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Microblogging and Media Policy in China: Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

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Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The Chinese government is striving to strengthen China's international discursive power. While expanding their presence globally, the state-owned media outlets are promoting both the government's domestic policies and international strategies via various digital channels. Under Xi Jinping's current administration, the BRI is promoted in a media offensive that is aimed at both domestic and international audiences. With respect to international discourse, the Chinese government perceives this as dominated by the mainstream "Western media." If there is such a disparity, however, then improving China's international discursive power should be based on understanding the discourses of various ongoing international issues and debates. The traditional doctrine of "differentiating internal and external communication" (*neiwai youbie*, 内外有别) and the supplemental strategy of "differentiating external communication" (*waiwai youbie*, 外外有别) may not fit the current ambitious communication goals any longer. Various cases proved that, when failing to grasp the nuances of international issues, the government's efforts on China's discourse construction not only result in vain but may even backfire.

With an intention to shine a positive light on the BRI, China's state TV network CCTV uses the most watched Chinese show, its annual Spring Festival Gala, to broadcast performances that portray China's friendship with different countries involved in this initiative. For instance, CCTV's 2015 Spring Festival Gala broadcasted different styles of traditional dances from Egypt, Iran, India, and Russia and ended with a leading solo Chinese dance (CCTV, 2015). This performance, named "Silk Road Dance" (*silu nishang*, 丝路霓裳) was clearly intended to raise positive, international attention, but failed to do so. However, a comic performance called "Shared Happiness" (*tongxi tongle*, 同喜同乐), aired in CCTV's 2018 Spring Festival Gala, caused great controversy among various international media outlets and criticism from social media users from both Weibo and Twitter. The performance was made to show friendship between China and Africa, as witnessed by China-backed infrastructure projects in Africa (CCTV, 2018b). However, with a Chinese actor appearing in blackface makeup and an

actor from Cote d'Ivoire in a monkey costume, the show sparked nothing but controversy (Polianskaya, 2018; Taylor, 2018). When an incident like this happens, it tends to create a remarkable discursive situation, where the online debate goes viral on social media platforms on the one hand, yet China's state-owned media outlets stay mute on the other. Would it be fair to say that state media outlets like Xinhua, CCTV, and the *People's Daily* are encouraged to promote China's image, and to disseminate the central government's policies and intentions, but they do not yet learn to handle situations in case of a PR failure? How, then, does Chinese state media's "differentiated communicative strategy" play out in the highly-mediated discursive environment of social media?

In Chapter One, I raised three questions in order to explore the policy and discursive changes of Chinese official media outlets with respect to social media. These questions are: *What is the relationship between social media messaging and media policy in China? Under the current overarching media regulations, what role is social media playing in China's internal and external communication? How does the interplay between digital media and mass media affect China's image building?* In the following section, I will revisit the main findings to investigate the question: *as China continues its soft power construction, how do Chinese policymakers and media practitioners come to terms with the increasingly powerful influences of the ICTs on the state media outlets?*

This research thus focused on Xinhua's performance on social media platforms to examine its internal and external communicative strategies. In this context, it explored—by means of a case study—how the Chinese leadership intends to construct the country's soft power by promoting its diplomacy in the name of the BRI.

8.2 Summary of the Main Findings

Chapter Four, titled "Policy Reviews and Fieldwork," disclosed the hierarchical relations of the relevant governmental departments and examined legal and policy documents on foreign policy, media policies, cyber security, and e-governance, as well as legal and policy documents on the BRI, specifically. The policy papers reveal that the responsibilities of internal communication are increasingly de-centralized, whereas the government aims to enhance its external, international discursive. Thus, for internal communication, the government ensures the overall management of the thought work (*sixiang gongzuo*, 思想工作)

and adopts differentiated measures towards the domestic audience; in terms of external communication, the government is implementing a more centralized strategy to make China's voice heard. However, the centralized management of external communication does not directly translate to a monolithic voice towards all international audiences. Reflected in the policy papers on the EU, Arab states, African countries and ASEAN countries, the nuances of different international relations influence the tones and attitudes held in the communication.

The 33 interviews conducted with academics, media workers, and policymakers revealed significant effects of the government's internal and external communication policies on the media industry. These effects are visible in the more modernized management styles and working environments the state media outlets have adopted. For example, taking on the diplomatic mission to promote the government's BRI, Xinhua creates the Silk Road database providing multi-lingual information products and consulting services. Spearheading the central government's communication policies, Xinhua centralizes its voice on international social media platforms in rebranded, uniform overseas accounts, whereas it differentiates its communication methods through domestic social media platforms. In general, digital technology serves as a catalyst in how the media industry evolves. However, this evolution does not automatically translate to success for China's soft power construction.

In order to examine the role of Chinese media outlets in shaping China's diplomatic discourse, this thesis explored the online discursive dynamics of the BRI. In Chapter Five, using two different digital methods (one using the software program Founder as a research tool and the other with Python scripts), I identified the key influencers in a specific time frame in the online public discourse on both Weibo and Twitter platforms. The result shows that on Weibo, these key message distributors in Chinese language consist of Chinese official media like *China Youth Daily*, commercial online media (such as NetEase and iFeng news), and news information platforms (such as UC Headline and Today's Headline). The distributors in English consist of both Chinese and international news organizations, including the *People's Daily*, *China Daily*, *Guardian* and *The Times of India*. Out of these, Chinese state-owned media outlets, such as Xinhua and the *People's Daily*, show major impacts in promoting this initiative and sending positive messages about China's intentions.

Xinhua emerges as a main player in both internal and external social media communication. This makes it an excellent candidate to examine in the context of a case study on the BRI in

social media discourse. This merits questions as: in shaping the online discourse of the BRI, does Xinhua display different communication strategies and perform different functions towards domestic and international audiences? Chapter Six dealt with this question and scrutinized the intentions and functions of Xinhua's messages on Weibo and Twitter. In this chapter, I collected messages from Twitter and Weibo pertaining to the BRI, and categorized these posts and tweets based on themes, timeline, and regions. With the aid of software program Yoshikoder 6.5.0 and the reference database CNCorpus.org, I identified and compared Chinese and English keywords from my corpus of data. The divisions of topics and themes I produced by categorising, show that in the early phase of promoting the BRI from 2013 to 2015, Xinhua shifts its reporting focus on Weibo from cultural topics to the opinions and speeches of Chinese officials and to current events taking place within China; whereas on Twitter, Xinhua shifts its reporting perspective from cultural topics to diplomatic activities, reviews from foreign experts, and the opinions of foreign governments' officials. More profoundly, Xinhua highlights China's relations with European countries on Twitter from the aspect of economic cooperation, and it underpins the relations with Central Asia from the aspect of culture and history.

The keywords analysis illustrated furthermore that Xinhua addresses the government's intention to seek potential partnerships for economic cooperation, policy connectivity, and information exchange on both platforms. Nevertheless, by putting a stronger emphasis on economic aspects on Twitter, Xinhua demonstrates a more defensive communication approach towards international audiences. The very restricted and often downplayed use of the word "strategy" on Twitter further adds to this case, whereas the Chinese equivalent word for strategy, 战略 (*zhanlüe*), appears frequently on Weibo. Moreover, Xinhua tends to quote from a variety of official(s) and expert(s) on Twitter, whereas on Weibo Xinhua gives much attention to what the Chinese president has to say. These findings reveal Xinhua's thematic preferences on social media to be in line with the government's communication policies. It also reveals how Xinhua sees the world. In Xinhua's reporting, the geopolitical paradigm is a division of the world in nation states. The effect of this, when Xinhua discusses politics in the discourse of Weibo and Twitter, is that political stances are naturally determined and justified by nation states.

Adding to the quantitative impressions and findings from Chapter Six, Chapter Seven addressed the qualitative aspect of Xinhua's performance on social media platforms by comparing its linguistic features and rhetorical devices. This qualitative analysis suggests that the Chinese and English texts show distinctive differences in terms of expressions and reporting tones. Yet, the texts in both languages also show similarities in rhetorical strategies. For instance, rhetorical devices such as metaphors, personifications, and visual elements are used in both texts. By abstracting, simplifying, generalizing, and visualizing, Xinhua aims to portray a friendly, open, and cooperative China on both platforms. As Chapter Seven argues, Xinhua's communication strategies are not only decided by fixed rules or policies from the government, but shaped by multiple, interplaying factors. As apparent in Xinhua's performance on Weibo and Twitter, the different reporting styles flow from the government's designs on soft power construction, diplomatic goals, and communication policies on the one hand, and Xinhua's news workers' responsiveness towards these and interpretation of them on the other. Moreover, the different message lengths, contents, and styles are also determined by the technical forms and limitations of the social media platforms, by Chinese and English rhetoric features, and, more broadly, by different discursive contexts from within and outside China.

8.3 Discussion of the Findings

In the following sections, I will bring empirical findings together to explore the interplay between mass media and digital media in China from different aspects, and I will also examine the dynamics of China's diplomacy, communication strategies, and soft power construction.

8.3.1 Interplay between Mass Media and Digital Media

By investigating Xinhua's efforts to reinforce the government's communication strategies in managing its social media performances, in expanding its international influence, and in promoting its diplomacy, this thesis has explored the interactions of mass media and digital media under the governments' overarching regulations.

First, this research illustrates that Xinhua, as a government information organ that has gone through the marketization process, aims to ensure its leading role among domestic media

outlets and also to enhance its credibility to compete with the international media organizations. In Xinhua's own words, the "around-the-clock news release" is meant to guide online public opinion at home and "publicize China and report the world" (Xinhua net, 2011a).

Communication in China went through a structural overhaul by marketization under Deng Xiaoping's sweeping reforms in 1978 and decentralization under Document No. 37 issued by the former SAPPRFT in 1983. Through the implementation of these policies, the media sector received more operational freedom and the benefits of favourable policies (such as tax breaks and performance-based financial rewards). Moreover, a four-tier media structure was formed covering central, provincial, and autonomous regions as well as prefectural cities and county-level cities. This was undeniably instrumental in pushing the media towards commercialization. Following the government's media policies, the state-owned media outlets embraced marketization on the one hand and intended to consolidate the CCP's political ideology on the other. Under the influence of marketization, Xinhua, still as part of the government's apparatus, has been operated through enterprise management to join the international competition.

In the information age, the development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has given rise to the popular use of digital media. With the vigorous expansion of social media, the government had to readjust the media policies. While putting up tremendous funds to back up the "going-out" strategy for the state media outlets, the government uses various measures to supervise the information flow in the domestic environment. The government justifies this as an act to ensure domestic stability and to tackle cybercrimes. In this context, Xinhua integrated digital media forms into its own news reporting. Through modernizing its management style and actively engaging in the international news reporting, Xinhua aims to present its professionalism and objectivity. Nevertheless, Xinhua's performance on social media platforms carries the primary task of policy dissemination from the CCP, and this trend is likely to continue in the future.

Second, as shown in this thesis, Xinhua's strategies to craft its performance on social media platforms differ in the two domains of internal and external communication. For internal communication, Xinhua tends to emphasize the authority of the central government leaders. It also distinguishes an "in-group" (domestic audiences) and an "out-group" (international group) in its discursive prose. In their external communication, Xinhua aims to appear more open and

objective, to engage various actors, and to encourage responsiveness online. This supplements the findings of works from several scholars on Chinese political communication. Zheng Yongnian (2010) and Zhang Xiaoling (2011) suggest that the government influences the agenda-setting of the news organizations in order to create a favourable public opinion environment online. Zhan Xinhui and Yang Chunlan (2006) hold that the media logic of Xinhua on the national level is to advocate the Party's political ideology by winning over online public opinion in the information age. This thesis contributes to their findings by further revealing that the interplay of digital and mass media has been largely guided and shaped by the central government's policy and strategies. Chinese state-owned media outlets may actively engage in the international media environment, integrate various digital channels, and deploy different tones and rhetorical devices, but all these must fit in the overall communication strategies of the central government.

8.3.2 Dynamics of China's Diplomacy, Communication Strategies, and Soft Power

Among the 15,000 news stories released by Xinhua in a day, one-fifth focus on international affairs. Xinhua explicitly announced its main task as "setting a good image of China abroad" (Xinhua net, 2011a). However, carrying this diplomatic task of "telling good China stories," Xinhua often finds itself facing a dilemma that reflects the realities and challenges of China's soft power construction in general.

Since 2013, the Chinese leadership asserted a significant change in the country's approach to international affairs, that is, a shift from strategic prudence (*taoguang yanghui*, 韬光养晦) to active engagement (*fenfa youwei*, 奋发有为) (Yan, Xueting, 2014). In the BRI, the government intends to take part in international policymaking, and to take on more responsibilities in international economic governance (Huang, Yiping, 2016), improve China's national image, and strengthen China's discursive power. According to Tekdal (2017), the BRI reflects China's multiple identities and the dual character of its foreign policy. China's leadership is shifting foreign policies to maintain social stability and confront economic and security challenges, whilst formulating plans to shape the regional order and global economic governance (Tekdal, 2017). However, due to the sheer magnitude, the long-term nature and the many partnerships of the BRI, Ferdinand holds that China's foreign policy is both optimistic and also vulnerable as "its success does not lie in its own hands" (Ferdinand,

2016). Thus, the government intends to send a message that through the initiative China and many other member states would achieve a win-win situation.

My research shows that in the context of China's increased global presence, Xinhua's reporting is oscillating between two discursive positions: playing the role of the CCP's mouthpiece, while also promoting itself as an objective, international media outlet.

On the one hand, as the mouthpiece of the CCP, Xinhua receives significant annual financial support from the government, to distribute messages that portray positive images of the government, and uphold the government's position in the international affairs by disseminating, explaining, and justifying the government's policies. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, in promoting the government's BRI, Xinhua not only downplays the notion of "strategy" on Twitter, but also emphasizes that the initiative is not a "geo-political tool" in response to the international debates. Furthermore, Xinhua distributes messages on the BRI that demonstrate positive relationships between China and other countries. On the other hand, by entering into the international market and expanding its presence around the world with a goal of competing with other major international media outlets, Xinhua upgraded its communication channels and aims to present its information objectivity and openness. For instance, in its Belt and Road message distribution, Xinhua included supportive opinions and quotes from various foreign governments' officials and experts. More broadly, Xinhua aims to project its news professionalism by establishing multilingual webpages with 24-hour broadcasts on global affairs. Therefore, I concur with Zhang Xiaoling (2011) that ICTs provide the government with new vehicles to promote its soft power at an international level.

Based on the opinions of my informants from Xinhua, Xinhua stands for China's position to counter the unbalanced discursive environment that has long been dominated by "Western mainstream media." Thus, by providing a different voice from China's viewpoint, Xinhua contributes to a more balanced international discourse. However, behind this logic, Xinhua's news workers are often driven by a sense of patriotism that does not necessarily translate to supporting all the policies by the government.

From another angle, I concur with Castells that image-making itself is power-making (Castells, 2010a, pp. 473-476). In the power-making process, according to Chinese communication scholar Chen Yanru (2018), Chinese media are balancing between building a

positive national image, “promoting the socialist ideal,” and preserving the “national cultural identity” on the one hand; and “maintaining objective representation of China’s social reality,” “facilitating the implementation of a market economy policy,” and “promoting the globalization of the economy” on the other. Chen argues that although media organizations fulfill diplomatic tasks, the leadership does not export its ideology abroad, but instead intends to support information transfer on “pragmatic knowledge” (Chen, Yanru, 2018). Thus, the narrative of achieving economic success is both the vehicle and the goal of China’s soft power construction. Joseph Nye (2018) states that it is a mistake to use the term “soft power” to describe any exercise of power that does not involve the use of force, as power not just “depends on whose army or economy wins, but it can also depend on whose story wins.” China’s discourse on the BRI demonstrates such efforts made by the government to win over the international opinion. In the midst of the government’s soft power construction, Chinese media outlets may find themselves in a tricky position. For instance, as Nye mentions, Xinhua’s open broadcasts around the world are employing soft-power techniques, but China Radio International’s act of backing 33 radio stations in 14 countries crossed the boundary into “sharp power,” which translates into information manipulation (Nye, 2018).

Chinese media outlets are caught in a dynamic of increasing their global presence to reach the broadest possible audience and to promote the government’s diplomacy, while at the same time taking part in China’s charm offensive as defined by the government’s soft power strategies. Perhaps that is why China’s soft power is not widely recognized. As Rogier Creemers argues, while transforming the state’s view of soft power into policy through the cultural bureaucracy with a focus on “top-down, state-centered image management,” the government’s public diplomacy programs are merely “an extension of domestic propaganda” with limited success even in domestic markets (Creemers, 2015a, p. 311).

8.3.3 Programmers and Switchers

This thesis demonstrates that both the Chinese policymakers and media practitioners recognize the increasingly powerful influence of ICTs on the state media outlets in terms of shaping online discourses. To the leadership, information technology is a crucial factor of social control, political reform, and economic development, as informatization “is no longer seen as an add-on to traditional policy tools and practices, but as a core facilitator of a new

governance approach based on ubiquitous sensors, IT terminals, big data, and cloud storage” (Creemers, 2015b, p. 13).

Nevertheless, this research implies that in China’s state-media-led political discursive environment, technological advances do not necessarily contribute to discursive empowerment of the government. Discursive power is relational, and it dominates through seductiveness as well as invisibility, which contrasts with China’s large-scale type of discourse construction. Based on Castells’ notion of “network-making power” in the information age (2009), Chinese state-media outlets are able to constitute and program such networks in the online sphere: its Weibo and Twitter accounts, for example, deal in no small part with the topics of China’s BRI. However, what lacks in this “network-making power” are the switchers: the important social actors who can connect those networks formed by the state-media outlets. As long as the state media outlets are producing and shaping the political discourse under the supervision of the government, there will be a lack of responsiveness from different social groups, which conversely is not likely to contribute to improving the government’s image in political communication. Rather, the technological advances generated by ICTs function as tools to reflect or even sometimes magnify the ongoing discursive environment.

In terms of discourse of the BRI, this research shows that Xinhua’s communicative strategies on social media turn out to be the extensions of the government’s communicative schemes. Even by reaching the audience through interactive, digital media channels, the official media’s form of communication in terms of official sources still stays in the same, unilateral form of broadcasting communication, equivalent to traditional mass media, including newspapers, radio and television.

With the fast development of ICTs, the Chinese government uses its power to shape and reshape the information environment. To improve “non-Chinese foreigners’ perceptions” of both its domestic policies and international strategies, the government is backing up its plans of “buying a boat,” referring to investing in international media organizations, which may turn out to be effective in the long run (Brady, 2015, p. 58). As Brady earlier pointed out, what has changed under Xi is that external communication is increasingly handled through “business transactions” in which the state-owned cultural organizations “make strategic acquisitions” of relevant international cultural enterprises (Brady, 2015, p. 57). However, it is uncertain

whether the economic drives behind online communication will enable more “programmers” and “switchers” to proliferate and to strengthen the government’s discourse.

8.4 Strengths and Limitations

Looking back at each part of my qualitative research, this type of study has inevitably and admittedly some points for further improvement. I designed the interviews as follows: I noted down a limited number of questions in preparation. When conducting the interviews, I let my informants choose a meeting place where it was most convenient or comfortable at the time for them. To create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere, I started out my interviews with questions that are relatively easy. The goal was to put them at ease and to encourage them to continue talking. However, I frequently interrupted the flow of the interview to ask my informants to further explain certain terms or metaphors they used. In hindsight, this might have caused some distraction counterproductive to my goal of encouraging an easy flow of conversation. A future improvement would be to primarily focus on getting as much information on individual topics as possible, in a natural flow, by avoiding interruptions. I will save additional questions that arise during the interview for after an informant has clearly finished an anecdote or argument.

My informants consist of academics, news workers and policymakers. They treated my interviews with different degrees of seriousness or casualness. For instance, my informants from academia were much more relaxed and understanding compared to the others, due to their familiarity with academic fieldwork and academic language. In this sense, the interviews I conducted with them were collegial in nature. The informants from the media industry demonstrated as much interest and curiosity in me as I had for them. They treated my interviews as if the roles of interviewer and interviewee were exchangeable by shifting perspective. There was a high level of information exchange and discussion. In contrast, the policymakers were polite and distant, and maintained an air of seniority throughout the interviews. Reflecting on the interviews, I learned that there is always a certain kind of power dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee, which varies in different situations and sometimes shifts throughout the interviews.

As this study mainly examines the intention and function of official media discourse online, my interviews in this research only included the perspectives of policymakers, news workers,

and academics. For various reasons, I did not include opinions from information technologists and everyday social media users in my qualitative interviews. At the very least, this would require a serious effort in finding the right informants, and a complete revision of the interviews' framework. At the current stage, it is crucial to acknowledge that the data drawn from the interviews is relatively limited, so the findings of this research cannot be generalized. In this sense, the data acquired from the interviews can be seen as an important start to understand the nuanced relations among different social actors. More abundant and higher-quality data from more social groups should generate stronger results and arguments.

By reviewing the government's policy papers and examining the mass media's communicative patterns, this study contributes to the existing literature on social media's influence on China's policymaking. The combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of Xinhua's message distribution on Weibo and Twitter provides a prism through which to understand the intrinsic relations between the political and economic drives behind Xinhua's news values. Setting up various resources to back up the state-owned media outlets, the government recognizes the social media platforms as important tools for internal and external communication and encourages the state-owned media outlets to fully integrate them in their digital reporting. It is interesting to note that the very act of building domestic cultural confidence and an international image of openness implies that there are domestic instabilities and international disputes associated with China's rise in the global arena in the first place.

The study of the state-owned media outlet Xinhua and its performance on social media platforms, applied to a case study of China's BRI, contributes to the research of online discourse of this topic as a whole. Chapter Five identified the influential actors which shape the BRI discourse on Weibo and Twitter. This shows that Xinhua (crafting its social media performances according to the government's communication strategies) has a major online influence on this topic, in terms of the scale and density of its network on both Weibo and Twitter. However, if data from other major players were qualitatively scrutinized for comparison, it would produce stronger results. Future studies can also extend the present research by covering a larger scale of network analysis, and examine the evolution of the online actors and development of the online discourse of the BRI. It would be interesting to conduct a comparison of a wide range of social media users from within and outside China, which will provide a deeper and more general understanding of the government's communicative strategies regarding the topic.

Second, through close examinations on how the state media outlet Xinhua constructs the Belt and Road discourse on social media platforms in Chapter Six and Seven, this research has contributed to the ongoing debate on China's political communication and official discourse construction. My qualitative analysis shows that on the one hand, by adopting colloquial terms, sensationalist rhetorical devices, and the use of eye-catching imagery and infographics, Xinhua adjusts itself to the taste and expectations of its target social media users. On the other hand, Xinhua's obvious and deliberate use of "down-to-earth" (*jie diqi*, 接地气) language online insinuates that it is, in reality, not a form of grassroots reporting that takes its shape naturally, but part of a carefully orchestrated, "top-down" political agenda that is backed by the central government. In other words, the state media actor intends to shape the dominant discourse by adopting it.

Third, by adopting various digital methods throughout, this research taps into the explorations of digital humanities. In Chapter Five, I used software tools to collect and analyse relevant data from Twitter and Weibo (Python scripts for Twitter, and the tool Founder for Weibo). In Chapter Six, I applied another software tool, Yoshikoder, for text analysis (Yoshikoder has built-in functions for analysis of English terms, and for the Chinese, I used the reference repository on CNCorpus.org). By comparing the advantages and disadvantages of each of these tools and methods, this research shows that these digital methods have considerable advantages, and are therefore becoming increasingly powerful in the field of current media studies, despite their drawbacks. Nevertheless, the limitations, challenges and errors produced by using these digital tools should be closely kept in mind. In this respect, I agree with Rogers (2013) that while researchers could think along with the digital tools they use, they must stay aware that the outcomes of digital research practices have a certain validity in research development, but this does not make them universal truths (Rogers, 2013).

Finally, as it requires a much longer time to testify whether the Chinese government's plans of formulating a stronger discursive power will be effective in the years to come, this research can be developed into a larger research project. The impact of China's online discourse on shaping international opinion about the BRI cannot be definitively known yet. In the future, as the policy develops further and information is more widely distributed throughout the world, assessment of positive or negative reactions will be able to be gauged.

8.5 Conclusion

I initiated my research with an aim to expand our understanding of how ICTs influence the government's communicative strategy that reflects through the state media outlets. This research compares with studies on media in different social and political contexts, and examines the dichotomous views of ICTs' role in China. By analysing Xinhua's activity on social media platforms and its discursive patterns, my study suggests that the theories of disciplinary and symbolic power are still significantly applicable to the contemporary political communication in China.

Tapping into the Xinhua's reporting perspectives on social media platforms Weibo and Twitter, the approach of discourse analysis provides a general picture of how Xinhua forms its communicative strategies under the overarching regulations and guidelines. Through the analysis of China's media regulations, the BRI, and social media phenomena, my research implies that the Chinese policymakers should not see the innovation of technology as a reliable incentive for social change as China continues its opening-up policy. The assessment of the success or failure of China's digital, social media public relations efforts in various regions of the world, on various subjects, is a worthwhile subject for future research.