

# **Wolf Warriors and Xi Jinping's Diplomacy: An Empirical Analysis of China's Diplomatic Language**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The media and pundits increasingly associate China's diplomacy with the term "wolf warrior" and warn about the country's increased assertiveness and hostility in foreign affairs. However, there has as yet been little if any systematic research on how official the hostile and combative wolf warrior diplomacy is or how it relates to China's diplomacy under Xi Jinping's leadership. This article situates wolf warrior diplomacy in the broader context of Xi's diplomacy and provides a large-scale empirical analysis of diplomats' speeches. We show that Xi's diplomacy contains two conflicting components: a liberal and egalitarian "shared future for mankind" and a realist "dare to fight." Wolf warrior diplomacy only reflects the realist "fighting spirit." Furthermore, our analysis of the transcripts of the press conferences held by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the past 20 years reveals that the language of these events has become increasingly hostile during Xi's presidency. However, this hostility has been associated only with specific issues.

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China's recent aggressive and assertive diplomacy has become a source of increasing concern among the media, pundits, and academics worldwide. Named after a patriotic Rambo-style Chinese film franchise, "wolf warrior diplomacy" emerged as a new buzzword for China's diplomacy since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> On average, in 2020, around 20% of Western news reports mentioning China's diplomacy included the phrase "wolf warrior."<sup>2</sup> The two most visible wolf warrior diplomats, Hua Chunying and Zhao Lijian, spokespersons of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), have aggressively confronted any external criticism of China on Social Media. For example, in response to former U.S. president Trump referring to the novel coronavirus as the "Chinese virus," Zhao backed a conspiracy theory on Twitter that the U.S. military brought the coronavirus to Wuhan. Zhao's controversial and blunt social media posts have not only incurred criticism but even incited diplomatic incidents. For example, after Zhao posted a computer-generated image of an Australian soldier holding a bloody knife to the throat of an Afghan child and condemned Australia's violation of human rights in Afghanistan, the Australian Prime Minister called a media briefing and demanded an apology from the Chinese government.<sup>3</sup> The wolf warrior actions of some Chinese diplomats have gone beyond rhetoric. At a recent U.N. meeting, for instance, members of the Chinese delegation protested a speech condemning the country's Xinjiang policy by banging on the table to drown out the speaker's words,<sup>4</sup> a behavior that the Chinese media had criticized as a "breach of diplomatic etiquette" when Cuban delegates similarly interrupted a U.S. delegate in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

While it has received broad scrutiny outside of China, wolf warrior diplomacy has been popular with the domestic audience. One manifestation of this popularity is the dramatic increase in domestic support for the MFA and its spokespersons. However, there

is still debate about whether this form of diplomacy represents an official foreign policy line or, rather, the more limited tactics of the MFA or even individual diplomats.<sup>6</sup> *Global Times*, a Chinese state-controlled daily newspaper, has praised the wolf warrior diplomacy for reflecting the interests of the Chinese people and attributed Western concern over it to the ongoing shift in the relative positions of China and Western countries.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, some long-serving and high-profile career diplomats, such as Cui Tiankai and Fu Ying, have publicly condemned and tried to tamp down the wolf warrior diplomacy.<sup>8</sup> International relations scholars in China, such as Yan Xuetong, have also urged the world to stop treating diplomats' personal statements and social media posts as China's official foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

How does wolf warrior diplomacy relate to Xi Jinping's diplomacy? Is it a response to the rising nationalism within China and a strategy doomed to fail, as analysts and media have suggested?<sup>10</sup> This article situates wolf warrior diplomacy in the broader context of China's foreign policy and offers a more nuanced explanation. We argue that China's MFA and its spokespersons have been following Xi Jinping's instructions on foreign affairs strictly. In particular, wolf warrior diplomacy reflects Xi's call for the "fighting spirit" in defending China's core interests. We further argue, however, that this is only one aspect of Xi's revamped diplomacy, which also emphasizes international cooperation in establishing "a community of common destiny." Thus, Xi's diplomacy also stresses China's responsibility to assist developing countries and the importance of going beyond the narrow pursuit of its interests. While these conflicting strands of Xi's diplomacy might seem incoherent to the international audience, they allow for great flexibility, in that the aggressive wolf warrior style satisfies the domestic nationalist audience, and the egalitarian and liberal rhetoric creates the foreign policy space for China to deescalate international tensions.

In addition, this article provides a large-scale empirical analysis of China's official diplomatic language, utilizing an original data set of transcripts from MFA news conferences over the past 20 years. We examine whether the official diplomatic language has become more hostile and combative in recent years and whether the hostility, if it exists, depends on specific issue areas. Using a supervised machine learning method and topic models, we find that, since 2012, China's MFA spokespersons have, indeed, become significantly more hostile, but only regarding issues relating to the country's core interests and on which it has received criticism. At the same time, there is decreased hostility in issue areas where China has received little criticism. While hostile and combative, wolf warrior diplomacy contains verbal insults and expresses China's firm stances without the threats of actual action, thereby rallying nationalist domestic support while also affording room for the Chinese government to maneuver in order to limit the escalation of foreign policy disputes.

In what follows, we first review the evolution of China's foreign policy directions under leaders since Deng Xiaoping with respect to continuities and discontinuities with Xi Jinping's diplomatic thought. We then elucidate the role of China's MFA in carrying out Xi's grand diplomatic strategy. In the third section, we present our analysis of the transcripts from the MFA press conferences over the past two decades. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings for studying and understanding China's foreign policy.

## **1. China's Evolving Diplomacy**

Just as there have long been concerns about the implications of a rising China for the international system, China has long been conscious of the rising power dilemma in its diplomacy since its opening up.<sup>11</sup> A sign of the government's sensitivity in this respect is the fact that, in the official English translation of its diplomacy, the phrase "major-country diplomacy" (*daguowaijiao* 大国外交) appears instead of "great power diplomacy." In this section, we review the evolution of China's major-country diplomacy and discuss the continuity of and changes in China's major-country diplomacy during Xi Jinping's presidency.

#### **a. China's Diplomacy before Xi Jinping's Presidency**

China's foreign policy has constantly evolved in step with changes in the domestic and international environments. When the country began integrating into the international community under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, Deng instructed China to take a low profile in the international society and focus on domestic development. In the early 1990s, Deng made a number of speeches on the topic of how China should deal handle the contemporary international situation, one of the key points of which was later summarized as the "20-character strategic policy" consisting of "calm observation" (冷静观察), holding a "steady position" (稳住阵脚), "calm coping with the situation" (沉着应付), "hiding our capabilities and biding our time" (韬光养晦), and "making some achievements" (有所作为). The goal of this low-profile diplomacy was, then, to achieve and maintain a friendly international environment for China's development.<sup>12</sup>

Since the 1990s, China's diplomacy has gradually departed from Deng's low-profile diplomacy. Under Jiang Zemin (1993-2003), China gradually became more active on the world stage as its economy rapidly developed, taking what other countries perceived as

assertive action in defending its core sovereignty interests. For example, in 1995, China occupied and fortified the Mischief Reef in the South China Sea, a disputed territory with the Philippines. Into the 2000s, given the improved domestic economy, military capacity, and increased international interdependency, scholars and policy analysts in China started to debate how to interpret Deng's low-profile diplomacy and whether to follow a different course. Some argued that, as China's national power and international influence increased, it should abandon the principle of "hiding our capabilities and biding our time."<sup>13</sup> Others, sensitive to international concerns about "China's rise" and the "China threat," argued more cautiously for balancing "biding our time" and "making some achievements."<sup>14</sup>

During the Hu Jintao era (2003-2013), China's rapid domestic development and international integration continued. Hu's diplomacy focused on dispelling the China threat theory and shaping China's image as a country bound by international rules rather than a revisionist country.<sup>15</sup> In addition to continuing major-country diplomacy, the defining discourse of Hu Jintao's diplomacy was the "harmonious world," which sent the signal to the world that China was moving into a new stage of development. Beijing worked to enhance its global visibility and build the image of a responsible major country by joining international and regional cooperation initiatives and hosting major international conferences and events.<sup>16</sup> Despite these efforts to create an image of China as a "responsible major country" undergoing a "peaceful rise," after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, U.S. media and academics increasingly suggested that China was adopting an assertive diplomacy. However, a study of seven events in China's foreign relations in 2010 did not find across-the-board new assertiveness. Instead, it discovered a continuing assertiveness in its core sovereignty issues such as the South China Sea disputes and Taiwan arms sales.<sup>17</sup>

In summary, China's foreign policy has constantly evolved in response to changes in the domestic and international environments, gradually departing from Deng's low-profile approach. Accordingly, the MFA's diplomatic statements in the 1990s started to refer to China as a "major country." However, during this period, China's major-country diplomacy involved managing relationships with the U.S., European Union, Russia, and other major powers rather than pursuing or forging a foreign policy as a major power. Through this period of evolution before Xi, China's diplomacy focused on joining and benefiting from the international system rather than improving or otherwise altering it. Thus, Jiang's Three Represents and Hu's Scientific Outlook on Development, their guiding ideological contributions to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), both focused solely on domestic affairs. The principle of diplomacy in the service of domestic affairs remained unchanged.<sup>18</sup>

### **b. China's Diplomacy during Xi Jinping's Presidency**

Unlike his predecessors, Xi invested considerable time and energy in foreign relations immediately after coming to power. At the 2014 Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, in the second year of his presidency, he called for a distinctive Chinese major-country diplomacy.<sup>19</sup> Major-country diplomacy is no longer about managing the relationship with other major powers but about diplomacy that suits China's major power status in the world. At the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018, "Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy" and "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism" were added to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. In addition to signaling the concentration of power in the country, this step demonstrated the importance of diplomacy in the minds of China's new leadership and distinguished Xi from his predecessors.

*A liberal and egalitarian “community of shared future for mankind.”* Contrary to the impression that China’s diplomacy has turned more assertive and hostile under Xi, his Thought on Diplomacy reads as fairly liberal and egalitarian, advocating for a shared future for all mankind characterized by win-win cooperation.<sup>20</sup> To be clear, none of the individual principles of Xi’s Thought on Diplomacy is new: the emphasis on win-win cooperation is longstanding, and Hu used the nearly synonymous term “community of common destiny” in 2007 and 2012.<sup>21</sup> However, it was Xi who elaborated and elevated these principles to the status of guidelines for China’s major-country diplomacy.

The concept of a “community with shared future for mankind” appeared in Xi’s public speeches immediately after he assumed the presidency. At first, Xi used the concept as a continuation of Hu’s “community of common destiny.” Unlike Hu, though, he repeatedly used the term in important meetings and continually elaborated on it—for it is, of course, quite vague. The scope of this imagined community also kept expanding during Xi’s first term. For example, in his speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in 2015, the “community of common destiny” included China and neighboring Asian countries. Xi used a different term, “community of common interest for all mankind,” when discussing the international community more broadly.<sup>22</sup> Five months later, in September, Xi included all nations in the “community of common destiny” in a speech at the United Nations.<sup>23</sup> However, in the government’s official English version of the speech, the Chinese characters usually translated as “common destiny” were rendered as “shared future.”<sup>24</sup> In January 2017, in a speech titled “Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind” delivered at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, Xi proposed four models of global



governance.<sup>25</sup> According to Chinese state media, this was the first time a Chinese leader had made such a proposal.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to promoting economic cooperation, Xi's "shared future for all mankind" has emphasized placing moral considerations before China's interests under certain circumstances.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, in the construction of mankind's shared future, China has a responsibility to assist developing countries rather than exclusively pursuing its own narrow interests in its diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> Xi's thinking here marks the first time since the era of Deng that China has pursued or promoted morality and justice in addition to its economic interests. Xi further institutionalized the principle of a "community of shared future for mankind" in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>29</sup> As scholars have noted, while continuing to accept many Western norms, China has gradually begun to develop alternative norms in areas such as conflict mediation and post-conflict peace-building.<sup>30</sup> This concept is also a path or solution to achieve the "Chinese dream" and "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" proposed by Xi Jinping. The reasoning here is that, when the trend toward globalization and multilateralism falters, China needs to play an active role in restoring it. More specifically, with the United States seemingly in decline and China rising, it is both necessary and appropriate for China to take a proactive role and claim a leadership position on the world stage.<sup>31</sup>

Part of this effort is also to get out of the rising power dilemma. The Chinese state media describes Xi's vision as China's solution to address global challenges collectively, a solution that leaves behind the Cold War mindset and power politics.<sup>32</sup> China is to play a consistent role in promoting world peace, contributing to global development, and upholding the internal order by facilitating international cooperation and multilateralism.<sup>33</sup> As the

Chinese nation experiences its great rejuvenation, it helps to build a community with a shared future for all mankind through major-country diplomacy.<sup>34</sup> Paradoxically, China's efforts to reassure others of its peaceful intentions through promoting a "shared future of mankind" have been perceived as signaling a proactive or even reformative China that challenges the international order and rules built by the United States after WWII.

***"Dare to fight" for core national interests.*** While Xi's diplomacy may be liberal on cooperative issues, he is more of a realist when it comes to security issues, in the context of which win-win situations are far more elusive. At the 2014 Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, Xi stated that "we will never relinquish our legitimate rights and interests, or allow China's core interests to be undermined." He stressed "bottom-line" thinking in defending China's core interests and advocated for a "dare-to-fight" spirit. That is, while China can and must make concessions in establishing a community with a shared future, the bottom-line thinking leaves no room for compromise on issues that are considered core national interests.<sup>35</sup>

At the 2017 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress, Xi emphasized national sovereignty, security, and development as the core national interests.<sup>36</sup> Once an issue becomes a "core interest," the imperative for bottom-line thinking preempts negotiation. However, it remains unclear precisely which issues constitute China's core national interests, though scholars have argued that Xi has expanded them in recent years. Around 2004, Chinese officials, academics, and official news outlets began to speak of "core interests" with increasing frequency in reference to sovereignty issues, at first concerning Taiwan and then, around 2006, to Tibet and Xinjiang. In 2011, a white paper issued by the China State Council

included among China's "core interests" state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity, national reunification, maintaining the political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and implementing the safeguards essential to ensure sustainable economic and social development. In 2013, MFA spokesperson Hua Chunying was the first Chinese official to refer to the Diaoyu Islands as a core interest. In 2014, China warned the United States against meddling in its internal affairs during the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. And, in 2015, when senior U.S. and Chinese military officials met, China referred to Taiwan, Hong Kong, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and cybersecurity as core issues. This ambiguity of "core interests" makes it challenging to predict China's diplomatic behavior but also leaves room for flexibility.<sup>37</sup>

Xi's emphasis on the "fight for international discourse" has paralleled his commitment to defending China's core interests, which are primarily domestic in scope. In a speech at the National Party School Conference in 2016, he referred to starvation, being beaten, and being scolded as the three main problems that China had faced. Its burgeoning national power had solved the first two problems, leaving only the problem of being scolded. The solution, Xi concluded, was to seize control of the international discourse and let other countries hear the voice of the Chinese government.<sup>38</sup> Xi's call in this regard has been reflected in state foreign propaganda over the years, even as the government has increased its investment in state-owned media for international communications and expanded the influence of its think tanks. The CCP has also actively engaged in party-level diplomacy as part of the effort to project a positive image of China abroad.<sup>39</sup> The state-controlled outlets have been paying more than 40 legacy news media outlets in some 20 countries to publish propaganda in the form of news stories.<sup>40</sup> The MFA's spokespersons, ambassadors, and

consuls in various countries have also actively engaged in “telling the China story.” In a 2019 speech to the Party School, Xi reaffirmed his thinking in this regard, asking party cadres to dare to fight:

“Leading cadres should take the initiative to devote themselves to various fights, dare to show their swords in the face of right and wrong, dare to rise to the occasion in the face of conflicts, dare to stand up in the face of crises and difficulties, and dare to fight resolutely in the face of unhealthy trends.”<sup>41</sup>

After Xi’s speech, Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged MFA officials to show a stronger “fighting spirit,” and Chinese diplomats in various countries began using international platforms such as Twitter to further efforts to reshape and enhance China’s image abroad.

In summary, China’s new major-country diplomacy under Xi consists of two conflicting components. On the one hand, China has been signaling its willingness to cooperate and join with other countries to promote shared interests, take on responsibilities outside its borders, and even sacrifice its interests to realize a shared future. On the other hand, Xi has demanded that all members of the CCP display a “fighting spirit” in defense of China’s core national interests, in particular, by adding its voice to the international discourse. The coexistence of these conflicting impulses reflects China’s reliance on different strategies when tackling non-core and core interests, respectively.

## ***2. Data and Analyses***

How have Xi’s instructions been translated into China’s everyday diplomacy? To determine whether China’s MFA has officially embraced wolf warrior diplomacy and chart the changes

in the diplomatic language under Xi's leadership, we analyzed the transcripts of regular MFA press conferences over the 20-year period from September 2001 through May 2020. We obtained the transcripts by scraping the MFA's official website. We argue that while diplomats' social media posts might have reflected their own incentive and tactics, the speeches at the press conferences should reflect the official diplomacy of China's MFA.

### **a. Why China's MFA and its Press Conferences**

By design, the MFA is not a decision-making body. Rather, its function in international affairs is communicating with absolute fidelity the party's perspectives on foreign affairs. Therefore, its statements reflect the policies of the top leadership, or, at least, the policies that the top leadership wants the public to see. Guided by Deng's principle of low-profile diplomacy, the MFA was long ridiculed as the "Department of Protests" on the Chinese Internet by citizens who perceived the agency to be ineffective. Some, playing on the notion of the ministry's "spinelessness," went so far as to send calcium pills to its offices as an expression of anger and frustration.

During Xi's presidency, the MFA has applauded and discussed in detail his every speech and thought regarding foreign affairs. In 2017, Foreign Minister Wang wrote that the president's thought on diplomacy "provides the theoretical guidelines for China's diplomacy in the new era and contributes China's perspectives and wisdom for reforming and improving the global governance system." Wang further claimed that Xi Thought on Diplomacy "has also made innovations and transcended the traditional Western theories of international relations for the past 300 years"<sup>42</sup> and vowed to "fully apply and follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in conducting major-country diplomacy with

Chinese characteristics.”<sup>43</sup> Following Xi’s call for a “fighting spirit” in international discourse, then, Chinese diplomats have been defending China’s image and using harsh language to challenge negative narratives and comments about the country. It is this fighting spirit that has earned Chinese diplomats the appellation of wolf warriors.

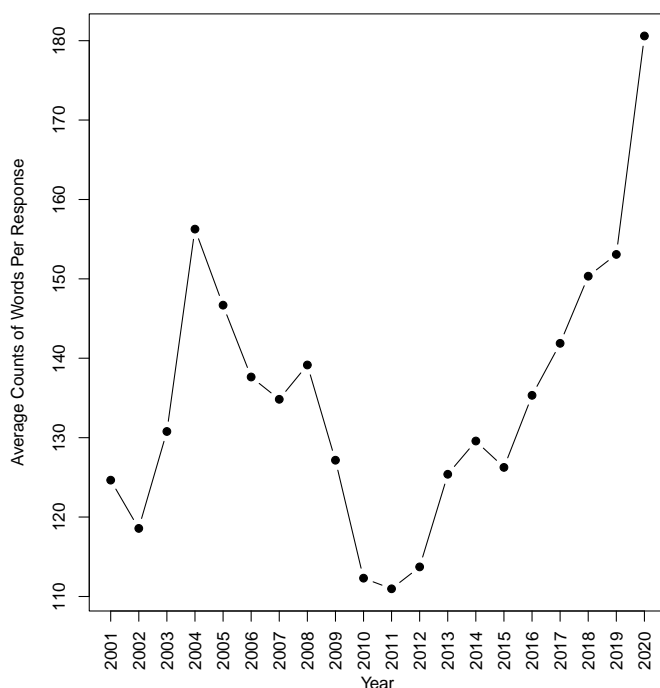
The MFA began holding regular press conferences in 1983 after the Central Propaganda Department and the Central Propaganda and Leadership Group issued a joint document requiring the ministry and the State Council to establish a press release system to communicate the actions of the council pertaining to external relations. Chinese authorities have since consistently regarded these press conferences as opportunities to showcase China’s development and progress for a global audience.<sup>44</sup> Under the principle of “limited authority for diplomatic work,” the spokespersons’ speeches reflect the coordination of views and policies among the Chinese government’s various departments. Any other ministries and commissions involved must sign off on these speeches. Therefore, the statements made at MFA press conferences reflect the policy stances and opinions of the various departments rather than those of any one person. Moreover, the transcripts of the press conferences receive strict scrutiny and censorship before publication, during which process some questions and answers are excluded, amended, or reworded. Accordingly, even should a spokesperson exercise some autonomy in reacting to specific questions, the official transcripts for the public have been examined and revised to ensure that they reflect the government’s policies.<sup>45</sup>

## **b. Data**

As mentioned, we scraped the transcripts of press conferences from September 2001 through May 2020 from the MFA’s official website. This sample covered 3,149 press conferences

in total. Because each transcript contains multiple questions and answers that usually touch on several issue areas, we further subdivided the transcripts into separate documents containing only one question-and-answer pair. This process yielded 22,375 documents (Q&As) ranging from 8 to 1,203 words in length and averaging 137 words. Figure 1 shows the average length of a single Q&A per year. There seems to have been a steady decline in the average length of the individual responses from MFA spokespersons during Hu Jintao's presidency interrupted by a slight rebound in 2008. We observe a steady increase in the average length of individual responses after Xi became president in 2013. The sharp increase in the average length of spokesperson's response potentially signals a more proactive and confident MFA under Xi's presidency.

Figure 1: Average Length of Q&As per Year



### c. Hostility in Diplomatic Language: A supervised sentiment analysis

While “wolf warrior” has become a buzzword for China's diplomacy, there is no clear definition of wolf warrior diplomacy. Media pundits and scholars generally use the term to

describe a style of rhetoric that is assertive, aggressive, combative, and even insulting.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, we first used a supervised machine learning method to identify aggressive, combative, and insulting language in the MFA spokespersons' statements.

In supervised machine learning, researchers train a classification algorithm based on labeled data and use the trained classifier to predict the classes of unlabeled data. Intuitively, a machine is trained to learn from some ground truth, such as expert-labeled data, and learn a function for mapping features onto the labels. For any supervised method, the first step is to find or create labeled data. In our case, we hand-coded a random sample of the spokespersons' speeches. To account for the possible variation in sentiments over time, we randomly sampled five documents per month over the 20-year period. For the months during which the transcripts yielded fewer than five documents, we selected all of the available documents. In the end, we sampled 1,056 out of the 22,375 documents (Q&As). We then labeled documents as hostile that included combative and insulting language. Two expert coders coded the 1,056 randomly sampled documents. In addition, to assess inter-coder reliability, both coders coded the same 200 documents. We obtained an inter-coder reliability of 91%, meaning that 91% of the time, the coders agreed with each other. We identified 164 Q&As as hostile out of the 1,056 sampled documents (15.52%). We then trained a convolutional neural network on 950 (90%) of the hand-coded documents (the training set) and tested the model fit using the remaining hand-coded documents (the test set).<sup>47</sup> We achieved an AUC (Area under the ROC curve) of 94% in the test set. Applying the trained classifier to the full corpus predicted 3,326 of the 22,375 Q&As to be hostile (14.86%).

Table 1: Example of a Hostile Response Predicted by the Model



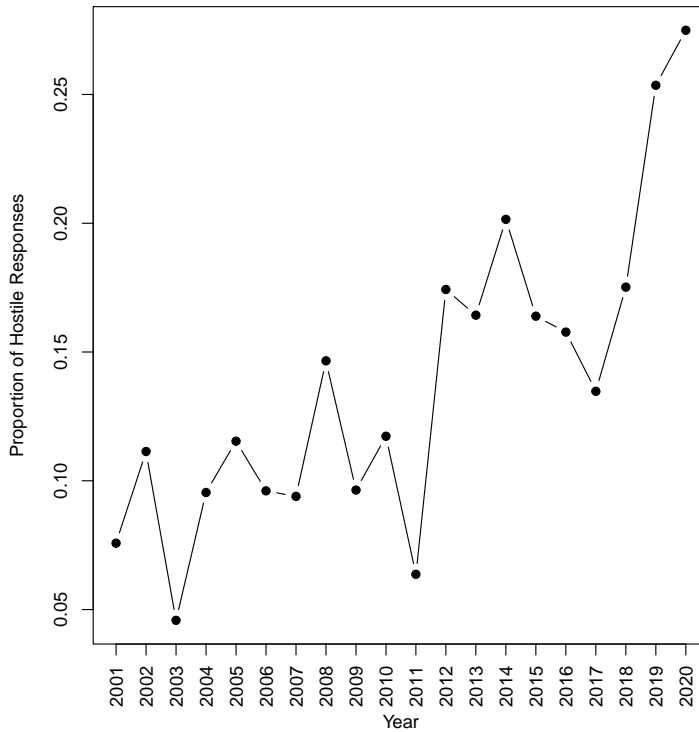
<p>“法新社记者：上周五，美国商务部以中方在新疆侵犯人权为由，宣布制裁相关中国企业和机构。中方对此有何评论？”</p> <p>赵立坚：美方将中国有关企业、机构和个人列入“实体清单”，泛化国家安全概念，滥用出口管制措施，违反国际关系基本准则，干涉中国内政，损害中方利益。中方对此表示强烈不满、坚决反对。</p> <p>必须指出，新疆事务纯属中国内政，任何国家无权干涉。新疆采取的反恐和去极端化举措，目的是从源头上预防极端主义和恐怖主义的滋生，完全符合中国法律，也符合国际实践。这些举措取得了实际成效，受到 2500 万新疆各族人民的广泛支持，也为国际反恐事业作出了积极贡献。美方对中方的指责完全是颠倒黑白、一派胡言，只能进一步暴露美方干扰新疆反恐努力、阻挠中国稳定发展的险恶用心。</p> <p>我们敦促美方纠正错误，撤销有关决定，停止干涉中国内政。中方将继续采取一切必要举措，维护中国企业合法权益，捍卫国家主权、安全、发展利益。”</p>	<p>AFP: On Friday the U.S. Department of Commerce said it would sanction relevant Chinese companies and government institute for human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Do you have any response to this?</p> <p>Zhao Lijian: The U.S., adding relevant Chinese enterprises, institutions and individuals to its “entity list,” has overstretched the concept of national security, abused export control measures, violated the basic norms governing international relations, interfered in China’s internal affairs, and hurt China’s interests. <b><i>China deplores and firmly opposes that.</i></b></p> <p>It needs to be highlighted that Xinjiang affairs are purely China’s internal affairs which allow no foreign interference. The measures on countering terrorism and deradicalization have been taken to prevent in a fundamental way these two evil forces from taking roots in Xinjiang. They accord with Chinese laws and international practices. They have been proved effective, widely supported by 25 million people of various ethnic groups in Xinjiang, and contributing to the global counter-terrorism cause. <b><i>The U.S. accusation against China, nothing but absolute nonsense to confound the public, only serves to reveal its vile attempt to disrupt Xinjiang’s counter-terrorism efforts and China’s stability and development.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>We urge the U.S. to correct its mistake, rescind the relevant decision, and stop interfering in China’s internal affairs. China will continue to take all necessary measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese enterprises and safeguard China’s sovereignty, security and development interests.</i></b></p>
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Table 1 presents an example of the hostile responses that our modeling identified along with its English translation. This response was drawn randomly from among the 1,102 responses for which the predicted probability of being hostile exceeded 0.9. The predicted probability of this particular example being hostile was 96.92%. The English version is the

official translation from the MFA's website, on which we highlighted the parts that we interpreted as evincing hostility.

Once we identified the individual hostile responses, we calculated the percentages of hostile responses by year and visualized the trend in Figure 3. The trend before 2011 confirms previous research showing that the assertiveness in China's diplomacy in this period has been underestimated while it has been overestimated in the period from 2010 to 2011.<sup>48</sup> Amid fluctuations, from 2001 and 2011, the level of hostility remained around 10%. In 2012, the year of transition from Hu to Xi, a sharp increase in hostile diplomatic responses is apparent. Amid further fluctuation after 2012, the least hostile year, 2017, was nearly as hostile as 2008, the most hostile year prior to Xi's presidency. We can also see a sharp increase in hostile responses starting in 2018 and continuing through 2020. While wolf warrior might be a new term for China's spokesperson and diplomacy in 2020, the hostility in spokespersons' responses is not new. Still, the rhetoric of these spokespersons has become increasingly hostile since the beginning of Xi's presidency, with 2019 and 2020 marking peak levels of hostility over the past two decades.

Figure 3: Percentage of Hostile Responses by Year



#### **d. Coexistence of cooperative and combative spirits: Hostility by different topic areas**

Based on our previous discussion of China’s new major-country diplomacy, the hostility in diplomatic language is likely to vary across issue areas: the hostility is likely to increase in issue areas related to the “core national interests” but is likely to decrease or stay the same in the areas identified as amenable to cooperation in Xi thought.

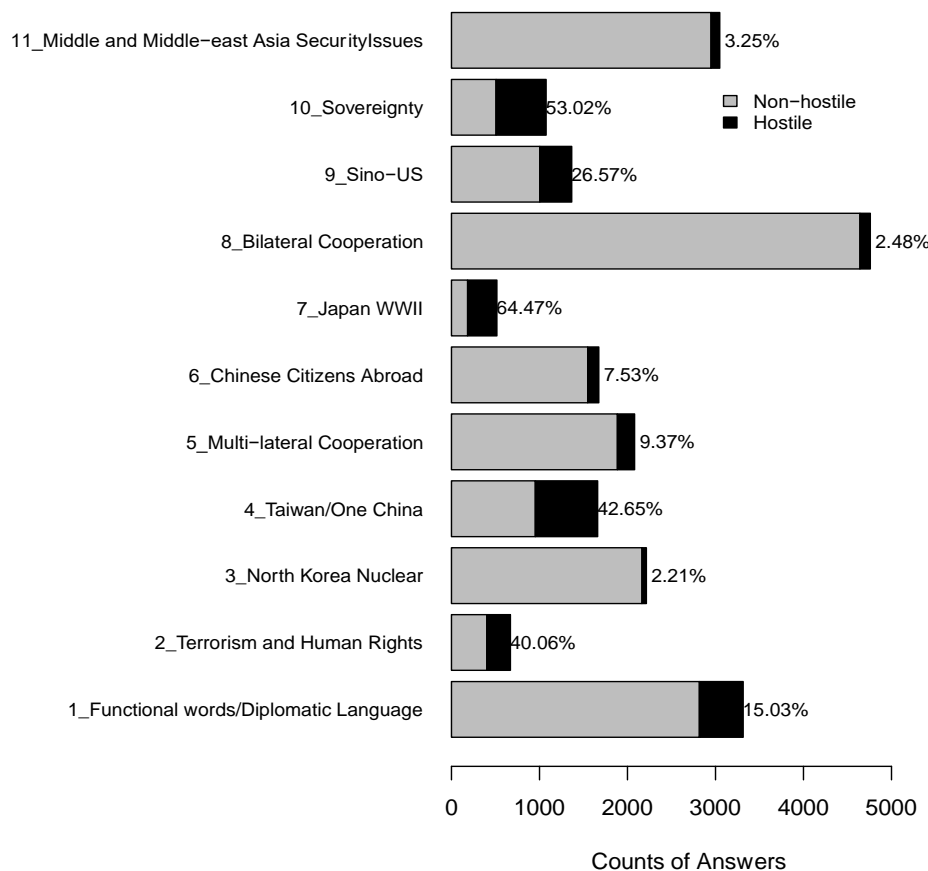
To compare the hostility in various issue areas, we estimated a topic model based on all of the transcripts. Topic modeling, developed by computer scientists, is now commonly used by social scientists to summarize large quantities of text data. Of the many algorithms used in topic modeling, we used the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) model for our analysis and identified 11 topics or clusters of diplomatic responses. LDA is a generative model built on the assumption that a corpus is generated by a group of topics. Within each topic, certain

Table 2. Topic Labels and Most Likely Terms within Each Topic

Number	Label	Most Relevant Term	Most Relevant Term Translated
1	Functional Words/Diplomatic Language	中国, 问题, 是否, 不, 没有, 有关, 会, 进行, 一, 这个, 情况, 说, 一些, 方面, 中方	China, question, whether, no, not, relevant, will, ongoing, one, this, situation, say, some, aspect
2	Terrorism and Human Rights	中国, 组织, 国际, 人权, 恐怖主义, 打击, 反恐, 恐怖, 社会, 合作, 政府, 反对, 国家, 人民, 宗教	China, organization, international, human rights, terrorism, strike, anti-terrorism, terror, society, cooperation, government, against, nation, people, religion
3	North Korea Nuclear	朝鲜, 会谈, 问题, 六, 方, 中方, 半岛, 各方, 解决, 对话, 有关, 希望, 朝, 和平, 努力	Korea (N.), talks, problem, six-party, China, peninsula, each party, solve, dialogue, relevant, hope, Korea (N.), peace, strive
4	Taiwan/One China	中国, 美, 美国, 台湾, 关系, 问题, 中, 美方, 不, 中方, 一个, 和平, 发展, 对此, 国家	China, America, U.S., Taiwan, relationship, issue, China, America, no, Chinese side, one, peace, development, regarding, country
5	Multilateral Cooperation	中国, 国家, 合作, 国际, 发展, 经济, 世界, 中方, 组织, 会议, 将, 非洲, 积极, 欧盟, 社会	China, country, cooperation, international, development, economic, world, China side, organization, conference, will, Africa, active, E.U., society
6	Chinese Citizens Abroad	中国, 中方, 事件, 人员, 政府, 已, 发生, 人, 有关, 将, 安全, 名, 公民, 情况, 驻,	China, China side, event, people, government, already, happen, people, relevant, will, safety, citizen, situation, stationed
7	Japan WWII	日本, 日, 日方, 中, 历史, 问题, 首相, 中方, 亚洲, 关系, 人民, 对此, 希望, 靖国神社, 战争	Japan, Japan, Japan side, China, historical, issue, prime minister, China side, Asia, relationship, people, regarding, hope, Yasukuni Shrine, war
8	Bilateral Cooperation	关系, 中, 将, 两, 合作, 国, 访问, 发展, 中国, 问题, 总统, 总理, 共同, 主席, 进行	Relationship, China, will, two, cooperation, country, visiting, develop, China, issue, president, prime minister, together, chairman, ongoing
9	Sino-US relationship	中国, 美, 中方, 美国, 合作, 中, 经贸, 问题, 贸易, 美方, 企业, 公司, 对此, 缅甸, 不	China, America, China side, U.S., cooperation, China, economic and trade, issue, trade, American side, enterprise, company, regarding, Myanmar, no
10	Sovereignty	中方, 中国, 南海, 香港, 主权, 领土, 海域, 对此, 钓鱼岛, 争议, 有关, 政府, 国家, 国际法, 行为	China side, China, South China Sea, Hong Kong, sovereignty, territory, sea area, regarding, Diaoyu Islands, dispute, regarding, government, country, International Law, behavior
11	Middle and Middle-east Asia Security	问题, 中方, 和平, 解决, 国际, 联合国, 有关, 局势, 安理会, 伊拉克, 希望, 阿富汗, 各方, 地区, 中东	Issue, China, peace, solve, international, U.N., related, situation, UNSC, Iraq, hope, Afghanistan, each side, region, Middle East

words are more or less likely to occur (or be used). Each document contains a mixture of topics. For example, our model indicated that the words “Korea (N.),” “talks,” “problem,” “six-party,” “China,” “peninsula,” “solve,” and “dialogue” frequently appeared together and were likely generated by one topic, which we named “North Korea Nuclear.” The number of topics is a hyperparameter in LDA that is not estimated but instead chosen by the researcher. We decided on 11 topics based on both the coherence matrix and interpretability.<sup>49</sup> Table 2 lists the topic labels and most relevant terms in Chinese and their English translations.

Figure 4: Percentages and Counts of Hostile Responses by Topic

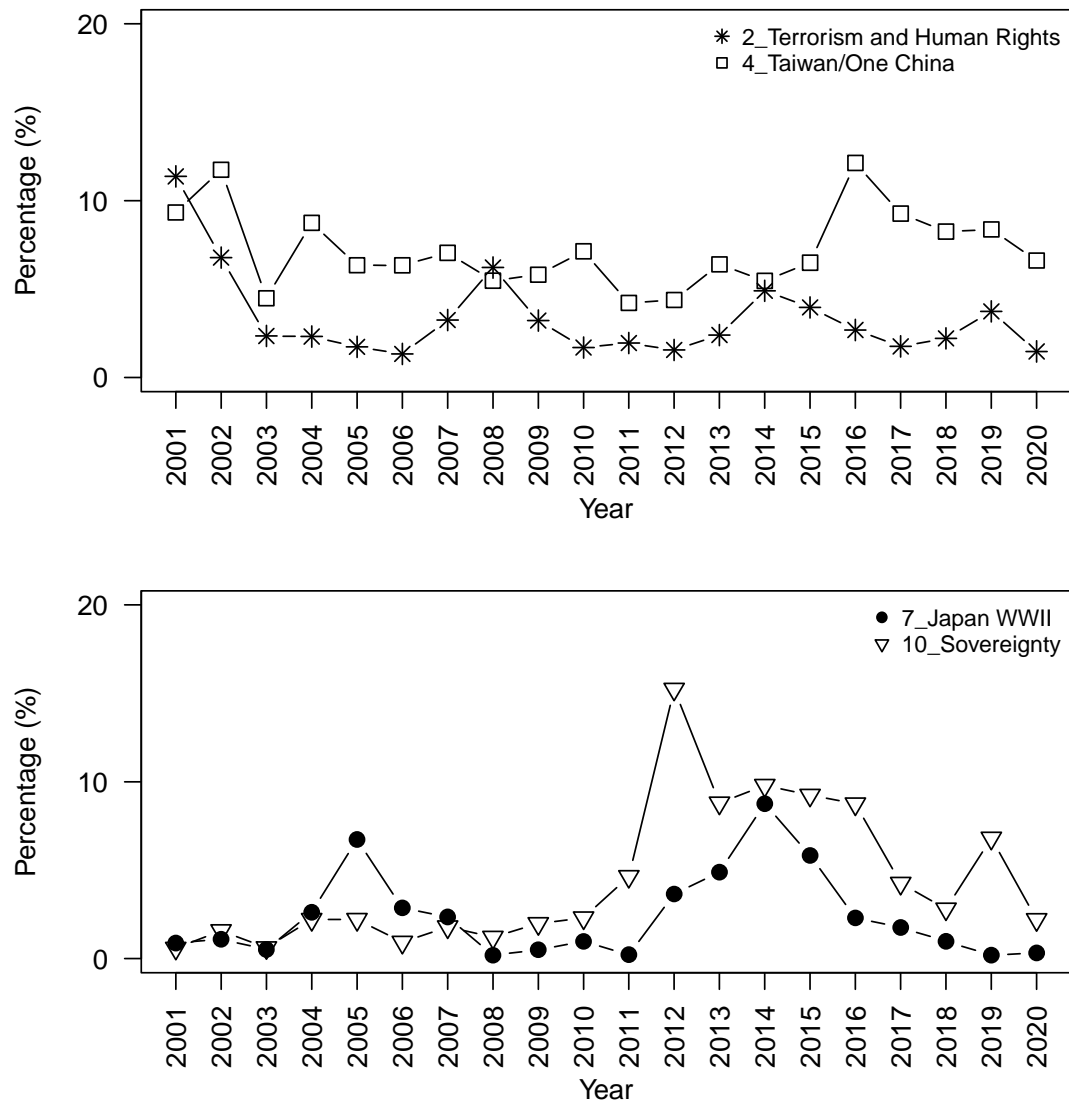


Because we measured the hostility for each response, we used the dominant topic of a response as its topic when analyzing the hostility by topic. We then calculated the percentage of hostile responses among all of the responses within each topic. As can be seen in Figure 4, the spokespersons' responses were more hostile when the discussion touched on the topics of Japan WWII (Topic 7), Sovereignty (Topic 10), Taiwan/One China (Topic 4), and Terrorism and Human Rights (Topic 2). In discussions that touched on the topics of Japan WWII and Sovereignty, more than 50% of the responses were hostile. The least hostile topics were North Korea Nuclear (Topic 3) and Bilateral Cooperation (Topic 8), with less than 3% of the responses having been hostile.

Although in the previous section we show a steady and sharp increase in the hostility in diplomatic sentiment during Xi's presidency, an alternative hypothesis is also possible that the levels of hostility in the discussion of individual issues remained relatively constant but that sensitive issues began to come up more frequently in more recent press conferences. To explore this possibility, we visualized the percentage of responses in the four topics most frequently associated with hostility (Topics 2, 4, 7, and 10) per year from 2001 to 2020. As Figure 5 shows, the coverage of Terrorism and Human Rights (Topic 2) and Taiwan/One China (Topic 4) during Xi's presidency does not seem to have differed from that in the years before 2012. However, there was a sharp increase in the coverage of Sovereignty (Topic 10) from 2012 to 2016, the period of Xi's first five-year presidential term. Prior to Xi's leadership, the highest percentage for the Sovereignty topic was 5% in 2011. In 2012, more than 15% of the diplomatic responses concerned sovereignty. The prevalence of this topic remained high from 2013 to 2016 and then began to decrease. However, the coverage of the sovereignty issue in Xi's second term remained higher than had been the case before 2012.

Similarly, there was a sharp increase in the mention of Japan WWII (Topic 7) in 2016, but the coverage quickly reverted back to a relatively low level. Overall, in the coverage of sensitive or hostile topics during the MFA's press conferences, only the topic of sovereignty seems to have increased during Xi's presidency.

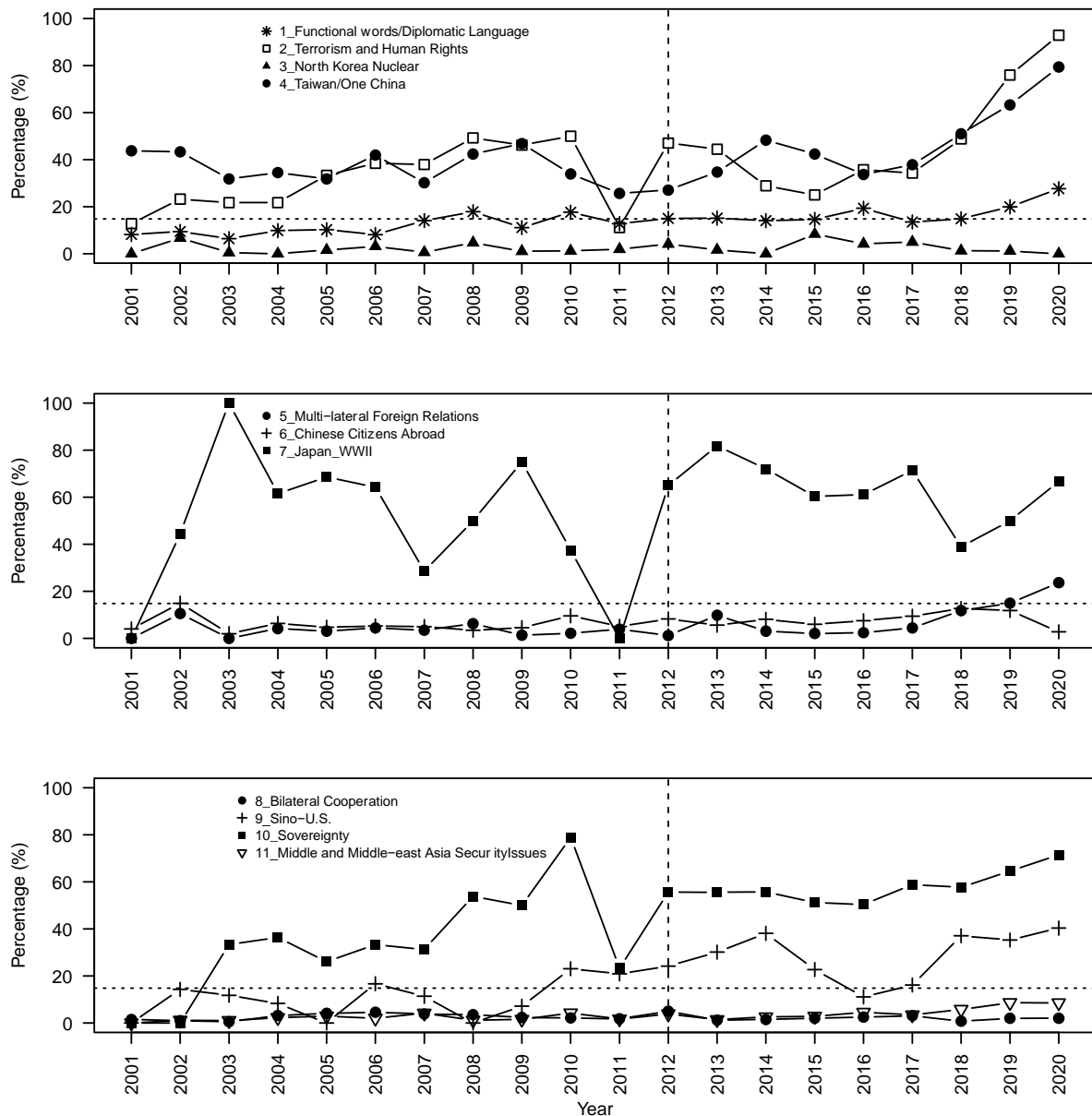
Figure 5: Percentage of Topic 3 and 4 per year from 2001 to 2020



Next, we examine whether hostility varies across different issue areas over time. In Figure 6, we visualize the percentage of hostile responses per topic per year. Because of the

relatively large number of topics (11), we visualize them in three subplots for greater clarity. In the figure, the dotted vertical line at 2012 marks the transition between Hu and Xi, and the dotted horizontal line at 14.86% represents the average hostility of all of the responses from 2001 to 2020. We use this overall average hostility as a naïve baseline for comparison.

Figure 6: Percentage of Hostile Responses by Topic from 2001 to 2020





***Continued and increased hostility in core interests.*** The hostility levels across four of the topics remained consistently above the baseline (14.86%) before and after Xi's presidency, specifically, Terrorism and Human Rights (Topic 2), Taiwan/One China (Topic 4), Japan WWII (Topic 7), and Sovereignty (Topic 10). Strikingly, there have been sharp increases in hostility associated with Terrorism and Human Rights (Topic 2) and Taiwan/One China (Topic 4) since 2017, though these were already among the most sensitive topics before Xi's presidency. Specifically, the hostile responses associated with Terrorism and Human Rights (Topic 2) increased to 75.95% (60 of 79 responses) in 2019 and to 92.86% (13 of 14 responses) in 2020. The hostile responses associated with Taiwan/One China (Topic 4) increased to 63.28% (112 of 177 responses) in 2019 and to 79.37% (13 of 63 responses) in 2020. While the hostility associated with Sovereignty (Topic 10) remained high and, indeed, increased slightly after 2016, the hostility has been no greater during Xi's presidency than it was in 2010, during Hu's second term. Though the hostility associated with Japan WWII (Topic 7) remained above the baseline over most of the past 20 years, it fluctuated dramatically, decreasing slightly during Xi's first term and beginning to increase again in 2020.

***New hostilities associated with neutral issues.*** The discussion of some of the more neutral and positive topics has become increasingly hostile in recent years, including Diplomatic Language (Topic 1) and Multilateral Cooperation (Topic 5). The latter finding was puzzling at first since it seems to contradict the emphasis on multilateralism and cooperation in non-core issue areas that we described as a feature of Xi's major-country diplomacy. Therefore, we read carefully through the spokespersons' responses regarding multilateral cooperation

and found that the increased hostility has occurred in the context of responses to criticism of and suspicions about China's global investment, especially the BRI. While the Chinese government has characterized this initiative as an innovative cooperative model intended to benefit the people in all of the countries along the route, other countries have expressed concern that a political agenda lurks beneath the economic agenda. From this perspective, the BRI exemplifies China's use of international aid as a foreign policy tool<sup>50</sup> in furtherance of a grand geopolitical strategy.<sup>51</sup> In the face of international criticism, doubts, and suspicions in this regard, the MFA's spokespersons took a defensive stance supported by hostile language.

The hostility associated with one topic, the Sino-U.S. relationship (Topic 9), rose consistently above the baseline during Xi's presidency, though this trend began in 2010 during Hu's presidency. Relations between the United States and China became strained in January 2010 when Google threatened to pull out of China, citing censorship and cyber-attacks, and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a speech criticizing China's increased internet censorship. The same month, the Obama administration notified Congress of its decision to sell arms to Taiwan, which prompted strong condemnation from the Chinese government. Later in 2010, the debate associated with the U.S. midterm elections included criticism of China's economic policies by U.S. government officials, candidates for office, and members of the public over China's alleged manipulation of the exchange rate for its currency.<sup>52</sup> Scholars and analysts have since identified 2010 as a turning point in the Sino-U.S. relationship, characterizing it as the worst in a decade.<sup>53</sup> The hostility associated with the Sino-U.S. Relationship decreased briefly in the last two years of Obama's

presidency and increased again during Trump's presidency, especially in relation to the trade war between the two countries and the question of responsibility for the Covid-19 pandemic.

*Issues associated with little or decreased hostility.* The topics of North Korea Nuclear issue (Topic 3), Chinese Citizens Abroad (Topic 6), and Bilateral Cooperation (Topic 8) have consistently been associated with lower-than-average levels of hostility, and they have been associated with even less hostility in recent years. Consistent with our overall argument, China has received little criticism regarding those neutral-to-positive topics.

Overall, the hostility in the responses of MFA spokespersons to questions during press conferences has increased sharply over Xi's presidency. This has been the case, in particular, in the official rhetoric related to two issues long associated with hostility that relate to China's core interests, Terrorism Human Rights (Topic 2) and Taiwan/One China (Topic 4). The hostility associated with Sovereignty (Topic 10), another core interest, remained high, showing little variation apart from a slight increase during Xi's presidency. In addition to those core interests, the MFA has also firmly refuted all criticism of China on such issues as the BRI, as reflected in the increased hostility associated with Multilateral Relations (Topic 5). On the other hand, there has been relatively little hostility associated with topics regarding which China has not received much criticism, such as North Korea Nuclear (Topic 3) and Bilateral Cooperation (Topic 8).

Although Chinese diplomats have embraced the fighting spirit demanded by Xi and earned the new title "wolf warrior," there have been mixed reactions to the term among Chinese diplomats and media. Some view it as positive. The Chinese ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, for example, said that he was honored to be called a wolf warrior because too

many “mad dogs” were attacking China, describing himself as a soldier defending his country against hostile foreign governments and media coverage and calling on Chinese scholars and media to join in—and some scholars in China have echoed his remarks.<sup>54</sup> Other scholars, however, have expressed reservations on the grounds that China’s diplomatic behavior ultimately shapes perceptions of the country by the international community. For example, IR scholar Yan Xuetong has suggested that the outside world should distinguish between the foreign policy of the Chinese government and the personal statements of Chinese diplomats and, for example, cease treating the social media posts and editorials of the latter as official Chinese rhetoric.<sup>55</sup> However, as our analysis shows, the official statements at the MFA’s press conference have also grown much more hostile regarding what China considers its core interests.

While China’s MFA has increased its popularity with its domestic audience, which no longer perceives it as weak and spineless, close examination of the spokespersons’ official statements reveals that the MFA, in practice, remains a “Ministry of Protest.” The increased hostilities have taken the form of elaborate verbal protests and insults unlinked to clear actions. For example, MFA spokespersons have often labeled criticism of China “vile attempts” to disrupt China’s stability and claimed that China would “take all necessary measures” to safeguard its sovereignty and security—but they have never specified what these measures would be. Recent studies have shown that Western criticism of China, framed as an us-vs.-them geopolitical clash, tends to increase the domestic support that the Chinese government enjoys.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, a confrontational posture seems calculated to depict the MFA as taking a strong stance so as to satisfy Chinese citizens’ strong nationalist sentiment while leaving room for measured diplomacy.<sup>57</sup> One recent study, for instance,

found an increase in popular support when the Chinese government made vague and, ultimately, empty threats.<sup>58</sup> In other words, Chinese diplomats have been deploying the tough rhetoric to please domestic nationalists and uphold President Xi's foreign policy while the empty threats have left the government room to maneuver.

## ***Conclusions***

China's combative wolf warrior diplomacy has attracted widespread international attention. Media, pundits, and policymakers have expressed concern that this diplomatic posture signals a more aggressive and reformative China in international affairs. However, foreign media reports on and analyses of China's wolf warrior diplomacy have focused on diplomats' social media posts. Accordingly, it has remained unclear whether this type of diplomacy is official and what the motivations have been for it. This article situates the wolf warrior diplomacy in the context of Xi Jinping's major-country diplomacy and the MFA's role in communicating China's positions on foreign affairs. Our findings indicate that the MFA, as a communication or propaganda department, follows Xi's instructions strictly, and the combative wolf warrior diplomacy reflects Xi's call for a "fighting spirit" in international discourse.

Our analysis of the transcripts of the MFA's press conferences over the past 20 years shows that the spokespersons' rhetoric has become much more hostile during Xi's presidency. However, the increased hostility is associated only with particular issue areas. The fighting-spirit rhetoric has received a disproportionate amount of media attention that has led the international audience to question the sincerity of the liberal and egalitarian rhetoric of win-win cooperation. The liberal and realist impulses co-exist in Xi's major-

country diplomacy, therefore, and may counteract one another, but, domestically, they serve to both boost support from the nationalist audience while leaving room for concessions without incurring audience costs.

We acknowledge that the speeches of the MFA's spokespersons alone do not provide a full picture of China's foreign policy. For example, we cannot infer the connection between the words and actions based on the MFA's speeches alone. However, our analysis shows that, while the MFA plays a limited role in decision-making, its statements can provide significant insights into China's foreign policy.

Our review of Chinese diplomacy over the past 20 years demonstrates that it has constantly evolved in step with China's growing national power and shifts in the international balance of power. Xi's assessment of China's domestic power and international environment can help to explain the change in China's diplomacy. As the Chinese economy has developed, its diplomacy has gradually shifted from "keeping a low profile" to "making some achievements" to "daring to fight." When Xi came to office, China had already overtaken Japan to become the world's second-largest economy. While Xi has acknowledged the challenges facing China, his assessment of its national power and international status is optimistic. Xi believes that China is "closer than ever to the center of global stage" and can no longer play a passive role in international politics, that is, that China's rise as a major power and the world's reaction to it call for a new Chinese diplomacy.<sup>59</sup> Anticipating the pushback from the existing major powers<sup>60</sup>, Xi has exhorted Chinese diplomats to display a fighting spirit in defense of the country's core interests and to establish its image as a responsible major country. Some Chinese diplomats view this fighting spirit as defensive rather than offensive in nature. Qin Gang, China's ambassador

to the United States, for example, recently justified his fellow diplomats' efforts by insisting that they were not "wolf warriors" but were "dancing with wolves."<sup>61</sup> Qin's rejection of the term concerned its negative connotations rather than its status as a manifestation of the fighting spirit that he viewed, again, a defensive reaction to Western, and especially U.S., aggression.

We have shown that Xi's major-country diplomacy is both new and old. On the one hand, every aspect of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy traces back to Deng, Jiang, or Hu. On the other hand, his diplomacy goes beyond the mere rebranding of old thinking in that, for the first time, China has specified and institutionalized to some extent those vague notions such as "shared future for mankind" and "responsible major country." Xi's major-country diplomacy also differs from that of his predecessors in looking beyond the management of relationships with established major world powers to a diplomacy commensurate with China's status as one of them. Xi's diplomacy is no longer purely serving domestic development. This being the case, it is short-sighted to consider wolf warrior diplomacy as simply a response to domestic Chinese nationalism.

While analysts and the media tend to believe the wolf warrior diplomacy is doomed to fail --- at least with regards to boosting China's image around the world, our findings suggest that it may succeed in a different sense. It allows Chinese diplomats to please domestic nationalists and uphold President Xi's diplomacy, while still leaves room for the Chinese government to control the escalation of disputed issues. Despite the focus in political commentary and scholarship on the reactions of the United States and its allies—the primary targets of the hostile rhetoric—it remains unclear how other countries perceive China's diplomacy. For example, A poll conducted in 2019 found that the citizens of low-

GDP countries tended to have more favorable views of China than those of developed countries.<sup>62</sup> For developing countries dissatisfied with the international behavior of Western countries, China's boldness in confronting the United States and its multilateral institutions may serve to strengthen the country's image as a capable leader, thereby facilitating its efforts to find potential partners in promoting its initiatives and institutions for international cooperation.

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**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> See Wilson VornDick, "Analysts Take Note: Wolf Warrior Is the New Chinese Rambo", *The Diplomat*. September 20, 2017; James Griffiths, "For China's aggressive new diplomacy, coronavirus is both a crisis and an opportunity," *CNN*, April 22, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/22/asia/china-diplomacy-coronavirus-crisis-opportunity-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Number calculated using LexisNexis newspaper achieves.

<sup>3</sup> Kirsty Needham, "Australia demands apology from China after fake image posted on social media", *Reuters*, November 29, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-australia-china-idUSKBN28A07Y>.

<sup>4</sup> CTS, "bu man tix in jiang ji zhong ying, zhong guo dai biao meng qiao zhao (Dissatisfied with the mention of Xinjiang concentration camp, Chinese delegates pounded the table)", *Chinese Television Station*, September 24, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Guancha, "lian he guo han jian yi mu: gu ba wai jiao guan pai zhao zi da duan mei dai biao yan jiang (A rare scene at the UN: Cuban diplomat interrupts U.S. representative's speech by slapping the table)", *Guanchazhe*, October 18, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> See Siegfried O. Wolf, "On the Asian Century, Pax Sinica & Beyond (X): Coronavirus: Why Beijing's 'Wolf Warrior Diplomacy' will fail," *South Asia Democratic Forum*, April 20, 2020; Chen Dingding and Hu Junyang, "Is China Really Embracing 'Wolf Warrior' Diplomacy?" *The Diplomat*, September 9, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/is-china-really-embracing-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/>

<sup>7</sup> Wang wenwen, "West feels challenged by China's new 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy", *Global Times*, April 16, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1185776.shtml>



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- <sup>8</sup> Bloomberg News, “Rare Spat Between Chinese Diplomats Signals Split Over Trump,” *Bloomberg*, March 22, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-23/china-s-top-envoy-to-u-s-breaks-with-foreign-ministry-on-virus>
- <sup>9</sup> Yu, X. (2021). World Peace Forum: Conversation with Yan Xuetong: What kind of paradigm shift has occurred in Chinese diplomacy? *The Paper*. Retrieved from [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_13414037](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_13414037)
- <sup>10</sup> Siegfried O. Wolf, “On the Asian Century, Pax Sinica & Beyond (X): Coronavirus: Why Beijing’s ‘Wolf Warrior Diplomacy’ will fail.”
- <sup>11</sup> See Garver, John W. 2016. “America’s Debate over the Rise of China.” *The China Quarterly*. 226:538–550. Wang, Hung-jen. 2021b. “Chinese IR Scholarship as a Relational Epistemology in the Study of China’s Rise.” *The China Quarterly*. 245:262–275.
- <sup>12</sup> See Goldstein, Avery. “China’s Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance.” *International Security* 45, no. 1 (2020): 164-201.
- <sup>13</sup> Zhao, Xiao-Chun. “An analysis of the debate on the ‘low profile’ strategy”. *Journal of University of International Relations*, 5 (2006): 24-27.
- <sup>14</sup> Zhu, Wei-lei. “On diplomatic strategy of ‘keeping a low profile and talking a proactive role when feasible’” (guan yu ‘tao guang yang hui, you suo zuo wei’ wai jiao fang lue de si kao). *International Perspective* (Guojizhanwang), 3 (2010).
- <sup>15</sup> Khan, Sulmaan Wasif. *Haunted by chaos: China’s grand strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping*. Harvard University Press, 2018. Zhu, Zhiqun. 2020a. A CRITICAL DECADE: China’s Foreign Policy (2008–2018). World Scientific.
- <sup>16</sup> Zheng, Yongnian, and Sow Keat Tok. “Harmonious society and harmonious world: China’s policy discourse under Hu Jintao.” *Briefing Series* 26 (2007): 1-12.
- <sup>17</sup> Johnston, Alastair Iain. “How new and assertive is China’s new assertiveness?.” *International Security* 37.4 (2013): 7-48.
- <sup>18</sup> Guo Weiwei, “New China’s Diplomatic Strategy and Economic Development from the Perspective of Internal and External Interaction” (cong nei zheng yu wai jiao hu dong de jiao du kan xin zhong guo de wai jiao zhan lue yu jing ji jian she de fa zhan), *Institute of Party History and Literature of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, Dec 28, 2007. <http://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/BIG5/n1/2019/0617/c427580-31157448.html>
- <sup>19</sup> For English translation of the speech, see [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1215680.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml).
- <sup>20</sup> See [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1215680.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml) and Wang Yi, “Practicing the idea of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics,” 4 May 2016, [cppcc.china.com.cn](http://cppcc.china.com.cn), [http://cppcc.china.com.cn/2016-05/04/content\\_38377875.htm](http://cppcc.china.com.cn/2016-05/04/content_38377875.htm)
- <sup>21</sup> Hu Jintao first used the term to describe the relationship between mainland China and Taiwan in his 17<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress report in 2007, see [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/24/content\\_6204564\\_11.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/24/content_6204564_11.htm); Hu again used the term describe an ideal mankind relationships in his report to the 18<sup>th</sup> congress in 2012, see <http://en.people.cn/90785/8024777.html>.
- <sup>22</sup> See “Full text: President Xi Jinping’s speech at Boao Forum for Asia.” [http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/2015-03/31/content\\_35201394.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/2015-03/31/content_35201394.htm). March 31, 2015.
- <sup>23</sup> Xi Jinping at the general debate of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. “Working together to forge a new partnership of win-win cooperation and create a

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community of shared future for mankind. (Xieshou Goujian Hezuo Gonying Xinhuan, Tonxin Dazao Renlei Mingyun Gong Tong Ti)" [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-09/29/c\\_1116703645.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-09/29/c_1116703645.htm). September 28, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> See New York Times, "Xi Jinping of China Calls for Cooperation and Partnerships in U.N. Speech." <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/29/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-united-nations-general-assembly.html>. September 29, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> See Zhang Li Li "The content, value and impact of Xi Jinping's thought of community of shared future for mankind" (xi jinping ren lei ming yun gong tong ti si xiang de nei rong, jia zhi yu zuo yong). *People's Tribune*, March 28, 2017 [https://web.archive.org/web/20180528234348/http://paper.people.com.cn/rmlt/html/2017-03/01/content\\_1759443.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20180528234348/http://paper.people.com.cn/rmlt/html/2017-03/01/content_1759443.htm)

<sup>26</sup> Note that it is not the first time that a Chinese top leader included global governance in a public speech. Hu Jintao, for example, also included global governance in his report to the 18th National Party's Congress. However, before Xi, China's goal was to actively participate in and benefit from the global system. Xi is the first one that claims to propose new models for global governance. See Zeng, J. (2019). *Chinese views of global economic governance*. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(3), 578-594; Qiushi (2020). [http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuangqu/2020-12/28/c\\_1126921292.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuangqu/2020-12/28/c_1126921292.htm); Chen Xiang Yang "General Secretary Xi Jinping's thoughts on global governance" (xi jinping zong shu ji de quan qiu zhi li si xiang), Qianxian 2017. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0817/c83859-29476848.html>

<sup>27</sup> See "Exploring the path of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics," remarks by foreign minister Wang Yi at the luncheon of the Second World Peace Forum, 27 June 2013. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/2461\\_663310/t1053908.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1053908.shtml); also Wang, Jianwei. "Xi Jinping's 'Major country diplomacy: A paradigm shift?." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2019): 15-30.

<sup>28</sup> See Wang Yi 'Upholding the correct view on justice and interest and actively playing roles as a responsible major country,' *People. cn*, 10 September 2013. <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2013/0910/c1003-22862978.html>

<sup>29</sup> Huang, Yiping. 2016. "Understanding China's Belt & Road initiative: motivation, framework and assessment." *China Economic Review* 40:314–321. Evron, Yoram. 2019. "The challenge of implementing the Belt and Road Initiative in the Middle East: Connectivity projects under conditions of limited political engagement." *The China Quarterly* 237:196–216.

<sup>30</sup> Alden, Chris and Daniel Large. 2015. "On becoming a norms maker: Chinese foreign policy, norms evolution and the challenges of security in Africa." *The China Quarterly* 221:123–142. Hirono, Miwa, Yang Jiang and Marc Lanteigne. 2019. "China's new roles and behaviour in conflict-affected regions: Reconsidering non-interference and non-intervention." *The China Quarterly* 239:573–593.

<sup>31</sup> See Zhao Hong Tao "Community of shared future for mankind opens a new chapter of building a better world together" (ren lei ming yun gong tong ti kai qi gong jian mei hao

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<sup>32</sup> See Xinhua, "Commentary: why president Xi strongly advocates building community with shared future", Xinhua, September 22, 2020.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/22/c\\_139388123.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/22/c_139388123.htm)

<sup>33</sup> See Yang, Jiechi, "Working for a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind by Promoting International Cooperation and Multilateralism", Foreign Ministry of PRC, February 17, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> See Wang Yi, "Xie shou da zao ren lei mingy un gong tong ti (Working together to build a community of human destiny)", Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, 120.

<sup>35</sup> Lin, Zhimin. "Xi Jinping's 'major country diplomacy': The impacts of China's growing capacity." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2019): 31-46. See Wang, Jianwei. "Xi Jinping's 'Major country diplomacy:' A paradigm shift?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2019): 15-30.

<sup>36</sup> See "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China October 18, 2017

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi\\_Jinping's\\_report\\_at\\_19th\\_CPC\\_National\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> See Wang, Jianwei. "Xi Jinping's 'Major country diplomacy:' A paradigm shift?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2019): 15-30. Zeng, Jinghan, Yuefan Xiao, and Shaun Breslin. "Securing China's core interests: the state of the debate in China." *International Affairs* 91.2 (2015): 245-266. Swaine, Michael D. "China's Assertive Behavior: Part One: On 'Core Interests,'" *China Leadership Monitor* 34.22 (2011): 1-25.

<sup>38</sup> See Xi, Jinping, "Xi Jinping zong shu ji z emo kan dang xiao gong zuo (How General Secretary Xi Jinping sees the work of party schools)", *Qiushi*, 9 (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Wen, Yao. 2021. "Branding and Legitimation." *China Review* 21(1):55-90.

<sup>40</sup> See China Daily, "China Daily's global development." 2018.

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<sup>41</sup> See Xi Jinping speech at the opening ceremony of the training course for young and middle-aged cadres at the Central Party School (National School of Administration), Xinhua, September 3, 2019. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2019-09/03/c\\_1124956081.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2019-09/03/c_1124956081.htm)

<sup>42</sup> Wang Yi, "Forge Ahead under the Guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Thought on Diplomacy," *Study Times*, September 1, 2017.

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<sup>43</sup> Wang, Yi. "Study and implement Xi Jinping Thought on diplomacy conscientiously and break new ground in major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics". On website of *Foreign Ministry of PRC*, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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<sup>44</sup> See Li Jian Ying "How the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson System was Established" (Wai jiao bu fa yan ren zhi du shi zen yang jian li de). *The Paper*. January 25, 2019.

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<sup>45</sup> For similar arguments, see Mochtak, Michal and Richard Q Turcsanyi. 2021. "Studying Chinese Foreign Policy Narratives: Introducing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Conferences Corpus." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* pp. 1–19.

<sup>46</sup> For examples see Ben Westcott and Steven Jiang, China is embracing a new brand of foreign policy. Here's what wolf warrior diplomacy means, CNN, May 29, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/28/asia/china-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-intl-hnk/index.html>; Zhiqun Zhu, Interpreting China's "Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy":

What explains the sharper tone to China's overseas conduct recently?, *The Diplomat*, May 15, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/>;

<sup>47</sup> We used pre-trained Chinese word embedding to vectorize words and documents in our corpus. Unlike the commonly used bag-of-words approach in Political Science where each unique word/token is one distinct dimension, the embedding representation of words and documents vectorize the words and documents based on their semantic and syntactic similarities. Words that are semantically and syntactically similar are positioned close to each other. Embedding representation of the corpus reduces the dimensionality of vector space substantially from hundreds of thousands (vocabulary size) to 100 to 300 dimensions. The embedding representation has shown to out-perform the n-gram and bag-of-word representation of words in many down-stream applications.

<sup>48</sup> See Alastair Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security*, Vol.37, No.4 (Spring 2013), pp. 7-48.

<sup>49</sup> We used genism library in Python for the topic modeling.

<sup>50</sup> Vieira, Victor Carneiro Corrêa. "From Third World Theory to Belt and Road Initiative: International Aid as a Chinese Foreign Policy Tool." *Contexto Internacional* 41.3 (2019): 529-551.

<sup>51</sup> Ploberger, Christian. "One belt, one road—China's new grand strategy." *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies* 15, no. 3 (2017): 289-305.

<sup>52</sup> Yan, Xuetong. "The instability of China–US relations." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3.3 (2010): 263-292.

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<sup>54</sup> Zhao, Y. (2021). Chinese envoy proud of "wolf warrior" title to safeguard national interest, as china presents respectable image. *Global Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202106/1226499.shtml>

<sup>55</sup> Yu, X. (2021). World Peace Forum: Conversation with Yan Xuetong: What kind of paradigm shift has occurred in Chinese diplomacy? *The Paper*. Retrieved from [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_13414037](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_13414037)

<sup>56</sup> Gruffydd-Jones, Jamie J. 2019. "Citizens and condemnation: Strategic uses of international human rights pressure in authoritarian states." *Comparative Political Studies* 52(4):579–612.

<sup>57</sup> For similar arguments and findings see Quek, Kai and Alastair Iain Johnston. 2017. "Can China back down? Crisis de-escalation in the shadow of popular opposition." *International Security* 42(3):7–36. Wang, Frances Yaping. 2021a. "Barking Without

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<sup>58</sup> See Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful patriots: nationalist protest in China's foreign relations*. Oxford University Press, 2014. Quek, Kai, and Alastair Iain Johnston. "Can China back down? Crisis de-escalation in the shadow of popular opposition." *International Security* 42, no. 3 (2017): 7-3.

<sup>59</sup> Yang Jiechi, “Study and Implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's Thought on Diplomacy in a Deep-going Way and Keep Writing New Chapters of Major-Country Diplomacy with Distinctive Chinese Features.” [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/201707/t20170718\\_678630.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201707/t20170718_678630.html)

<sup>60</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., and Glenn Alterman. *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company, 2001; Mearsheimer, John J. "China's unpeaceful rise." *CURRENT HISTORY-NEW YORK THEN PHILADELPHIA*- 105, no. 690 (2006): 160.

<sup>61</sup> CGTN (2021). Qin Gang: Chinese diplomats are not “wolf warriors”, but “dancing with wolves”. CGTN. Retrieved from <https://newsus.cgtn.com/news/2021-12-26/Qin-Gang-Chinese-diplomats-are-not-wolf-warriors--16i1Yk9Rc3K/index.html>

<sup>62</sup> Silver, Laura, kat Devlin and Christin Huang. 2019. “Attitudes toward China.” Pew Research Center. DECEMBER 5, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/12/05/attitudes-toward-china-2019/>