

G7 LEADERS VS CHINA

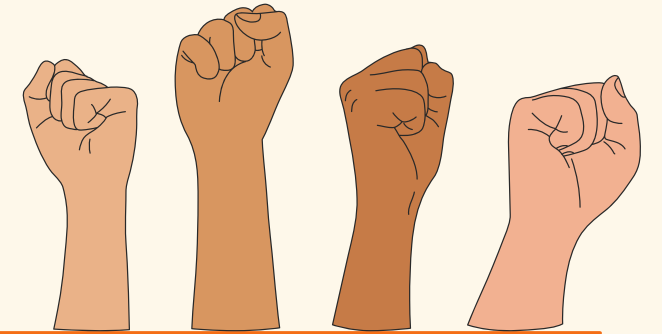
HOW DID REACTIONS DIFFER WHEN THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR ESCALATED IN 2022 AND WHY?

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using the Three Step Model (TSM) proposed by Darics & Koller (2019) to look at how the official political statements of China and G7 Leaders can be seen as actions towards constructing political stance and ideology.



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BACKGROUND

Previous research suggests that instances of diplomatic discourse such as political statements function as branding. This includes the overall transference of action to construct an image in line with the political intentions and ideological goal (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2023; Szondi, 2008; Kaneva, 2011). Therefore, the relevance of the conveyed image transcends the audience of foreign investors and tourists, as nations direct their communicative strategies towards domestic and international audiences respectively (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2023). Especially, in crisis communication such as the Ukraine War, it is found to have revealed relationships between nations and strengthened identities of Ukraine, its affiliates, and oppositions.

SIGNIFICANCE

While the goal of crisis communication is to instil confidence and trust towards the nations ability to maintain public support and management, political statements are closely knit with the maintenance and construction of ideological structures and political power relations (Richie et. al, 2004; Canel & Sanders, 2010, p. 451-455). In particular, looking at language as an action that maintains and constructs ideologies is crucial towards understanding the values and intentions implied in national statements (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 117-119; Fairclough, 2013). Essentially, the intentions implied in by a nations identity may be conflicting in nature due to its reflection on alienation from others through maintenance of national identity and war (Kaneva, 2011; Scheff, 2007).

PURPOSE

This research attempts to raise awareness towards ideological structures found in political statements concerning the Russo-Ukrainian War. Consequently, critical reflection on the implied intentions may be enabled by applying discourse analytical tools to deconstruct agency and actions in political discourse.

QUESTIONS

1. "How do political statements considering the war in Ukraine reflect and construct ideologies and intentions by displaying agencies?"
2. How does the China and the G7 Leaders statement differ in their stance-taking?"

METHODS

Presupposing that ideologies are identifiable within and constructed by discourse, the analytical goal to infer underlying intentions in political statements adopts principles of CDA (Paltridge, 2012). Additionally, TSM is iteratively applied to explore agency and action: The three step model includes:

1. looking at how social-actors were included (implicitly, explicitly), what agency they were ascribed to (active, passive, (im)personal), in order to understand possible relationships
2. infer underlying ideologies; norms, values
3. ultimately recognize the communicators possible intentions and influences

DATASET

Two political statements: G7 Leaders, China, both published within three days after the escalations are included. The two were chosen since studies suggests China as Russian-leaning while G7 has shown strong stance towards Ukraine (Korolev, 2019).

ANALYSIS

Being an inductive research, analysis succeeded iteratively based on grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006). Repeatedly consulting findings from earlier steps, data was analysed until sufficiently backed inferences could emerge.

RESULTS: G7

Frequent social actors constitute a hierarchical agency from lowest to highest: Ukraine, Belarus, Russia. Utilizing passive constructions, subjections are used, wherein Ukraine becomes the receiver of Russia's actions. War is described as "completely unjustified attack", portraying affiliated relationship of author with Ukraine by applying high epistemic modality. Also, backgrounding is used to fuse descriptions of the attack with Russia, ascribing full agency to Russia. Belarus is objectified and ascribed to lower agency when compared to Russia. Excessive use of personal pronoun 'we' exclusively referring to the authors, unambiguous stance and relationship towards war parties.

RESULTS CHINA

Low agency ascription to China by referring to statement as "basic position". Beginning sentences with impersonal reference "China" often connected with active verb form, connecting tools of low and high agency showing distance/impartiality towards conflict. Further, use of collectivisation "all countries" when referring to security strengthens impartiality. Also, ambiguous language use by utilizing passives, backgrounding actors, abstracting war as "legitimate security demands", is shown, displaying partiality towards Russia while constructing low agency towards the conflict. By linking war with security and advocating security that is "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable", the author lowers Russia's agency while possibly taking a stance against backgrounded agents such as the US in "The Cold War mentality" using high epistemic modality "should be disregarded completely".

CRITICAL DISCUSSION

Evaluating the differences after reviewing the two summarized results, it becomes clear that although referring to same actors, vastly deviating images are constructed. While China refers to war as "legitimate security concerns", G7 did as "completely unjustified attack". China appears to justify the use of violence to stay secure together with authority and autonomy as reflected by the impersonal and abstract language use. This also portrays China as distant and uninvolved, attempting to pacify the conflict by rationalizing Russia's action and reciting UN Charter Articles. Contrastingly, G7 draw a clear line, taking a personal stance against Russia's action "we condemn". Values like proximity, support and compassion are reflected. Possible intentions emerged as to condole with Ukraine and display a moral stance against aggression. Possible intentions of China include political interest, distancing ideologically from the West, and justifying military action against it.

FINAL REMARKS

Attempting to answer the questions, this study aims to raise awareness towards the use of CDA and TSM to sharpen the perception of potentially harmful values reflected by political discourse. While TSM has been developed for Corporate Discourse, this study tries to transcend its application to other discourse shaping public identity and opinion. Its usability has been proven, however, further tools such as meta- or rhetorical-analysis in synthesis with CDA are expected to refine the findings of this study.

