

**CHINESE “WOLF WARRIOR”
DIPLOMACY AND
FOREIGN PUBLIC OPINION**

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Executive Summary

1. Governments employ digital public diplomacy to shape foreign citizens' attitudes in their favour using online platforms such as YouTube and Twitter as seen in Russian Today's content or US embassy accounts promoting American values and policies.
2. In recent years, Chinese diplomats have shifted towards a more assertive "wolf warrior" diplomacy (WWD) on Twitter, a term adopted from a 2017 movie celebrating China's national prowess. This approach contrasts with their earlier reserved diplomacy.
3. This diplomacy style, exemplified by tweets from China's spokespersons Zhao Lijian and Hua Chunying, juxtaposes flaws of Western countries (especially the United States) with praises for China.
4. Despite Western media's negative depiction of China's "wolf warrior" diplomacy, the term itself is not inherently derogatory. The "wolf warrior" strategy of critiquing others while praising oneself is a tactic not unique to China.
5. While much research examines message content, a key role of digital public diplomacy, few assess its actual impact on audiences (e.g. how foreign audiences perceive the message-sending country, particularly China). The importance of US-China relations warrants an understanding of American reception of China's WWD strategy.
6. Platforms' labelling, like "government account" or "state-affiliated media", has the potential of reducing message credibility. Other than Twitter, platforms like YouTube and Facebook continue to use such labels on state-linked accounts.
7. Experiment 1, which analyses participants' reaction to state-affiliated tweets, suggests that Chinese diplomats' positive portrayals of their nation can foster a favourable image of China. However, critiques of the United States have no

significant impact on American perceptions. In Experiment 2, messages favouring China in Chinese state-controlled media tweets did not significantly enhance its image among Americans.

8. Findings show that praising one's nation might potentially enhance its global image, whereas criticising rivals yields no results. China's WWD strategy, particularly during heightened anti-China sentiments, has restricted effectiveness. However, "negative-US" messages did not backfire, indicating WWD does not necessarily harm China's image. In essence, WWD's benefits might be limited, so are its downsides.
9. China's stance on WWD has evolved from *Global Times*' 2021 support to Qin Gang's 2023 dissent. However, WWD elements, like Hua Chunying's recent tweets, remain prevalent. Lacking an alternative, China might persist with WWD.
10. In general, nations benefit more from highlighting their positives rather than criticising rivals, pointing towards an ideal route for national image enhancement.