

New Features of Chinese Network Political Culture in Social Media Era

Xiaoying Lin^{1,2,*}

¹School of Advertising, Communication University of China, No.1, Dingfuzhuang Street(E), Chaoyang District, Beijing, P.R.China.

²School of Media, Shanghai Sanda University, 2727, Jinhai Road, Shanghai, P.R.China.

*Corresponding author. Email: linxy06@cuc.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

This paper takes Chinese social media Weibo as the study object, and studies the new characteristics of Chinese network political culture in the era of social media. In the era of social media, the new features of China's online political culture are: the attention to serious political topics tends to be detailed and gossip oriented, the expression of political attitudes tends to be segmented, the emotional complexity of state organs and staff, and the idealization of political expectations behind negative comments. Facing the new characteristics of network political culture, the government should actively guide and coordinate to build a new, civilized and healthy network political culture.

Keywords: social media, Sina Weibo, network political culture

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the statistical report on China's Internet development, by June 2019, the number of Chinese internet users reached 854 million, the internet penetration rate was 61.2%, and the number of mobile internet users was about 847 million, accounting for 99.1% of total Internet users, up 1.6 percentage points from the end of 2018. [1] The development and popularization of the Internet in China has a great impact on the economic, political life, social contact and cultural heritage of the society, especially the popularity of social media such as microblog in China, which makes Chinese citizens obtain a new way of political participation, which is totally different from the traditional way of political participation. The openness, interactivity and directness of internet greatly stimulate the enthusiasm of Chinese people to participate in political and social topics, and make the participants' political attitudes and political cognition change. Through analyzing the popular current affairs on Sina's micro blog, this paper will explore the political attitude of Chinese netizens and reveal the new characteristics of the development of network political culture in the new media era.

2. POLITICAL CULTURE AND NETWORK POLITICAL CULTURE

In the 1950s, the study of political culture began to flourish. Almond, an American scholar, put political culture into the study of political science. In 1978, G.Bingham Powell Jr., believed that "political culture is a set of political attitudes, popular beliefs and feelings in a

certain period of a nation." [2] Political culture is formed by the interaction of a nation in the long-term historical activities, in the current social, political, economic and cultural activities. The political culture formed by people in history has an important influence on the political behavior of the nation or country, which will affect the behavior of political decision-makers, political demands and the response to the law. In short, political culture refers to the deep-seated cognition, emotion, attitude and belief of social members in politics.

Under the network environment, the network political culture is the sum of the mental products, such as political attitude and political emotion, which are formed by the Internet users' understanding and evaluation of the political reality carried by the specific types of political information, and through the continuous accumulation of the general subjective consciousness level. The network political culture contains the consciousness product of "network politics", which is a new type of "sub" political culture. [3] The political culture of Chinese society presents new characteristics in the Internet age. The network political culture is the new form of political culture in the Internet age.

3. NEW CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE NETWORK POLITICAL CULTURE

3.1. Attention to serious political topics tends to be detailed and gossip oriented

From September 4 to 5 of 2016, the 11th summit of G20 leaders was held in Hangzhou. As the main platform for global economic cooperation, the G20, China, as an

emerging market and the largest developing country in the world, can realize positive interaction with more countries and organizations in the world through this platform to achieve win-win development. However, during such a major festival, the focus of microblog netizens is not the important topic of the conference, but some details of the conference: "national banquet recipe disclosure", "leaders' group photo stand", "first wives' buy, buy, buy" and "how the amazing night is born", etc. Netizens spread these details in a joking network language, and quickly became a hot topic on the Internet. Related topics were ranked in the top ten of Sina Weibo hot search list that day.

On such a serious topic as diplomatic relations, microblog users also enlarge the details of their concerns. On the morning of November 10, 2014, during the forenoon of APEC, Xi Jinping met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Great Hall of the people in Beijing. Netizens captured the details of Shinzo Abe 's first hand gesture and no smile from the live video. The two leaders 'handshake picture was widely forwarded and commented. The details and gossip of microblog users on major and serious political topics reflect that in the era of social media, there is one-sided cognition on political topics. Internet users over interpret the details of the handshake, only judging the attitude of Chinese leaders from one or two pictures. This extreme expression will seriously affect the diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

Why do netizens pay more attention to important and serious political topics, which tend to be detailed and gossip? This has something to do with the openness and popularity of social media on the Internet. In the era of Web 2.0, "unlike the traditional cultural structure, elites are replaced by ordinary Internet users, the communication between equal and free subjects becomes the mainstream, and the elitism centralization in the era of authoritarianism is weakened.". [4] In the age of authoritarianism, the people's gossip about politics can only be carried out in private and cannot be discussed publicly. In the era of we-media, the public is highly involved in social media. Ordinary netizens are different from a few elites in their attention to politics and tend to choose easy topics for discussion. Therefore, serious political issues emerged, which were interpreted in detail by netizens, quickly spread in social networks and became a hot topic.

3.2. Political attitude expressed in form of jokes

"Duanzi" originally refers to a section of artistic content in crosstalk works. In the era of social media, netizens often arrange jokes on political topics, express their political attitudes in an artistic way, and criticize the current events with helpless ridicule and attack.

On July 12, 2016, the Hague International Arbitration Tribunal made a "final adjudication" on the South China Sea arbitration case, claiming that China has no "historical ownership" of the South China Sea area. Searching "South China Sea Arbitration" on Sina Weibo, the results show that on that day, Weibo search index of "South China Sea Arbitration" broke through the peak of 3.09 million, while

the topic of " China: Not even a bit can be left behind " initiated by the official Weibo account of Fujian Provincial Committee of the Communist Youth League triggered the relay of netizens, generated 6.5 billion reading volume and 8.78 million discussions, and became the top ten hot topics of Weibo search in 2016. Popular Weibo comments are: if unilateral arbitration is useful, we will send God to punish you; let alone South China Sea, a package of Central South Sea cigarette will not give you. [5] The comment is a typical use of paragraph language to express the attitude of supporting national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is funny and reflects the firmness of the attitude at the same time.

In 2014, the APEC meeting was held in Beijing. In order to ensure that the air quality can reach a good level, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei issued a series of measures, such as road restrictions and shutdown of polluting enterprises. Netizens call the blue sky in Beijing during the conference "APEC blue", and attach a new meaning to APEC, "air pollution eventually controlled".

One of the major characteristics of network language is the free expression, especially when it comes to current political news. Netizens are used to express their emotions through "jokes", comics or pictures, or obscure or direct. These "jokes" with strong personal feelings, and can quickly spread to other netizens to follow or identify with.

3.3. Emotional complexity of state organs and government officials

In social media, when it comes to the news about state organs or government officials, especially corruption or privilege, Chinese netizens react fiercely, with severe wording and sarcastic tone. On February 15, 2017, the topic "the director of the police station hits people in the street" once occupied the first place of the hot topic of the day. Sina Weibo reported that the head of a police station in Baoding was carrying underworld to beat women. Under the topic, netizens' popular comments were fierce. They were dissatisfied with the fact that the head of a police station, as a state official, ignored the national law and questioned how to become a police officer and promoted to a director because of such low quality. In the popular comments, there were frequent names such as "local tyrant".

On the other hand, when the news of civil servant abide their duties and selfless dedication was hot on Weibo, netizens also use vivid words and image emoticons to express their respect for the public servants. Take the explosion in Binhai New Area of Tianjin on August 13, 2015 as an example. One of the most frequently forwarded microblogs in this event is a cartoon named "the most handsome retrograding in the world" created by a netizen. By the end of December 2019, the microblog had been forwarded more than 520000, the number of comments reached 73000, and the praise was nearly 440000. This cartoon vividly depicts the firefighters who rushed to the scene of the disaster without hesitation, "the most

handsome retrograding in the world" has moved numerous netizens, and the popular comments are full of concern and respect for firefighters.

The object of network political culture bears the realistic political problems. The complicated attitude of netizens towards the staff of state organs, on the one hand, reflects the people's dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic style and corruption of state organs and staff in reality, and the network, because of its anonymity, stimulates the extremely destructive side of human nature. Therefore, in social media, the negative news about state organs and staff can always quickly become the focus of the topic, and netizens take the opportunity to vent their dissatisfaction. On the other hand, positive energy news can instantly inspire the people to love the Communist Party and support government, praise the responsible civil servants and praise them one after another. In the face of a large number of negative evaluation, the media need to make a sound from a rational and constructive point of view, to ease contradictions, bridge opposites and gather consensus, rather than watching and stirring up the flames; the media need to spread more positive and positive news on the Internet, and positive energy is the best booster for social progress. However, the most fundamental thing is to change the style of work of government staff, and deeply implement the mass line.

3.4. Idealization of political expectation behind negative comments

Internet politics enriches the meaning of democracy, expands the field of democracy, and improves citizens' democratic consciousness. Internet users can effectively experience the democracy of modern political life with the help of modern network. Internet users express their opinions and suggestions through the Internet and participate in politics, which can release the bad emotions of the society. Every kind of complaints about state organs and staff members on micro-blog is hidden behind the basic demands of the people for better national governance, the more honest and efficient government and the expectation of more just judicature.

Take the hot topic "Shandong vaccine scandal " on Weibo in 2016 as an example. Sina Weibo has 24.13 million articles on this topic and 6520 discussions. The news about the problematic vaccine in People's Daily has been reprinted more than 10000. Netizens angrily expressed their concerns about the safety of vaccines, but also put forward requirements and expectations for law enforcement departments: to intensify efforts to crack down on illegal criminals. During the 2014 Beijing APEC conference, "APEC blue" quickly became a hot vocabulary on Weibo, with a reading volume of 110 million and 45000 microblogs participating in the discussion. Hot keywords reflect the concern of netizens on the people's livelihood, which is also the expectation of the government to effectively control environmental pollution for a long time.

Facing the negative and emotional comments of netizens, the party and government should learn to find out the public's demands from these complaints, and clearly know public's concerns and live up to the expectations of the people. The development of Internet politics will develop towards a benign direction. On the one hand, it will not cause any impact on the existing political order and social order, but also enhance and cultivate China's public. The democratic consciousness of the people and the democratic style of the leaders and staff of the party and government organs at all levels.

4. CONCLUSION

In the era of social media, China's network political culture presents new characteristics, which are manifested in the following aspects: the attention of serious political topics tends to be detailed and gossip oriented, the expression of political attitudes tends to be jokes, the emotional tendency towards state organs and staff tends to be negative and the political expectations behind the negative comments are idealized. These new characteristics of network political culture are closely related to the special cultural environment of network and the social reality of China.

The reason why the attention to major and serious political topics tends to be detailed and gossip oriented is that: the network environment is different from the political environment under the previous "authoritarian rule", the people can make fun of political figures and gossip, and the popular netizens tend to be relaxed and entertained compared with the elite groups; The parody of netizens' political attitude is the embodiment of the network's special way of expression, which implies dissatisfaction and complaint to social problems; the emotional complexity of state organs and staff is dissatisfaction with the actual bureaucratic style and corruption of the current state organ staff, which implies the people's idealized political expectations.

The government should attach great importance to the new features of the network political culture, because it is related to whether the mainstream political culture and social ideology can continue to have a unified cohesive force and appeal. Facing the new trend of Internet public opinion, the government should actively guide and coordinate to build a new, civilized and healthy internet political culture.

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