consists of two parts. The first is the Chinese netizens' opinion. International politics as a topic is frequently discussed on China's online fora such as Tianya.cn and People.cn because of the online nationalism (Wang 2006, pp. 1–13). In fact, the BBS of people.cn was initiated by China's denunciation of the US's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999. If the Chinese government misconducted in an international conflict, a flood of criticism would emerge on the online fora. Opinion on these fora could be a huge factor for the process of the decision of Chinese diplomacy. So the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has deployed special officials to convey public opinion from these online fora. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been conducting direct interviews with people online, absorbing their opinion into its diplomacy. The most influential one is “外交大家谈” (let's talk about diplomacy), which is a theme activity organized by the Office of Public Diplomacy regularly. It is a platform for the direct communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chinese netizens. From 2012–2013, it had been held over 11 times (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of P.R. China 2013).



Graph 1. The Three-Level Structure of China's Cyber Diplomacy

Source: Author's own data

The directors from different departments of the ministry listen and answer the questions from Chinese netizens via this interview. This activity is broadcast live on several Chinese cyber media simultaneously and Chinese netizens can participate in it via these media. To this extent the government creates a tie between Chinese officials and people in cyberspace. The second part are the elite groups from the Chinese civil

society. Non-governmental think tanks are making contributions to cyber diplomacy intellectually. For instance, the Charhar Institute, an individual think-tank specializing in diplomatic studies, discusses China's diplomatic affairs on the Internet and provides consultative support for China's cyber diplomacy frequently. Han Fangming, the founder of this think-tank, has been elected as the representative of Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee (CPPCC) and the vice director of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in CPPCC.

## **The outcome of China's cyber diplomacy**

China's cyber diplomacy might have gained some achievements. As the BBC's annual survey on national image indicated, from 2007 to 2013, the respondents who had positive views towards China had increased by 5%. This slight rise might originate from the promotion of Chinese culture and the positive image of Chinese youth in cyberspace. According to the report of the Charhar Institute in 2013, the non-Chinese respondents are very positive about Chinese youth, who are widely recognized as hardworking, energetic and seen as the hope of China. Furthermore, also in this report, 61% of the non-Chinese respondents expressed their interests in learning Chinese culture, and a third of them would like to learn Mandarin (2013, p. 10). Therefore, the promotion of Chinese culture and the communication among the Chinese and the foreign youths on the Internet might be meaningful.

Nonetheless, the outcome of China's cyber diplomacy is still limited. The negative side of China's national image could not be shrugged off at least in short term. The BBC's annual survey in 2007 found that 42% of the 28,000 respondents from 27 countries had negative views towards China. In 2013, the figure was almost the same. Among those 26,299 interviewees from 25 countries, 42% of them still held negative views towards China. Criticism against China has never ceased throughout the evolution of Chinese diplomacy. The lack of the credibility and validity are the constraining factors in China's cyber diplomacy.

The lack of credibility mainly derives from the over intervention of the government. Indeed cyber diplomacy, as a branch of public diplomacy, requires the direction of the government. But in its implementation, the civil society should take the major part. The government is a poor speaker and often suspected of conducting propaganda. Conversely, the non-governmental agents have more credibility and detailed expertise in society;



they are regarded as the more appropriate actors in conducting public diplomacy (Riordan 2004, p. 14). Nonetheless, the first and the second levels of China's cyber diplomacy are tightly controlled by the official departments. And the most influential Chinese cyber media, for instance, ChinaDaily.com and Xinhua.net, are considered as the tongues of their government. The Chinese civil society, which should be considered the proper actor in cyber diplomacy, can merely provide advisory support for the system. In the real world, the entry barrier for establishing a NGO is still high in China. According to the Administrative Regulation of Register for the Mass Organizations, the applications for the register have to gain the consent from the administration department, and the qualified organization should have at least 50 individual members or 30 members from its administrative department. Further, the minimum registered capital for the nationwide organization is 50,000 RMB, and that for the local ones is 10,000 RMB. Moreover, the registered organizations must have their fixed operation place (2014, para. 20–25). Under these requirements, many online interest groups might not be qualified for application. Furthermore, currently the Chinese government is inclined to purchase the social services from the government-organized NGO (GONGO). Few independent NGOs are able to receive the offers unless they have good relationships with the Chinese government. In cyber diplomacy, the Chinese government also tends to trust those think tanks that are under official supervision (e.g. the Charhar Institute) and listens to the people's opinion from the fora set up by official media (e.g. the BBS of People.cn). Opinion from individual fora and interest groups has not been fully coordinated into the system of China's cyber diplomacy. The age of information is marked by the rise of the individual actors, which have greater power in conducting cyber diplomacy. The lack of independent NGOs' participation and over dependence on the official departments in the system could ruin the credibility of China's cyber diplomacy.

Secondly, the conceptual gaps between China and the developed countries would also undermine the credibility of China's cyber diplomacy. In the interpretation of the concepts of human rights and democracy, China's steady stance on its uncommon values might be disliked by other countries. For instance, the Western world believes that human rights originate from natural law and social contract theory; people's possession of human rights has no link with the social reality. On China's side, the concept of human rights derives from traditional culture like Confucianism and Marxist thoughts, and the Chinese government reckons that the development of human rights should be closely related to the social real-



ities (Zhang 2012, pp. 83–97). In the aspect of democracy, the Chinese government keeps insisting its own means to democracy. It believes that its political system reflects the social conditions currently and it has performed well. Likewise, its idea has nothing common with the democratic ideologies of the Western countries, which emphasize the universality of democracy (Weil & Jing 2012, pp. 113–127). This divergent perception has created an undemocratic image for China among the Western publics, despite Chinese leaders mentioning the development of Chinese democracy on various occasions.

As for the lack of credibility, China's cyber diplomacy also suffers the problem of validity. In some issues, China's cyber diplomacy has not yet remedied its negative image. The Chinese government needs to justify them more in cyberspace. Otherwise, China's cyber diplomacy would fail to shoot the right targets. The most vulnerable issues for China are as follows.

**Diplomatic disputes.** As the power of China rises, some Asian countries are seeking support from the USA. Especially in the disputes of the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands) and Huangyan Island (the Scarborough Shoal), China's effort in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity has frightened its neighboring countries. In other world political issues (e.g. the crisis in Syria), China's peaceful solution is not compatible with the Western countries. Therefore, the endeavors for shaping China as a contributor to world peace are rarely perceived. The poll of *Global Times* revealed that only 13% of the 14,400 respondents from 15 countries would like to describe China as peaceful. However, 29.4% of them reckon that China is a "belligerent" country (AFP 2013, para. 2–7). Furthermore, cyber security is also an embarrassing issue for China's diplomacy, because China is the top suspect in cyber-attacks. Many officials of governments and institutes assert that hackers under the Chinese government's control have compromised their cyber networks and stolen confidential information. In the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission's (USCC) 2012 annual report to Congress, China again was described as a country that had been pursuing other countries' defense information for its political and security objectives. Despite the fact that Chinese officials have been denying those accusations and expressed their willingness of safeguarding world cyber security, their rebuttals have gained little effect, because tracing the commander in a botnet is tough and the hackers tend to capture the computers from China to launch their attacks due to China's poor credibility in this issue (Lieberthal & Singer 2012, pp. 11–13). The rage towards China's "rascality" will by no means calm down in short term.

**Domestic affairs.** The credibility of a state's diplomacy is closely related to its domestic affairs. Some issues could have huge damage on China's image. The first are the political scandals, which have got much attention from the world publics. In the age of information, the intensifying flows of information on the Internet make politics more transparent. According to the statistics released by the Charhar Institute in 2013, only 10% of people in developed countries held positive views towards Chinese politics; 30% of them thought that the Chinese government was severely corrupted. Secondly, Western countries' understanding of China's human rights also hampers the effect of its cyber diplomacy. According to the Chinese government's white paper, *Progress in China's Human Rights*, the Chinese government in recent years had been promoting human rights in various dimensions and admitted that there was room for improvement. However, the room is much more impressive than the promotion for the developed countries. As the US government's human rights report of 2013 mentioned, the Chinese government's respect to its people's freedoms was far from satisfactory (U.S. Department of State 2014, p. 1). The events of violating human rights are still widely reported by foreign media. The progress of China's human rights advocated by the official media is rarely perceived by the world public. Moreover, other domestic issues like pollution, crime and social unjustness also undermine China's image in cyberspace when they are reported by the world cyber media.

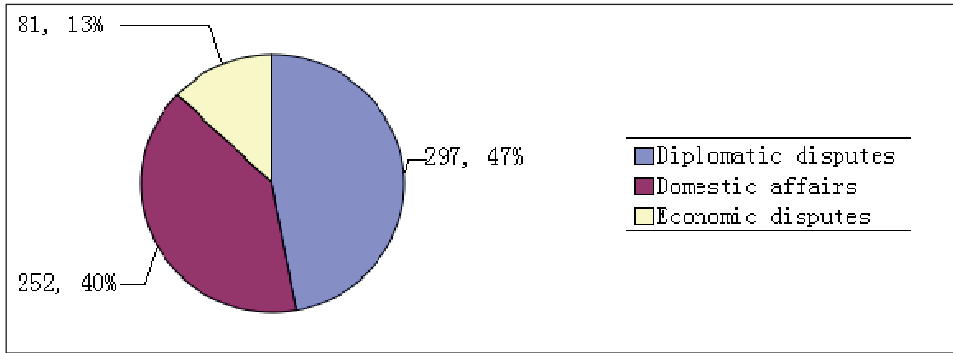
**Economic disputes.** The world has witnessed the rapid growth of the Chinese economy in recent years. However, in this field, China's diplomacy is still hobbled by two problems. The first one is the quality of Chinese goods. The unsophisticated management of market regulation and the lack of the protection of intellectual property hurt the fame of Chinese commodities. Over 50% of the world public in the Charhar Institute's investigation indicate that the Chinese commodities are known for low quality, poor after-sales service and fake goods (2013, p. 16). The second problem are the trade disputes. Export is one of the most important driving forces for the growth of China's GDP. So with various approaches the Chinese government endeavors to accelerate the growth of its export volume. But some countries consider the subsidies on the export product as conducting dumping. For instance, in 2013, China's expanding export of solar panels was investigated by the European Commission. As the EU imposed anti-dumping measures on Chinese solar panels, the conflict was triggered. As a result, the pages of the cyber media of the EU were flooded with negative reports and comments

against China, hurting its national image in cyberspace. Furthermore, China is also regarded as a currency manipulator by some countries. On various occasions, the officials of the developed countries stated that the Chinese yuan was undervalued, even though the value of yuan had increased. This image as a currency manipulator also provokes criticism against China in cyberspace.

Indeed in many issues, China's national image in the eyes of the world public is negative. However, the extent to which those issues undermine China's images in cyberspace may vary. In order to find the vulnerable issues for China in cyberspace, the following part will conduct a quantitative analysis on the news items from the notable news sources on the Internet.

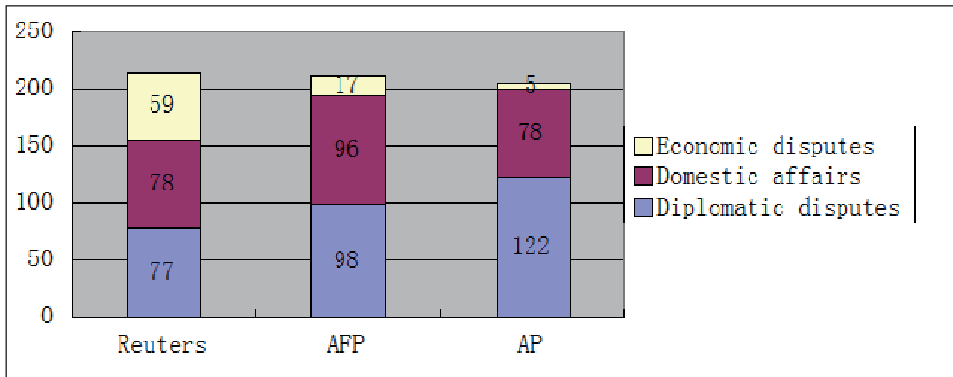
To conduct this analysis effectively, each piece of negative report against China from Reuters, AFP and Associate Press during December 1 to 31, 2013, was regarded as a single unit of the population, and the titles of these news items shall include the keyword of *China*. In order to ensure the items were credible, the range of the collection was targeted on the first 10 pages of each search result from Google News USA by inputting *Reuters China*, *AFP China* and *Associate Press China* respectively, day-by-day, during that period. Then all eligible negative news items were picked up from that range after examining the contents. After the collection, a population of 631 items was set up. During the sampling period, China had declared its new Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which triggered tension in the Pan-Pacific area, especially in Japan. Furthermore, other domestic scandals of corruption and human rights events were still widely reported by the cyber media. Furthermore, controversy over the EU's imposition of anti-dumping measures on Chinese solar panels also happened in this month. The variety of these issues in this period could guarantee the validity of the sampling. Then the population was divided into three categories. They were *economic disputes*, *domestic affairs* and *diplomatic disputes*. The proportion of these three categories in the population is illustrated in Chart 1.

As shown in Chart 1, with 297 items in the population, *diplomatic disputes* took up the largest percentage of the whole. And the category of *domestic affairs* also shared a large part in the chart; its proportion was 40%. However, the economic issue was the smallest in proportion; it only had 81 pieces in the population. And the distribution of those three categories of news in the three selected cyber news agents is illustrated in Graph 2.



**Chart 1.** The Proportion of Diplomatic Disputes, Domestic Affairs and Economic Disputes in the Population

Source: Author’s own data



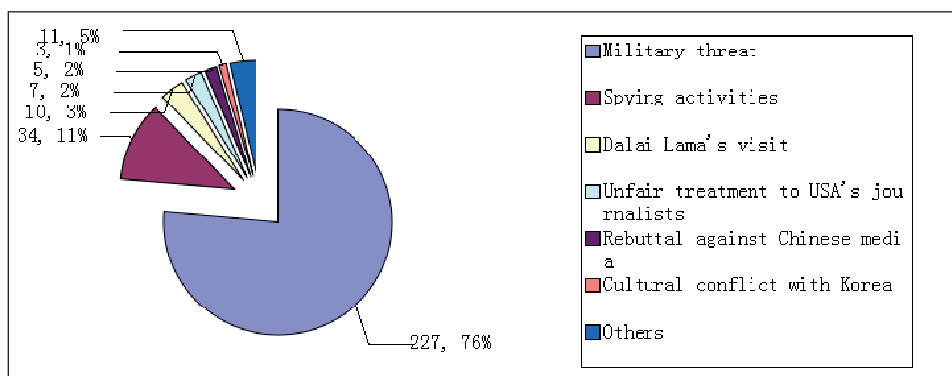
**Graph 2.** The Distribution of the Three Categories in Reuters, AFP and Associate Press

Source: Author’s own data

As Graph 2 indicated, those three cyber news sources shared a similar overall amount of news items in the population. The Associate Press (AP) had paid more attention to China’s diplomatic disputes but was indifferent to China’s economic disputes. While Reuters news online was most interested in reporting the economic disputes of China among the three sources. Nonetheless, its number of news for economic disputes was still relatively lower than the other two categories. Likewise, AFP also attached great importance to China’s diplomatic disputes and domestic affairs and paid less attention to China’s economic disputes. In sum, those three news sources had shown similar preference in reporting China’s negative news.

As the statistics above reveal, China's diplomatic disputes and domestic affairs were the two main wounds for its image in cyberspace. In order to find out the deadly issue for China's cyber diplomacy more exactly, the categories of *diplomatic disputes* and *domestic affairs* were subdivided into several individual problems.

The issues included in the category of *diplomatic disputes* were *military threat*, *Dalai Lama's visit*, *spying activities*, *unfair treatment to the USA's journalists*, *rebuttal against Chinese media*, *cultural conflict with Korea* and *others* (issues with less than 3 items). The proportion of these issues in the subsamples of *diplomatic disputes* is shown in Chart 3.



**Chart 3.** The Proportion of the Issues in the Category of Diplomatic Disputes

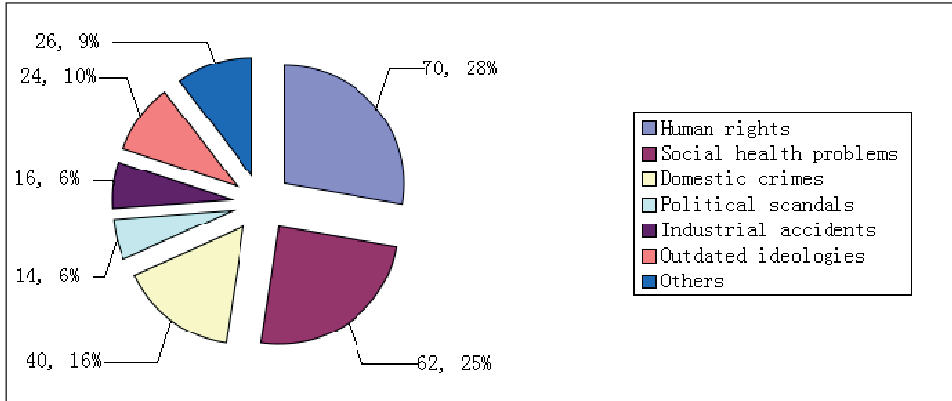
Source: Author's own data

As Chart 3 revealed, the news concerning China's military threat (mainly triggered by China's announcement on its Air Defense Identification Zone) took up the majority. There were 227 items of that sort in these subsamples. Other issues just had a small proportion in the chart. Together they took up less than a quarter of the whole. So the negatives news of China's military threat was thus dominant in these subsamples.

Likewise, the category of *domestic affairs* also contained various topics of China's negative news. As well they could be sorted out with seven issues, which were *human rights*, *domestic crimes*, *social health problems*, *political scandals*, *outdated ideologies*, *industrial accidents* and *others*. After the sorting, the distribution of these issues was summarized in Chart 4.

As shown in Chart 4, the distribution was more even than that of *diplomatic disputes*. Three major issues took up the majority of this category. They were *human rights* (70), *social health problems* (62) and *domestic*

*crimes* (40). But other issues like *political scandals* (14), *industrial accidents* (16) and *outdated ideologies* (24) still had their parts, which could not be ignored in this category. None of these issues could be as dominant as *military threat* in *diplomatic disputes*.



**Chart 4.** The Proportion of the Issues in the Category of Domestic Affairs

Source: Author's own data

The overwhelming amount of the negative reports on China's military threat on the Internet was hatched by the following facts. China's announcement of ADIZ in the East China Sea was widely concerned and caused a chain reaction against itself. Soon after China's declaration, South Korea also extended its ADIZ, which partially overlaps with China's. Then Japan urged support from the USA to counter against China. Consequently, flows of worry were aroused and reports on China's military threat to the world flooded the Internet. For instance, a Reuters report on December 5, 2013, had been forwarded to other cyber media 3,633 times. In another category, there is no such issue that could be as influential as China's military threat. For instance, in the category of *domestic affairs*, the most attention-catching news item was a Reuters report on China's smog on December 9, 2014, which got forwarded just 503 times.

On the other hand, China's cyber diplomacy was still obsessed in promoting Chinese culture and history and failed to explain China's ADIZ to the world public more explicitly. For example, ChinaDaily's main page on Facebook was still introducing Chinese martial art, wooden temples and space program, not providing any justification on China's ADIZ during that period. Neither the Confucius Institute Online nor the CCTV's accounts on Twitter had explained China's diplomatic actions when the

cyber media were criticizing China at that time. Therefore, China's cyber diplomacy was not always targeting the right place when a crisis of national image emerged. Additionally, the Chinese government's diplomacy in the geopolitical domain was inconsistent with its diplomatic pursuits in the virtual world. In other words, the validity of China's cyber diplomacy was far from satisfactory to this extent. This circumstance echoed with Joseph Nye's comment on China's soft power. As he put it, "a Confucius Institute in Manila to teach Chinese culture might help produce soft power, but it is less likely to do so in a context where China has just bullied the Philippines over possession of Scarborough Reef" (Nye 2013, para. 4). Likewise, when China is having military disputes with its neighboring countries (no matter who is right or wrong), panics over China's military threat would dominate the headlines of the cyber news and subsequently linger in people's dialogues in cyberspace. China's effort in cyber diplomacy is very likely ruined consequently. Therefore, the geopolitical conflicts with the neighboring countries to this extent can be regarded as the deadly wound for China's image in cyberspace.

## Conclusion

China has recognized the political importance of cyberspace. It has constructed its cyber diplomatic system with a three-dimension structure. Due to the lack of credibility and validity in its system, currently China's effort in cyber diplomacy has gained little outcome. As various polls indicated, still a great number of people in the world dislike China. To a large extent, the hatred is caused by China's military actions against its neighboring countries. The promotion of Chinese history and culture cannot eliminate the world's concerns regarding China's military threat. The Chinese government has to attach more importance to the justification of its foreign policy in cyberspace. Moreover, the improvement of China's cyber diplomacy is also related to the development and participation of its civil society, the bridging of the conceptual gaps with the world, the better governance in domestic affairs.

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