



# The Image Analysis of Foreign Aid Between China and The United States from the perspective of comparative politics

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**Abstract.** After the World War II, the power structure had been fundamentally switched from the bipolar pattern to the world multi - polarization direction till now and would last for a long decade. Under this circumstance, People's Republic China has rising and trying to participate more in international affairs, while the U.S. is trying to keep its leading position. This essay will critically analyse the images China and the U.S. national image through their foreign aid conduction and whether they have reached the goal. By using quantitative text analyse tools, this essay found a totally different media and voice reaction on these two countries. Meanwhile, this essay will use the examples in Sudan, after compare and contrasted the image through foreign aid, this essay will provide suggestions for China for future practice mainly in two perspectives: reduce antagonism of discourse and identify the purpose of assistance.

**Keywords:** Foreign Aid, National Image, Comparative politics, China, United States.

## 1 Introduction

Foreign aid is an action usually conducted by countries, which transfers its public resources to other countries, non-governmental organizations or international organizations. The most accepted standard carried out by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is that the transfer should contain at least 25% complimentary ingredients [1]. National image is the subjective perception of a specific country's history, culture, politics, economy and other comprehensive factors. It is also a kind of media output of a country system after being processed by public image under specific conditions [2].

The U.S. was the first mover in the field of foreign aid. Right after the World War II, the U.S. had already started its Marshall Plan in 1947 to help Europe recover and against Soviet Union [3]. After more than 70 years of development and improvement, the U.S. and the international foreign aid procedure had been well adapted. However, due to varies factors, China did not join the OECD, and because the voice of the international community is in under the control of western countries such as Britain and

the United States, most of the reports and news on China’s foreign is negative and was painted as a Chinese threat and neo-colonialism. Thus, study on the different image on China and U.S. is important for both helping China to create a responsible image of a major country in peace, cooperation but also for China to break through the Western monopoly on international public opinion to establish a more just and open international discourse system.

This essay mainly adopts the literature analysis method, the combination of qualitative and qualitative methods, case study method and interdisciplinary research method. As for the literature review, until now, the previous scholars and journal articles are mainly divided into two fields, one is to study about how China’s foreign aid is reported in western media like Mao’s article [4] and Zhang’s analyse [5]. Another field is to study the difference between China and U.S. foreign aid and put criticizes on U.S. aids’ political strings and hegemonic practice [6]. However, this essay tries to analyse from a new perspective which is by adding the western view on U.S. foreign aids’ this essay wants to claim that China’s foreign aid is in a developing stage, and China should seek to claim its purpose on its foreign aid to mitigate the suspicions from western countries and medias, meanwhile, scholars should avoid the situation that China and U.S. blame each other’s aid method and ignore to accept the bright point in each other’s aids. By conducting these two methods, this essay believes that a better future for China to show its responsibility and soft power will be reached.

2      **Text analyses on China and U.S. media**

In this part, this essay will use qualitative software to identify and analyse the major concept and opinions the medias tried to deliver through their reports and news. This essay selected articles from BBC and China Daily randomly from 2010 to 2020, and manual classification is used to remove stories that are not relevant to foreign aid in substance and selected 10 articles for each chart (see example articles in appendix). This essay had found results as follows:

**Table 1.** Top 20 words from BBC reports on U.S. foreign aid (2019)

Word	Counts	Weighted percentage	Synonyms
Aid	162	3.19%	assistance
Foreign	87	2.04%	-
Government	117	1.90%	admission
President	66	1.30%	-
Countries	66	1.27%	-
Cut	69	1.16%	cutting
World	45	1.01%	global
Money	42	0.99%	-
Funds	54	0.94%	support
Wants	42	0.91%	needs

Projects	48	0.86%	proposals
Corker	36	0.84%	-
Trump	36	0.84%	-
Process	57	0.83%	progress
Directly	93	0.80%	aims
Work	84	0.78%	act
Bangladesh	33	0.77%	-
International	42	0.74%	national
Congress	33	0.73%	parliament
Development	51	0.73%	getting

From this table, we can find that, the BBC's reports on US are mainly talking about its aid factors such as words like "aid" "foreign" "government", which means BBC's reports on US foreign aid is less focus on driving audience to a certain "story" or theory or opinion. An interesting point is that the word "cut" appears 69 times, which shows the current situation for US foreign aid is facing challenges. Another factor is that from the word "work" together with the word "development" shows the aid's positive effect. To conclude, the BBC reports on US foreign aid is basically from a neutral and factors-based perspective.

**Table 2.** Top 20 words from BBC reports on China foreign aid (2019)

Word	Counts	Weighted percentage	Synonyms
China	285	4.46%	-
Countries	192	2.72%	nation
Aid	132	1.85%	help
Chinese	96	1.50%	-
Africa	87	1.36%	-
Loans	81	1.20%	lending
Money	69	1.08%	-
Development	87	0.95%	growth
Image	78	0.90%	picture
Beijing	51	0.80%	-
International	63	0.80%	global
Researchers	51	0.80%	research
World	60	0.80%	universe
Get	102	0.72%	acquired
African	42	0.66%	-
Debt	39	0.61%	debts
Year	39	0.59%	annually
Wants	51	0.57%	requirements
Economic	36	0.56%	economics
Found	42	0.54%	initiative

Table 2 shows the fact that a significant weighted percentage difference from the US report. “China” has accounted 4.46% and appeared 285 times in 10 articles while “Chinese” is counted 96 times, which shows a significant prefer for BBC to stress the foreign aid are conducted by China and Chinese people. Another factor is that, although “development” also appears at a high frequency, negative words like “loan” “debt” “get” “wants” shows a trend for BBC to report Chinese foreign aid as a kind of purposefully, especially about some purposes with negative effects on recipient countries. And this had a negative effect on China’s national imagine.

By compare and contrasting the different attends for BBC in reporting the foreign aids for US and China, this essay found that when western medias talking about China and Chinese foreign aid, they are more concerned about the purpose of Chinese foreign aid, and tend to interpret the purpose with a negative assumption. To avoid this situation and to establish a positive national image, this essay suggests that, except making Western countries realize the nature of China’s foreign aid through a long period of game and practice, a certain and reasonable purpose of Chinese foreign aid is an inescapable question. By claiming Chinese purpose, misunderstandings and malicious speculation can be mitigated, and this is beneficial for a good national image of China.

### **3 Foreign aid theories and examples in practice**

In this part, this essay will first introduce several theories of international system and foreign aid, and then will study Sudan case on China and US foreign aid and the national image behind their practice. A typical theory on foreign aid is Harrod-Domar model [7], which argues that the economic growth rate is inversely proportional to the capital output rate which put forward the view that foreign aid contributes to the economic growth of donor countries. After the Washington Consensus was reached and the neo-liberalism theory became the main theory to prompt the free trade across borders. To prompt Washington Consensus, US set up rules for receipt countries which is called structural adjustment programs [8]. And this is most criticized by Chinese scholars. During this time, Rostow’s development aid theory is based on his Cold War thinking mode of economic development concept, that is, economic growth stage theory. According to him, social development can be divided into the following five stages according to the economic scale of the society, in Rostow’s theory, he pointed out that all countries should trace to reach the higher stage, which means they need to try to become a country like western view of modernization, and this theory is also called modernization theory. However, underdevelopment theory (a set of theories represented as dependency theory [9] and world-systems theory [10]) argues that, underdevelopment countries are not “catching up” (with developed countries) but rather “breaking out” (of domination) necessary for development. Other unpopular theories on foreign aid and development is neo-statist theory, which argues for state’s intervene and rational policy and human development theory, which focused on human happiness rather than economic factors like GDP.

After introduced and analysed theories which concentrated on foreign aid and development, this essay will study on Sudan case to analyse the national image China and US created during their foreign aid conduction. Sudan is a country located in the northeast Africa, and both China and US have conducted their foreign aids to Sudan. This case study will divide the time period into three parts, the first part is the period during cold war. At this period, Chinese government mainly helps Sudan by several large infrastructure construction project [11], one thing to notice that, during this period Chinese technician has provided Sudan technicians skills to repair its machine, which is beyond simple material aid. But the purpose of this action is due to “not to ask those imperialists for help”, which is related to strong cold war background. Meanwhile, US found Sudan’s large oil resource and had put large foreign aid to help Sudan on oil infrastructures, thus, when the government changed to a not US favoured government, US reduced its foreign aid down to zero. During 1990s, China started to help Sudan construct its energy infrastructure [12] and helped Sudan transferred from an oil import country into an export country. Meanwhile, due to the political reasons, US put economic sanctions on Sudan. In the 21th century, both China and US started various forms of foreign aid in education, medical, infrastructure and others. The main guide line for both China and US are humanitarian assistance.

From Sudan case, this essay argues that although US returned back for Sudan’s foreign aid, the national image US created in Sudan is a kind of profit-driven, because throughout the time US and Sudan relationship is kind of related to Sudan’s energy resources. The national image China created through its foreign aid is a kind of responsible image, because China never stops the foreign aid in Sudan even the government changed and the civil war outbreak. However, China’s constant foreign aid to Sudan was related to ideology issues during cold war. One thing to concentrate in this case is about the attitude behind China and US national image. China government had promised not to intervene Sudan election and will continuously conduct foreign aid to Sudan, on the contrary, US government attitudes toward Sudan is significantly different according to different governments. Under this circumstance, China’s foreign aid is more aimed to countries and civilians while US’s foreign aid is more concentrated to governments. And the division of foreign aid purposes related to different national image.

#### **4 Factors, challenges and reactions for national image creating**

In the previous parts this essay had evaluated media reports and foreign aid theories and case study. In this part, this essay will introduce the essay into field of national image building. According to statistics from China's Foreign Aid (2011), the country's first white paper on foreign aid, the average annual growth rate of China's foreign aid reached 29.4 percent from 2004 to 2009 [13]. And according to statistics from China's latest white paper on foreign aid, China's foreign aid (2014), from 2010 to 2014, the total amount of China's foreign aid reached 89.3 billion yuan [14]. However, the rise and persist foreign aid from China is often being labelled with neo-colonialism [15],

and had a negative effect on China's national image building. The process of national building requires both subject's advocating and object's reaction. A study on China's national image building found that although Chinese media and government try to break through the hegemon of western media and advocate for Chinese foreign aid and Chinese plan like one belt and one road, but there are fewer referrals in the local media [16]. Another challenge is from the internal factors, because Chinese media's report in international societies are usually with initiative, pay more attention to positive, theory, and ignored the foreign audience is want to know the facts and details of the report, so it is easy to hold the western media to seize the Chinese foreign aid has not been disclosed in detail, such as lending and investment, oil and gas resources to deliberate smear China. In addition, because audience does not know the real factor, and the culture difference may lead to prefer in specific explanations, (an example of this could be the word dragon, which has totally different meanings in Chinese and western culture [17]) if there is only one voice in blaming China in those areas, it is hard for China to form a responsible cooperative and peaceful major country image. Due to the two challenges in forming China's national image, this essay suggests that, there are several factors as follows: According to Chinese adopt of validity development theory [18], China has an aim to help receipt countries to achieve self-development, with this shift and guiding supports, China had actually provided international societies with creative contributions: one is about push western development assistance gradually shift from vertical domination to equal cooperation [19], and another contribution is to promote the shift of western development aid from emphasizing aid effectiveness to development effectiveness [20].

## 5 Discussion

For discussion, due to the availability of textual analysis data, this essay only drawn an outline of western media's reports on China and US. Another limitation of this essay is due to the author's own academic level, only one case study in Sudan is included in debate and analyse. For future scholars, more specific cases could be applied, especially current case about Chinese foreign aid on COVID-19.

However, China's contribution in foreign aid can be seen by most countries, especially on the post pandemic period, China has put a lot of efforts on controlling COVID-19 and the sent medical staff, medical equipment, epidemic supplies and all kinds of low-interest loans to support other countries [21]. This is a chance for China to break through the western media's reports and set up a good and responsible national image for China.

## 6 Conclusion

To conclude, chapters this article in detail analyses the national image of foreign aid in the building, this paper studied the aid of China and the United States in the western media reported the difference, then in Sudan, for example analysis of the actual

behaviour of foreign aid after the cold war, China and the United States in the final analysis of the current China's foreign aid such as the power loss and facing publicity.

To summarize, approaches for China to build a good national image can be listed as follows: First, make a clear stand and explain China's purpose on foreign aid to avoid suspicions. Second, try to cover more detail and factor reports in external communication to break through the monopoly of the discourse power of western media. Third, China should be confident of its foreign aid practice and use these practice to advocate a more benefit system for receipt countries and establish a responsive, cooperative and peaceful major country image. To summarize, participating in international societies with an open role and engage discussions on foreign aid conduction is a suggested way by this essay for China to create a peaceful, cooperative and responsible major country image. It could be suggested that, further studies could focus more on how to disseminate China's foreign aid clearly and objectively and mitigate the western misunderstandings about China's foreign aid.

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