The Age of E-diplomacy - Reviewing and Rethinking Australia's Efforts in China

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that, where not otherwise cited, this thesis submitted as part of the requirements for the Australian National University Doctor of Philosophy program is entirely my own work.

Xiying Lei
20 April 2019

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 19th century, new technologies have continued to redefine the ways in which diplomacy is conducted, and importantly, the role of individuals in diplomacy. Like telegraph, radio and television before it, the universalisation of access to the Internet has dramatically transformed the form of diplomacy in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Where broadcast technologies allowed the state to transmit information to the domestic public as well as foreign states for diplomatic purposes, the medium of the Internet affords individuals the tools and platform to directly partake in the diplomatic process, and achieve a real, instantaneous effect in state-to-state relations, for better or worse. The prevalence of social media, such as Twitter internationally and Sina Weibo in the People’s Republic of China, have in the first two decades of the 21st century further blurred the bounds of influence for individuals, media and government, and contributed to an internationally expedited news cycle.

As a constantly developing and changing concept, this new stage of E-diplomacy presents challenges and opportunities that are not, as this thesis will argue, easily placed within current conceptual frameworks of diplomacy. As a result, many actors are not properly equipped to either fully utilise its potential, or manage the risks posed by this new era of diplomacy.

This thesis provides a definition for this new stage, E-diplomacy 3.0, with respect to the history of E-diplomacy and diplomacy more broadly, and through a case-study of Australia’s use of E-diplomacy on Sina Weibo on China, provides an overview of the ways in which this technology changes the diplomatic landscape and how individuals interact with each other and state relations; the challenges and opportunities this presents for states; and, on the basis of these findings, makes suggestions for the optimisation of E-diplomatic practices.

Keywords: E-diplomacy, digital diplomacy, Australia-China, Sina Weibo
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Chapter I

Introduction

i. Introduction—The Rise and Significance of Weibo for E-diplomacy in the Chinese Context

Since the middle of the 19th century, new technologies and their direct descendants, such as telegraph, fax, radio, television and internet, have gradually become ubiquitously utilised by policy-makers as new governing tools, principal sources of information and the forces for propelling the development of the society. Similarly, diplomatic processes using these new tools have begun to gain momentum. Upon the dawning of the 21st century, especially with the emergence of Twitter, Facebook and their siblings, this effect has become increasingly apparent, although their predecessors remain relevant. E-diplomacy has dramatically transformed the way in which diplomacy is being conducted. China is of course no exception, and in fact provides a pertinent case study for the widespread application and implementation of E-Diplomatic practices. Following the emergence and popularisation of what has been referred to as the Chinese version of Twitter – Sina Weibo – traditional notions and forms of diplomacy have been considerably reshaped in the Chinese context, as have some of the practices of embassies and other foreign powers.

In the first place, this and the following chapters will attempt to contribute to the literature on E-diplomacy; or, more precisely, E-diplomacy 3.0, based on the process of its evolution from 1.0 to 3.0 and performance and influence. Secondly, it will analyse the changes in China’s diplomatic features before and after the emergence of Weibo, and thus

\[\text{1 Philip Seib, Real-Time Diplomacy: Politics and power in the social media era (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), P2}\]
\[\text{2 Fergus Hanson, ‘Baked in and Wired: eDiplomacy@State’, brookings.edu}\]
\[<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/10/25-ediplomacy-hanson> accessed on 4th June 2013]\]
infer the challenges and opportunities for E-diplomacy in the Weibo age. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will provide an overview of Australia’s efforts in China as a case study for E-diplomacy within the conceptual framework defined in the preceding sections, and then provide some insights into the successes, failures, challenges and opportunities for Australia in its E-diplomacy efforts in China. Some other countries’ efforts and experiences in China will be referenced for the recommendations to Australia.

A new definition of E-diplomacy in the Chinese context

E-diplomacy, as a matter of diplomatic fact since the 18th century, is a new notion for diplomatic studies. There are many definitions of E-diplomacy. One recent discussion even suggests that ‘there is no agreed definition of E-diplomacy. A slightly revised working definition is the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives, by which the understandings of E-diplomacy become broader and can eschew a simple equate with social media’.

One of the most pertinent reasons behind the failure of researchers to reach a consensus on the definition of E-diplomacy is that the backgrounds and levels of development of E-diplomacy in different phases and countries vary considerably. For example, in the 19th century the telegraph was the core tool of E-diplomacy, but was replaced by fax, radio and television in the 20th century, and transformed by the Internet upon the arrival of the 21st century. Similarly, based on geographical and national dimensions, in the United States, owing to its leading technology, matured awareness and understandings about E-diplomacy and ‘globalised national interests’, E-diplomacy is already applied across eight different program fields including Knowledge Management, Public Diplomacy, Internet Freedom,

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3 Fergus Hanson, ‘Baked in and Wired: eDiplomacy@State’, brookings.edu
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/10/25-ediplomacy-hanson> accessed on 4th June 2013
Information Management, Consular, Disaster Response, Harnessing External Resources and Policy Planning. However, in many other countries, these conditions, capacities and demands do not exist; thus, an overly abstract definition is, in effect, meaningless for these countries, the leaderships of which are very likely to possess somewhat different understandings of E-diplomacy from those popularised by the field-leading United States.

China’s plight is comparable. Vis-à-vis those countries with accumulated experiences and advanced understandings of E-diplomacy, China should be considered as a new and inexperienced participant in this field. In fact, E-diplomacy in China is emerging along with China’s public diplomacy trend. Although the earliest Chinese E-diplomacy related department—the management division of the Internet home page affiliated to the Foreign Ministry Information Department—was established in June 1999, its main mission was merely to maintain the Foreign Ministry and its agencies’ website as a fact-laden information base.

During the following decade, E-diplomacy remained a fuzzy concept for China. With the emergence and drive behind a so-called ‘China Threat Theory’, popular in Western countries, this was at odds with China’s own diplomatic formulations of a ‘peaceful rise’ and ‘go global, bring in’ strategies, and placed China’s public image in an unfavourable light. Based on this reality, the Chinese Government gradually realised the importance of domestic

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4 Fergus Hanson, ‘Baked in and Wired: eDiplomacy@State’, brookings.edu
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/10/25-ediplomacy-hanson> accessed on 4th June 2013
5 Wen Jiabao, ‘Turning your eyes to China’—speech by Premier Wen Jiabao at Harvard University, fmprc.gov.cn
<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceuni/eng/xw/156090.htm> accessed on 11th June 2013 (把目光投向中国—温家宝总理在哈佛大学的演讲)
6 Hu Jintao, ‘Hu Jintao’s presentation in the 17th national congress of the communist party of China’, xinhuanet.com
and international ‘discourse power’ and initiative, and its profound ability to influence social trends and public opinion.

As a result, public diplomacy has become an attractive concept and trend in China. Apart from this trend, a public diplomacy office affiliated to the Foreign Ministry’s Information Department (which was upgraded to being a department of public diplomacy directly affiliated to the Foreign Ministry in August 2012), was set up in October 2009, charged with the primary responsibility for conducting the overall planning and comprehensive coordination of the Foreign Ministry and its branches’ public diplomatic affairs. Recently, in order to coordinate increasing E-diplomatic affairs and govern cyberspace, especially to deal with the affairs related to cyber-attacks and establish international internet norms under the UN system, the Chinese Foreign Ministry established a dedicated organ named the Office of Internet Affairs in June 2013.

Since its inception, E-diplomacy, although not limited to public diplomacy, has been one of the most important forms of public diplomacy in cyber space, and has continued to emerge rapidly along with this public diplomacy trend. In 2011, China’s former foreign minister Yang Jiechi pointed out that in order to innovate in the field of China’s public diplomacy, the Foreign Ministry should vigorously and effectively use the internet for promoting the development of China’s public diplomacy. Therefore, it is not hard to see that

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China’s nascent understanding of E-diplomacy was simplistic, constituting merely a new tool or means for assisting public diplomacy.

However, as the emergence and subsequent prevalence of Weibo became apparent, E-diplomacy for the Chinese Government has become more meaningful and indispensable than the nascent understanding could have predicted. By the end of 2013, the number of ‘netizens’—a Chinese term for internet users—in China rose to 618 million, accounting for 45.8% of China’s population\(^\text{11}\). By the middle of 2018, this number had boomed to 802 million, accounting for 57.7% of China’s population, according to the 42nd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China published by the China Internet Network Information Center\(^\text{12}\). According to Sina’s 2013 financial report, the number of the users of Sina Weibo had reached 536 million and the number of daily active users was an average of 49.8 million\(^\text{13}\). After suffering a low ebb in 2014, by 2017 the number of monthly active users approached 392 million and daily active users had jumped to an average of 172 million\(^\text{14}\). This means that in China, even if one only uses the data of monthly active users to approximate activity, more than half of the total of Chinese netizens have registered a Sina Weibo account, and at least one fifth of them are active online daily. In comparison to the novel trend of internet and Weibo, the traditional media inclusive of television and newspapers have declined severely in their readership and influence. According to a report released by the research centre of the State Administration of Radio Film and Television


(SARFT) in June 2013, traditional media have been severely impacted by new media. In the capital Beijing for instance, even starting from 2010, within three years the proportion of homes using TV declined from 70% to 30% by 2013. Furthermore, the audiences of traditional media are typically middle-aged and older people whose ages are an average over 40. In addition to this, younger users especially those who are highly educated and have a higher income bracket, tend to be loyal users of new media (SARFT, 2013). On a national scale, the total number of homes using TV has declined from 240 million to 234 million between 2015 and 2018.

Against this general trend and giant user volume, Weibo has become the most influential and indeed an unparalleled social media platform in China. Accordingly, it has transformed into the key battleground of E-diplomacy in the country. Another key reason behind it is that on other Chinese E-platforms, censorship is stricter than that of Sina Weibo, and the degree of freedom is relatively lower. In this battlefield, the composition of the participants of E-diplomacy is exceptionally complex, including states, associations of states, international companies, non-governmental organisations and individuals. Of course this includes Australian government departments, government agencies, non-government organisations, enterprises, media, public figures and individuals. Each of these actors competes for ‘discourse power’ and initiative and, upon obtaining it, utilises it to assist itself in realising its objectives. Among these groups, the competition between anti-government groups (taking an aggressive role) and pro-government groups (taking a defensive role) is one

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15 The State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT), ‘the new era of meida: Change is just beginning’, gmw.cn <http://tech.gmw.cn/2013-06/13/content_7940175.htm> accessed on 14th July 2013 (视听新媒体时代：变化才刚刚开始)

16 The first half Bulletin of China's cable TV industry development in 2015, China Digital cable TV, 2016(S1):414-416 (中国有线电视：2015年上半年中国有线电视行业发展公报)

17 The second half Bulletin of China's cable TV industry development in 2018, CATV Technology, 2018(08):14-17 (有线电视技术：2018年第二季度中国有线电视行业发展公报)
of the fiercest. As a result of this ‘fight’, extreme and broader politicisation has become the most remarkable and significant feature of Weibo. More precisely, the trend of pan-politicisation—that is, the excessive politicisation of issues that do not necessarily warrant it—has become a defining feature of Sina Weibo, to the point where each political faction can ‘weaponise’ almost any topic to become a tool in its struggle for discourse power in an intended region or incident, and then utilise it.

It should be emphasised that the emergence of Weibo could be seen as a milestone in the process of China’s reform and development, with an undoubtedly profound implication for China’s subsequent development process. In this dynamic context, definitions cannot remain static, especially for utility-type definitions like E-diplomacy or, more precisely, E-diplomacy 3.0. In turn, it should be adjusted with events, which means that at different stages of development, E-diplomacy should have different guiding definitions. Thus, based on common sense, and incorporating the current trend of E-diplomacy 3.0 and its concrete performance and influences in China, the author suggests that its definition ought to be revised with the following guiding framework:

_E-diplomacy 3.0, a term which at a practical level is generally interchangeable with digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy, is the concrete manifestation of broader diplomacy in cyber space. It is an instrument closely linked with new development of information and communication technology, such as hacking techniques and social media, and used by states and non-state actors, including common individuals to fight for initiative and discourse power in an intended region or incident and then used to assist themselves to realise their specific objectives._
At this stage, the discussion may be abstract to the reader, especially around terms such as E-diplomacy, E-diplomacy 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0, and for digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy. The intricacies of these terms will be elaborated in the following chapters. Indeed, the reason for emphasising E-diplomacy 3.0 in the definition is to make a distinction between it and the previous iterations—E-diplomacy 1.0 and E-diplomacy 2.0. This definition is a utility-type definition and is judged on the basis of a historical and developing view. In the third phase, it is not necessary to be defined in a too narrow sense. A general definition is preferable which is interchangeable with other similar terminologies. This suggestion should help practitioners to more easily understand how to practise and realise their objectives. In practice, the public is only one component in E-diplomatic 3.0 actions.

*The challenges of E-diplomacy in the Weibo age*

The challenges of E-diplomacy for the Chinese Government in the Weibo age are closely linked with the current background of China:

*First challenge*

As part of the concern that China’s unprecedented growth in recent decades will lead to it threatening the national interests of the United States and Asia-Pacific, a ‘China threat theory’ has gained traction in public discourse abroad\(^\text{18}\). As a result, the US has adjusted its global strategy and inclined towards the Asia-Pacific region\(^\text{19}\). Meanwhile, although the US has strengthened its power in the Asia-Pacific region and will move the majority of its


\(^{19}\) Ni Feng, ‘New aspects in US Asia-Pacific strategy’, January 22, 2013, peoplesdaily.com.cn
warships to that region by 2020\textsuperscript{20}, it is impractical for the US to use military forces to directly subvert the Communist Party that rules the People’s Republic of China. This can be partly attributed to experience in the Korean War (1950–1953) and the Vietnam War (1959–1975). Thus, the US is more inclined to use ‘soft power’ such as its culture, democratic values, human rights policies and social welfare to exert a silent transforming influence on Chinese society and thereby discredit the mandate of the CCP. It could be argued that this has been underway for some time, but strict censorship in China has limited the impact on the Chinese public. However, the internet and its derivatives have provided the US government with a golden opportunity to break this constraint.

Especially after China became the largest internet-using nation in the world, the advantages of E-diplomacy have become obvious and it is automatically chosen by the US government as the primary way for exerting influence in the PRC. In addition, as Weibo has speedily developed in recent years, the US gained a very rare opportunity to make contact directly with more than half a billion Chinese people. On the Weibo platform, the values and ideologies of the US are penetrating into almost every corner of the social media network. For example, the Singapore Lianhezaobao (Union Morning Newspaper) reported on a research paper published by Zhongshan University in 2012 which demonstrated that, by the end of June in 2012, 50 countries had opened Sina Weibo accounts in China. Since then, this number has greatly increased. By the end of 2017, more than 200 foreign dignitaries, diplomats, heads of international organisations and nearly 300 international organisations and national public

institutions such as the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee had opened official Sina Weibo accounts.  

Among these, the US accounts are the most active ones and have the most influence. The most recent cases in 2018 include Vice-President Mike Pence’s speech on 4 Oct 2018 at the Hudson Institute in Washington that condemned China for ‘using its power in more proactive and coercive ways to interfere in the domestic policies and politics of the United States’. The article ‘Secretary’s Remarks: 29th Anniversary of Tiananmen Square’, was posted on the US embassy’s website and Weibo on 4 June 2018, along with a series of accusations in September and October 2018 about Iran’s illegal behaviours such as supporting terrorism, violating neighbouring countries and mistreating political prisoners. On one hand, the US Government uses these Weibo accounts to demonstrate its ‘soft power’ by introducing US history, culture, law, famous people, customs and heart-warming stories to help shape a favourable image of the US in Chinese society; on the other hand, the US Government is also well-versed in using the hottest issues of Chinese society and events, especially through comparing these issues with the US domestic situation, to highlight disparities between the two countries, the core differences of which are freedom, equality, democracy and justice, in order to shake the public’s recognition of the ruling party. The most typical cases are the reaction by these accounts to instances such as China’s ‘school bus accidents’ and ‘food safety event’. When accidents involving school buses occur in China, the

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22 Sina美国驻华大使馆 https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4292070081998956  
24 Sina美国驻华大使馆 https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4290613190941435  
25 Sina美国驻华大使馆 https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4288530215977001  
26 Sina美国驻华大使馆 https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4287044929349035  
US accounts immediately highlight the tough safety standards of American school buses\(^28\); similarly, when problems with China’s food security were exposed, these accounts began promoting US food security standards\(^29\). Ostensibly, these US accounts are merely introducing the domestic conditions of the US; however, it is clear they are using the stark comparison between standards to make an impact on Chinese society and put pressure on the Chinese Government. However, as a centuries-old traditional major power, the US is aware it has advantages compared to a 69-year-old PRC in almost every field, including social welfare, education, medical treatment and the most important economic and political structures.

The US government has also developed many partners in China to promote messages and information which cannot be published through official channels. For instance, the most famous propagators of democracy, human rights, the US values in China, such as Li Kaifu, Yu Jianrong and He Weifang, have protection from the US Embassy in China.\(^30\) These practitioners each have more than one million followers on Sina Weibo, and they assist the US in inculcating ‘western universal values’ in the Chinese public and using the US as a marker by which Chinese development and reform can be measured\(^31\). In addition, a special group in China called ‘Lead-the-way Party’\(^32\)—an internet slang used by Chinese patriots to describe those who oppose the CCP and admire Western countries—is voluntarily working to

\(^{28}\)Sina@美国驻华大使馆 https://weibo.com/1743951792/xBEaj15vM
\(^{29}\)Sina@美国驻华大使馆 http://c.weibo.com/1743951792/ezXg09WdBty
\(^{30}\)This can only be partly proved by the evidence released by Wikileaks, in the cables which were sent by the US embassy in Beijing to the White House. The names mentioned in the article are all listed in six cables as ‘strictly protect’ people. The original website addresses are: http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2010/02/10BEIJING358.html; http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2010/02/10BEIJING358.html; http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2010/02/10BEIJING384.html ; http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2010/01/10BEIJING68.html; http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/12/09BEIJING3315.html
\(^{32}\)Lead-the-way Party: generally thought to have originated from the sarcastic remark, ‘if foreigners invade, I’ll help the foreigners by leading the way.’ A typical case occurred in 2010 when the US and South Korea conducted multiple military exercises in the Yellow Sea. When a US aircraft carrier was going to enter the Yellow Sea, some people online said that if the US military invaded China, they would ‘lead the way.’
underpin the US E-diplomacy strategy towards China. Based on these conditions, the US utilises the means at its disposal to bring into question the legitimacy of the CCP. With the dawning of the Weibo age, the US is undisguised in utilising Weibo as an effective way to question the ideological foundation, which is considered a guarantee for maintaining CCP’s leadership in China and is one of three fundamental advantages for the CCP and the Chinese Government.

Although China also seeks to enlarge its own influence in the United States, its capability is severely limited by its weaker ‘soft power’ because, as mentioned above, it has no apparent advantages in economic structures, political ideologies and structures, social institutions and wellbeing or modern cultural products compared to the US. Therefore, it is impossible for China to utilise E-diplomacy as an effective, skilful and influential means of impacting the public of the United States. Hence, the gaps between the two countries in ‘soft power’ and the capability of utilising E-diplomacy strategy pose a considerable challenge for the Chinese Government.

Second challenge

From the perspective of the domestic environment, China now is in a transition period and multi-tiered problems have bloomed. Although China’s economy maintains a high rate of growth, social dissatisfactions with the CCP have been increasing, mainly around the following 10 issues:

1. The process of restructuring the economy and constructing a consumer-driven economy

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2. The failure to nurture and grow a middle class
3. The fast-increasing gap between the rural area and urban regions
4. Population policies unsuited to social reality
5. Bureaucratisation and profit-incentivisation of educational and scientific research institutions
6. Continued worsening of environmental pollution
7. The government’s failure in establishing a stable energy supply system
8. The moral lapses and the collapse of ideology, and the government’s failure to build an effective and convincing value system that can be accepted by the majority
9. The government’s ‘firefighting’ and ‘stability-maintenance’ style diplomacy
10. The government’s insufficient efforts in pushing political reform and promoting democracy.

Based on these dissatisfactions, it can be said a sense of crisis is now simmering below the surface in Chinese civil society. Compounding the impact of these dissatisfactions, widespread criminal tendencies are sprawling within Chinese society. A typical case was the explosion that occurred inside the Beijing Capital International Airport. In this instance, a wheelchair-bound man named Ji Zhongxing detonated an explosive at the Terminal 3 on 20 July 2013 after he was stopped from distributing leaflets outside the arrivals hall to draw attention to his complaints and appeals. On his blog he wrote in September 2006, ‘he had been attacked and beaten by security guards outside a police station in 2005 after carrying a passenger on his motorcycle. He was paralysed after the incident and petitioned for official

compensation. Since his legal appeals cannot be satisfied within the current legal framework and administrative system, he chose this desperate measure. Indeed, such cases are not rare occurrences in contemporary China. These dissatisfactions have increasingly contributed to social unrest, as well as to a large extent reducing the competitiveness of the CCP and Chinese Government in the process of struggling with the ‘hostile force’ in the E-diplomacy battle. Furthermore, this internal weakness also presents a security hazard to the CCP and the Chinese Government, because the public has become easily provoked against the government. For example, large-scale demonstrations, involving hundreds of thousands of people, occurred in Xiamen city, Dalian city, Ningbo city and Kunming city from 2007 to 2013, because local people strongly disagreed with the local governments’ development plans of introducing XP (paraxylene) chemical projects to these cities, and held concerns about the potential environmental pollution that would be generated. An extreme example was a case that occurred in Qidong city, Jiangsu Province, where ‘a massive demonstration sparked by environmental concerns against a Japanese paper company quickly turned into a riot against local officials on 28th July 2012, with thousands occupying a city government building site and attacking police… destroyed the signboard of the Communist Party and other items.’

Similar cases occurred in many other cities such as the Wengan mass disturbance in Guizhou Province in 2008; the Shifang mass disturbance, Sichuan Province, 2012; and the Shishou mass disturbance, Hubei Province, 2009. From east to west, these frequent occurrences of mass disturbance indicate that if the new leadership’s economic and political reforms do not effectively resolve current problems before China’s economic growth rate decreases to a

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37 Asahi Shimbun, ‘Nervous Chinese officials caving into massive protests’, asahi.com
38 People’s Daily, ‘Mass disturbance in Wengan county on 28th June 2008’, people.com.cn
39 BBC Chinese, ‘Shifang mass disturbance is remitted’, bbc.co.uk
lower level, a revolution akin to what happened in Egypt is not impossible within next two decades. The advent of the E-diplomacy age and the Weibo age would considerably accelerate this evolving process.

Third challenge

As has been established in the above, a ‘Weibo society’ has been established and factions have developed within it. In light of this, it is not easy for the Chinese Government to gain more influence within Weibo society. For instance, a researcher named Zhang Mingshu from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published his conclusion in April 2013 on the question, ‘whether democracy is good or not’. In his survey, he used the participants’ attitudes towards democracy as an assessing standard; the conclusion reflects that China today is divided into three parties: leftists (anti-democratisation), rightists (support democratisation) and centrists. According to his survey data, leftists make up 38.1% of participants, while the numbers of rightists and centrists are 8% and 51.5% respectively.41

It should be emphasised here that the citation of this article is not an attempt to prove whether these data are precise or not, but instead as indirect proof of the division of ideologies in current Chinese society. However, even in light of these pro-government data, the Chinese Government has already lost its discourse dominance. The government’s disadvantages are appearing more obviously in Weibo. Although the leftists and rightist have seemingly opposite positions on issues such as democracy, freedom and human rights, they are united against corruption, the gap between rich and poor, social inequality and environmental pollutions. These issues, which are closely related to Chinese people’s daily lives, constitute the hottest topics on Weibo. If the Chinese Government remains blind in this situation, the

41 Shi Yan, ‘the investigation of Chinese opinions about democracy’, May 03, 2013, infzm.com
<http://www.infzm.com/content/90096> accessed on 1st September 2013 (调查‘中国人眼中的民主’国
people’s trust in the government will eventually be lost. Meanwhile, based on the current ‘Weibo pattern’, the existing negative feelings towards the CCP and the government will not disappear but continue to accumulate and foment. In addition, the ‘Pandora’s box’ of information—as described by Philip Seib as ‘popular sources of information create challenges for those who govern’—has been opened and the Chinese Government is unable to close it. When the government decided to allow its Citizens to use Weibo in this ‘information control’ country, it had to recognise that if it could not deal adequately with its domestic problems, not only would it lose its discourse power, but also face a foreseeable danger that it could trigger a large scale social disintegration, the result of which cannot be easily quantified. Therefore, the third challenge for the Chinese Government is to learn how to manage Weibo intelligently and flexibly, and to limit its negative influences in a rational and acceptable range, while it is in the transitional period and in the process of dealing with its domestic problems.

E-diplomacy in China is closely linked with Weibo. It has seriously changed China’s traditional diplomatic direction, activity state and participants, and has increased the difficulty of diplomacy. In the future, the Chinese Government will need to explore effective ways for dealing with the challenges of international competition and foreign penetration, weakness in soft power and difficulties in managing Weibo.

*Considering Australian efforts on Sina Weibo*

Sina Weibo is an important diplomatic tool for the Chinese Government and also for the Australian Government. Weibo offers a window into certain kinds of Australian diplomatic efforts in China, whether in the political, economic, social or cultural spheres. Australian E-

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diplomatic efforts in China are by no means exceptional, but are nonetheless an important case to consider in the specific context of Sina Weibo in China. The reasons are:

First, the number of netizens or users of these E-platforms is equal to nearly a quarter of global users. As mentioned previously, by the middle of 2018 the number of Chinese netizens had boomed to 802 million, accounting for 57.7% of China’s population. This number is equal to nearly a quarter of global users. According to Sina’s 2013 financial report, the number of the users of Sina Weibo had reached 536 million and the number of daily active users was an average of 49.8 million. After suffering a low ebb in 2014, by 2017 the number of monthly active users approached 392 million and daily active users had jumped to an average of 172 million. This means that in China almost half of all netizens have registered a Sina Weibo account. This continuously growing number not only means a usefully large data pool for Australia’s specific analyses and demands in multidisciplinary fields; more importantly, it is a potential audience market which is prominently beneficial to Australian national interests.

Secondly, China’s role in challenging the international order has been problematic for its image. As China’s economy boomed, it has been recognised as the so-called unique challenger of the US-led international order which has lasted for more than half a century. This has caused China to earn extra attention from the US and its allies. Significantly, Australia is one of the closest allies of the US. Considering the costs of war, conflict is no longer a viable or preferable option for threatening or suppressing a nuclear power. The so-called ‘soft’ means of eliminating threats, including E-diplomatic activities, have become increasingly popular and many cases are worthy of being summarised, reviewed and analysed.
Thirdly, E-platforms in China have possessed greater freedom of speech than others. Due to their features and Chinese Government censorship or restrictions, the traditional media are feeble in interacting with the public, weak in timely dissemination of messages and limited in publishing or propagating of information. Thus, it is not easy for traditional diplomacy practitioners to use traditional media to make impacts on Chinese society. However, although the Chinese Government has tried to perfect its censoring and managing system in the internet world with the establishment of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace affairs on 27 Feb 2014, E-platforms are still comparatively flexible and open in these aspects, providing ample spaces for diversified E-diplomacy operations. Theoretically, all official and unofficial organisations and individuals can use these E-platforms to interact with many Chinese netizens and gradually realise their aims. E-platforms’ characteristics such as digitisation, virtualisation, interactivity and instantaneity have changed Chinese public opinion and therefore utilising public opinion to influence China has become simpler.

Fourth, in the process of promoting Australia’s E-diplomatic capacity, an experimental region is required, and China is one of the best options for Australia. China’s advanced internet environment and its predicted strong momentum towards further leading developments, are indicative of modern diplomatic trends. Theoretically, these bases and conditions are providing an outstanding experimental and practical zone which can satisfy the overwhelming majority of Australian demands for analysing different fields or groups, finding objective markets or audiences and realising various governmental or non-governmental targets. What is more, the E-diplomatic activities executed by both major powers and other countries are converging in Chinese E-space for diversified objectives. All

43 People.com.cn, the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission was established: from a big network country to a strong one,people.com.cn<http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0227/c1001-24486366.html> accessed on 27 June 2015 (中央网络安全和信息化领导小组成立:从网络大国迈向网络强国)
manner of typical E-diplomatic cases can be found in China, and both daily observations and practices are beneficial for promoting Australia’s E-capacity.

*The gap in the literature*

E-diplomacy is a relatively new research field, even for most experienced researchers of traditional diplomatic studies. Some scholars, including David Rothkopf, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, have theorised that the development of new technologies would change traditional world politics by the end of 20th century. Rothkopf\(^4^4\) pointed out that ‘the realpolitik of the new era is cyberpolitik, in which the actors are no longer just states, and raw power can be countered or fortified by information power’. Arquilla and Ronfeldt\(^4^5\) advised that ‘Noopolitik\(^4^6\) is an approach to statecraft, to be undertaken as much by non-state as by state actors, that emphasises the role of soft power in expressing ideas, values, norms and ethics through all manner of media’.

What happened two decades later was far beyond their imagination.

Coming into the 21st century, given the popularity of Internet in the world, as well as increasing demands from the Overseas Presence Advisory Panel requiring the US State Department to improve its capacity to communicate and interact with the wider world, the US State Department established its E-diplomacy unit, known as the Taskforce on eDiplomacy, in

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\(^{46}\)Noopolitik is a paradigm introduced by Arquilla and Ronfeldt in 1999 for reflecting on how the information age is affecting the US strategy. In their view, other possible terms like cyberpolitik or infopolitik are not appealing. They considered and rejected the term cyberpolitik, because they wanted to focus attention on the noosphere, not cyberspace, and because they wanted a term whose connotation would be less technological and more ideational.
2002. Around this time, a handful of scholars including Wilson P. Dizard\textsuperscript{47} and Evan H. Potter\textsuperscript{48} began to explore this new field, but most of them focused mainly on the case of the US; according, the number of research products, such as published studies and papers, is extremely limited.

In fact, academia to this date still lacks a consensus on the definition of E-diplomacy. The simplest and popularised understanding of E-diplomacy is as given on \textit{Techopedia} that: ‘E-diplomacy is the act of attempting to achieve diplomatic goals through the use of the Web, social media and communications technology in general’\textsuperscript{49}. This concept emerged as a result of the rise of social media and the increased awareness of its power. However, from the view of guiding practices and reviewing historical evolution, this definition still has much scope for improvement in delineating E-diplomatic activities or deeds under the different conditions and backgrounds.

Although the US State Department had established its Office of eDiplomacy by 2003, public debate and academic work began to pay special attention to E-diplomacy only after one of Hilary Clinton’s speeches mentioned ‘21st century statecraft’ in 2009. Interest in the topic was also stimulated by the ‘Arab Spring’ which had driven a revolutionary wave in the Arab world and overturned multiple regimes. Despite some scholars and researchers focusing on this field, the majority have mainly taken the role of observer, collecting data and information from news, reports, various articles or interviews. Many are not specialised in the fields of Internet and social media. Very few of them are actual practitioners or executors of E-diplomatic activities. This situation somewhat restricts the process of in-depth research.


\textsuperscript{49} Techopedia, Definition – What does E=diplomacy mean? <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/29050/ediplomacy> accessed on 27 June 2015
It is not difficult to address this dilemma. All E-diplomatic activities can be roughly classified into two categories. The first is ‘positive’ E-diplomatic activity, the fundamental objective of which is maximising the propagation of benefits and advantages. The other is negative E-diplomatic activity, the aim of which is to maximise harm to its targets. In the case of the former, it is usually applied in a public manner so that all can observe the entire process. However, in the case of the latter, it is ordinarily executed opaquely, and only a few people are able to approach essential components of it. The result is that it is not easy for common observers to accurately and deeply grasp the essence of E-diplomacy. Only a few researchers who are directly involved in E-diplomatic activities have moved further and deeper into this research.

ii. Aims, Focus and Arguments of the Thesis

Against the aforementioned background, the present thesis is concerned primarily with the examination of Australia’s efforts in China on Sina Weibo, in the field of E-diplomacy. This will be done through an attempt to answer three core research questions:

1. What is E-diplomacy? This is a definition of key concern to this thesis and the field of study. The thesis proposes that E-diplomacy ought to be highlighted as a utility-type definition and redefined based on its performance and influence in different countries, with various backgrounds and levels of development. A specific definition reflective of E-diplomacy’s concrete features in China, as suggested in the preceding introduction, will be suggested, and this definition will be applied to explain and review what Australia’s (not exclusively the Australian government) E-diplomatic efforts in China. These findings will be used to provide a new perspective on E-diplomacy to the public debates in Australia.
2. **Which issues are the Australian society and government intertwined with, and for what reasons?** Through the extensive review of years’ worth of debates, the thesis will attempt to systematically summarise and analyse the crucial issues that Australians have been wrestling with for several years in both general public debates and academic discussions. Many factors play comprehensive roles in this, but one of the most pertinent problems is that even for noted Australian E-diplomacy researchers such as Fergus Hanson, and in spite of practice done by Australians, organisations and enterprises, their understandings about E-diplomacy are still focused on the government-dominated variant of diplomacy. Narrow understandings, horizons and visions are inhibiting the further positioning and proceeding of Australian E-diplomatic strategies.

3. **How should Australia position its E-diplomatic direction and strategy?** The thesis will define and compare the similarities and differences between that of Australia and other E-advanced countries. For Australia, three typical cases—the incident involving Chinese movie star Li Bingbing; Mack Horton’s ‘drug cheat’ accusations against Sun Yang; and policy towards the South China sea—will be evaluated and analysed. The result of Australia’s reactions to these three cases could partly reflect Australia’s E-diplomatic capacities with respect to how they represent the ‘non-international, non-political’, ‘international, weaker-political’ and ‘international, strong political’ cases separately. The E-advanced countries to be mentioned in the thesis include major powers (the US, Russia), medium countries (India, Japan) and mini-states (Singapore, Israel). Following the comparison, the thesis will make an assessment of Australia's diplomatic conditions, plights and demands. The thesis emphasises the importance of E-diplomacy based on the case examined, and demonstrates the reasons behind Australia’s possible wish to deepen its
understanding and efforts in E-diplomacy and greater attention to its significance. Therefore, the thesis will analyse the challenges and opportunities for Australia in the following decades, and will attempt to provide a systematic analysis of how to position Australia's E-diplomatic developing direction and strategy.

iii. Contributions

This field of study is both topical and of key importance to Australia and its relations with China. This makes the thesis and its insights relevant to diplomats, governments, enterprises, academics and ordinary people alike. For Australia and the world, both government and society are vehemently debating how to promote national competency in utilising E-diplomacy immediately. For China, E-diplomacy will, to some extent, decide the CCP’s and PRC’s destinies. In fact, along with the expedited development of ‘new media’ in China, E-diplomacy has become one of the most important components of Chinese diplomacy. The Chinese Government has increasingly paid attention to this field in recent years. How successfully Australia makes use of E-diplomacy may offer lessons for how China might pursue its own E-diplomacy strategies.

The findings of this study are unique as there is a dearth of general academic work on E-diplomacy, even more so to do with Australia, and in the unique context of China. This is an important relationship for both countries to balance, and it is also a very different one from Australia’s relations at a government and Non-government level with any other country, due to the institutional and ideological differences. As someone who has built a profile in China as a youth commentator on the Weibo platform\(^{50}\), it could be argued that the author is one of

\(^{50}\) My weibo account has 2.13 million followers, and verified by Sina weibo as political commentator, https://weibo.com/210707265
many unofficial practitioners of E-diplomacy. The author’s personal insights are likely to be of interest to Australians interested in influencing international, specifically Chinese, audiences. This information is of significance to Australia, China and also the other countries in effectively and more deeply understanding the importance and impacts of E-diplomacy. The findings are useful for encouraging different countries to participate in the reshaping process of the international Internet order. Lastly, this type of research is urgently required in the daily-changing Internet E-diplomacy age.

iv. Methodology

In guiding the direction of this research, a theoretical skeleton frame based on the offensive neorealism view of John Mearsheimer has been adopted.

Offensive neorealism plants its principal emphasis on security competition among great powers within the anarchy of the international system, and it maintains that states are not satisfied with a given amount of power, but seek hegemony for security because the anarchic make-up of the international system creates strong incentives for states to seek opportunities to gain power at the expense of competitors … Given the difficulty of determining how much power is enough for today and tomorrow, great powers recognise that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power. Only a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive51 (Mearsheimer, 2001).

This view is appropriate in addressing both the central research questions and the reasons why major powers provoke fierce competition in the E-diplomatic field. It is useful for Australia to rethink its understandings of E-diplomacy. In addition, the thesis reflects the core idea of E-diplomatic activities, especially negative E-diplomatic activities.

The research is qualitative and the related questions guide the author in sourcing relevant data, through a series of semi-structured interviews with key individuals, and a review of key case studies and literature related to E-diplomacy, China’s specific situation and Australia’s efforts. The qualitative data are obtained through daily observation, interviews, access to restricted data from government and Internet enterprises, library books, academic journals, journal investigations and online resources, among others, as cited. Authorities and experts in the area of public diplomacy, social media, national security, and staff working in Internet policy, foreign embassies and non-government organisations have been contacted and/or interviewed. In addition, in order to do an in-depth, up-close and detailed examination of Australia's E-diplomatic efforts in China, three typical cases—Li Bingbing’s experience in Australia, Mack Horton's ‘drug cheat’ accusation against Sun Yang and the South China Sea disputes—have been chosen to support the research; these three cases underpin the research from three different directions—the ‘non-international, non-political’, ‘international, weaker-political’ and ‘international, strong political’, respectively. All research activities have conformed to both the national security laws of both the People's Republic of China and the Commonwealth of Australia.

v. Limitations and Challenges

The research is limited in absolute terms by its focus on Australian efforts, and a specific platform in the host nation of China. However, the inferences that may be drawn from
the conclusions may be more widely applicable. There are also important considerations to be taken into account about the possible secrecy involved in official efforts, and the dearth of publicly available information on this topic. The thesis is confined to information available to the researcher at the time of writing. For a Chinese national conducting research about another nation’s activities, there are limitations to the information that is available.

The objective limitations of, and scope for, the thesis are:

1. Australian E-diplomatic practices and E-diplomatic activities that have occurred in China.

2. Using Sina Weibo as the primary social platform for this research.

3. China's Weibo was only launched in 2008, but Australia's practices likely go further back than this.

4. Cases used are determined to have milestone significance.

5. Only non-secret materials can be directly cited. Secret ones can only be applied as reference, if available.

vi. Structure

In addition to the present introduction chapter, the thesis is comprised of an additional seven chapters. The present chapter has provided a background and basis for further research, defined the aim of the thesis in the context of the available literature and current research and outlined the methodology and limitations of the thesis.

The second chapter, *Towards a Conceptual Framework: Redefined E-diplomacy in the Guide of Practices*, reviews the relevant literature and, on this basis, provides a nuanced conceptualisation of E-diplomacy, digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy, and a comparison between new diplomacies and traditional diplomacy or public diplomacy.
The third chapter, *The Century of E-diplomacy: A Silent Contest*, classifies E-diplomatic activities and behaviours in terms of the three criteria (offensive, defensive and rational), analyses the motives, aims and means of these, and provides relevant examples.

The fourth chapter, *The Development of E-diplomacy in Australia and its Efforts on China’s Sina Weibo*, provides an introduction and background to Australian conceptualisations, opinions and arguments to do with E-diplomacy, a rationale for using Sina Weibo as a case study for this thesis, and an overview of Australian efforts on Sina Weibo to date.

The fifth chapter, *A Case Study of the ‘Li Bingbing Incident’ and an Inquiry into the Australian Medical Service System*, focuses on the case study of the public discourse on Sina Weibo surrounding an incident involving the Chinese film star Li Bingbing, assesses Australia’s actions and responses to the incident, and evaluates its influences on Chinese impressions of Australia’s medical service system.

The sixth chapter, *A Case Study of ‘China’s Territorial Disputes’ and an Inquiry into the Australian Political Stance*, focuses on the case study of public discourse on Sina Weibo surrounding The Hague ruling and Australia’s announced position on the ruling, reviews Chinese opinion and Australia’s actions and responses to the incident, and evaluates its influence on Chinese impressions of the Australian political stance, in particular toward its relationships with the United States and the People’s Republic of China.
The seventh chapter, *A Case Study of Mack Horton’s ‘Drug Cheat’ Accusations Against Sun Yang and an Inquiry into Australian Sportsmanship*, focuses on the case of public discourse on Sina Weibo surrounding Australian athlete Mack Horton’s statement that Chinese swimmer Sun Yang was a ‘drug cheat’, assesses Australia’s actions and responses to the incident and evaluates its influence on Chinese society.

The eighth and final chapter, the conclusion, based on the findings of the preceding chapters, affirms the importance of E-diplomacy and demonstrates the rationale for Australia to deepen its understanding and application of E-diplomacy as a form of soft power, summarises Australia’s current performance on Sina Weibo on the basis of the case studies examined, outlines the areas for improvement, current and future challenges and opportunities, and puts forth expectations and advice for the future of Australian E-diplomacy.
Chapter II

Towards a conceptual framework: Redefined E-diplomacy in the guide of practices

I. Introduction

Many academics have, based on their personal preferences, made interchangeable use of the three terms: cyber-diplomacy, digital diplomacy and E-diplomacy. Shaun Riordan points out that, ‘this not only wastes three perfectly good terms where one could do (denying us the other two for other purposes), it also conceals considerable confusion about the relationship between diplomacy and the digital world. In particular, it tends to conflate two very distinct activities: the use of digital tools to advance diplomatic ends, and the use of diplomatic tools to resolve issues arising in cyberspace’. 52

Furthermore, Shaun Riordan proposed to use the terms distinctively, referring to different backgrounds and characteristics, such as using ‘digital diplomacy’ to refer to the use of digital tools and techniques utilised to carry out diplomacy (including consular diplomacy), and the term ‘cyber diplomacy’ to refer to the use of diplomatic tools, and the diplomatic mindset, to resolve issues arising in cyberspace. Originally, Shaun Riordan intended to offer the prospect of greater clarity. But has he? For instance, US President Donald Trump has promoted his Twitter account as a significant diplomatic tool. Thus, if he continuously used Twitter in the way that he did in 2013 to directly criticise China and other countries for

cyberattacks, how should the terminology be applied? Is he utilising digital tools and techniques to conduct diplomacy, or using diplomatic tools, and the diplomatic mindset, to resolve issues arising in cyberspace?

Source: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/321716462966415362

Source: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/322792909780963328

In fact, such a seemingly precise definition is difficult to find. Not only does it not offer the prospect of greater clarity to E-diplomacy, but will also generate further confusion for perceptions of E-diplomacy. Because E-diplomacy is a new diplomatic practice, and a concept for which the connotation and related phenomena are expanding continuously, the boundaries are blurred when attempting to accurately cognising and understanding this concept. It is the reason why the first question referring to E-diplomacy is not how to define it, but how to choose one from these three terminologies—digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy and E-diplomacy—to represent it. In addition, the continuously expanding connotation and
extension of E-diplomacy, and the unceasingly emerging new situations and special circumstances, will inevitably render a narrowing definition of E-diplomacy that is unable to adapt to the fast-moving age. Thus, compared with defining E-diplomacy based on parts of the reality, a generalised definition will be more suitable for contributing to help readers to cognise and understand E-diplomacy. One one hand at least, a generalised definition will not hinder understandings of the general significance of E-diplomacy; on the other hand, it will not cause confusion, although some new situations and special circumstances may occur in the future, having an impact on the changing definitions of this fluid term.

On this basis, E-diplomacy is employed as a fixed and exclusive terminology throughout this thesis to describe this E-trend, and conceptualise the diplomacy of the new era. The following part of this chapter will first review the typical literature on this new field of E-diplomacy published in recent years. After this, I will demonstrate why we need to use the distinct terminology of E-diplomacy from four distinct aspects and, then, redefine ‘E-diplomacy’ from a generalised perspective and a practitioner’s viewpoint. The end section of this chapter will compare the similarities and differences of E-diplomacy with traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy.

**ii. Review of the relevant literature**

The revolution of communication technology and particularly the growth of the Internet have both affected all aspects of modern life, including diplomacy and international relations. As a foreign policy tool, diplomacy has been profoundly influenced and transformed by this revolution. This chapter will review the discussions regarding E-diplomacy, and the related terms such as digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, and virtual diplomacy, in light of current common understanding. However, E-diplomacy is still a relatively new research field, even
for the most experienced researchers of traditional diplomatic studies, and despite the
inferences of a handful of forward-looking scholars including David Rothkopf, John Arquilla
and David Ronfeld on the development of new technologies that would change the traditional
world politics at the end of the 20th century. Rothkopf pointed out that ‘the realpolitik of the
new era is cyberpolitik, in which the actors are no longer just states, and raw power can be
countered or fortified by information power’.53 Arquilla and Ronfeldt advised that ‘Noöpolitik
is an approach to statecraft, to be undertaken as much by non-state as by state actors, that
emphasises the role of soft power in expressing ideas, values, norms and ethics through all
manner of media’.54

Moreover, according to Fergus Hanson, ‘The origins of E-diplomacy at State can be
traced to this same year—1998—and the East Africa bombings, when a Blue Ribbon Panel
investigating the attacks concluded State was poorly placed to internally communicate’.55

The belated initiation of E-diplomatic practices decided that even countries like the US
needed, at that phase, more time to recognise and digest its significance. This is the reason
why Wilson Dizard Jr. commented on the ‘The Future of Digital Diplomacy’ in the last
chapter of his book in 2001, specifically indicating that the State Department’s reluctance to
acknowledge new digital realities mirrors an institutional culture that still resists change. Then
followed the establishment of the first Taskforce of eDiplomacy in 2002, the commencement
of ‘21st century statecraft’ in 2009 and the Arab Spring in the end of 2010.56 These three
events have gradually made E-diplomacy and its interchangeable terminologies a buzzword in

Affairs, volume 51, number 2 (Spring), pp. 326.
54David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, ‘The promise of noöpolitik’, First Monday, volume 12, number 8 (August 2007), online:
55Fergus Hanson, ‘REVOLUTION@STATE: THE SPREAD OF E DIPLOMACY’, Lowy Institute, 27 March 2012, online:
56Wilson Dizard Jr., Digital Diplomacy: US Foreign Policy in the Information Age (2001)
popular discourse. Accompanying the process at this transitional stage, related articles and books were rapidly produced. A common understanding has been gradually formed, as well as the general understanding that digital diplomacy can be seen as focusing on the leverage of digital tools in the field of diplomacy and in the pursuit of countries’ foreign policies goals. As Sabrina Sotiriu says, ‘As a recent development, digital diplomacy has been interpreted, defined and understood in different yet similar ways by researchers and practitioners alike’. However, there is an obvious dearth in widely accepted definitions and frameworks to cover the concept. The following section introduces the typical literature to date that is useful in helping to understand E-diplomacy, and its particular definitions.

**Defining E-diplomacy within the diplomatic tradition**

According to a 2012 study by Denstadli, Julsrud and Hjorthol, despite epochal transformations that Internet telecommunications and other technologies have undergone and the impacts that have been made on the ways in which diplomacy is carried out, diplomacy in the traditional sense, between heads of state and diplomats, has undergone little change. Accordingly, leaders still travel to meet other leaders for high-profile negotiations, and diplomacy at this level is still regarded to be of key national and international importance and is restricted to an exclusive group of elite leaders and nation-appointed representatives. In this sense, the possibilities for new technologies to disrupt this status quo are somewhat restricted by the boundaries of traditional diplomacy that, throughout history, has practised the occupation of territories, and communication between those sovereign territories.

According to this, the process of face-to-face negotiations between national leaders remains the primary platform for diplomatic exchange, even in the Internet age.

Indeed, the traditional form and function of public diplomacy as a formality is likely to remain conservative, despite the many inefficiencies involved in high-profile visits, and the opportunities for a new method of diplomacy that information technology provides. As a formality, it is useful to contrast traditional diplomacy to E-diplomacy, but it is also important to remember that, in defining E-diplomacy as a new dimension for diplomacy at different levels of government and society, these two forms are not entirely at odds. Instead of comparing these different means of communication, a more pertinent question would be to investigate how, in the Internet age, traditional and novel paradigms of diplomacy interact and influence each other.

As reflected in Strauss, Kruikemeier, Meulen and Noort’s article, new platforms such as social media websites provide a means with which to engage in a bidirectional dialogue with the general public. As information can be transmitted, digested and commented on ‘directly, continuously, and unrestrictedly’ in this new sphere. As mentioned previously, this is distinct from face-to-face head-of-state diplomacy, and from the unilateral communication of information or propaganda by traditional means such as telegram, newspaper, television and radio. These new platforms allow for the communication of information and instant solicitation of opinion on that information, as as being an effective means both to inform the public and absorb the public’s response to that information. It should be noted that this is an

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entirely new means of communication, distinct from, but undeniably complementary, to the traditional forms of public diplomacy that ultimately results in state-level decisions.

According to a study by Hanson, E-diplomacy has already penetrated government agencies and missions abroad globally.\(^{62}\) The US alone has over 150 employees working at E-diplomacy headquarters, and over 900 employees at its various missions and embassies abroad engaged in the dissemination of diplomatic information. This usually takes place through the primary transmission channels of Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites (SNS). In China, Sina Weibo and Tencent WeChat form the locally preferred sites for official diplomatic activities by the Chinese Government and foreign actors, due to its penetration in public opinion. Apart from the US, by 2012 more than two-thirds of United Nations members had followed suit in pursuing their own ‘E-diplomacy strategy’.\(^{63}\)

Despite the speed with which social media engagement has been adopted by various governments in the age of the Internet, there is a self-admitted dearth of understanding of the significance of this new medium and the ways in which it has been utilised, or should be utilised, in different national contexts. In the words of Criado et al. (2013), ‘the study of social media in government is still at its infancy’.\(^{64}\)

There is ample literature on public relations, marketing, propaganda and traditional diplomacy; these theoretical backgrounds are useful in clarifying the related but distinct fields that underpin diplomacy in the Internet age. Indeed, E-diplomacy as a specific concept and its

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\(^{62}\) Hanson, F., 2012. Baked in and wired: ediplomacy@ State. Foreign Policy at Brookings.

\(^{63}\) Olga Khazan, ‘Diplomats on Twitter: Putin follows no one’, Washington Post, 26 July 2012. online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/diplomats-on-twitter-putin-follows-no-one/2012/07/26/gJQAUKPvBX_blog.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4b5f5e98d6f4

significance as a case study has been neglected by academics in these fields until recently. If traditional public diplomacy is defined as the ‘government’s process of communicating with foreign people in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies’, then, in a host country, ambassadors and other officially appointed national representatives essentially serve the purpose of representing their home nation, its people, interests, ideology, beliefs and worldview. It is therefore of interest for those representatives to establish a network of relationships that allows them to complete these tasks more effectively. This could include leaders, influential individuals, governmental departments and other local facilities that would increase the efficiency of consular, interpersonal and international activities in the host country.

By extension, a basic function of E-diplomacy is to facilitate these bidirectional communications and the relationships they maintain, and also to engage in the multidirectional transmission of information that is within the perceived national interests of the acting nation.

The significance of Social Networking Sites for E-diplomacy

The integration of Internet services, in particular Twitter, has been the most obvious application within this more traditional paradigm of bidirectional communication and wider propagation of information. As previously discussed, the creation of a public profile and presence on Twitter and similar services provides an indispensable tool for generating discourse and influence.

The significance of social networking services, in particular Twitter, can be observed in the coinage of the nomenclature of a specific, new field of research—‘Twiplomacy’ or Twitter diplomacy—which was first described in 2012 in light of the surge of global leaders on Twitter using personal accounts. The ‘Twiplomacy’ study\(^\text{68}\) found that in 2012, there were 264 heads of state or government and institutional representatives from 125 countries using accounts. Interestingly, only 30 of those accounts were managed and ‘tweeted’ by the leaders personally. In fact, the remainder of the supposed leader accounts were managed by teams, akin to marketers, who post regularly on the behalf of the account owners with updates on the leaders’ daily activities, comments on current events and other information promoting the leader’s profile. This provides evidence of two significant points for understanding of how E-diplomacy has influenced traditional diplomacy:

It has become standard practice for leaders to maintain an online presence as part of their marketing campaign. It is expected, and therefore important, that they cultivate their readership and support group by maintaining regular contact with their readership. However, for many leaders this is merely a perfunctory feature of the traditional political campaign rather than, as optimistic scholars have predicted, a means of actual communication between leaders and the general public. Twitter posts are tightly controlled in most cases and are not posted by the leaders themselves. Instead, they are sanctioned by marketing teams, in a formulated fashion, for optimal reach in the sense of a traditional advertisement.

There are exceptions to the general rule that leaders employ teams with formulated marketing strategies and, indeed, this is likely to become more of a trend. Donald Trump made religious use of Twitter throughout his presidential candidacy and built a base of popularity through this method. This testifies to the fact that E-diplomacy is becoming a disruptive force in the political arena, and that ‘Internet celebrities’ are beginning to possess increasing amounts of influence. The Trump case also proves that, for engaged leaders who interact with their followers daily, not only can profound support be found in a loyal user base, but influence online can be transformed into enormous political might in the ‘real world’; furthermore, due to the unprecedented level of connectivity and instantaneous transmission of virtually unremovable information, topics that gain the attention of stakeholders at all levels of society can be speedily created by online activity. Indeed, in the wrong hands, these tools of influence could lead to a diplomatic disaster but, in the right hands, values that the beholder wishes to disseminate or extract public opinion on can be quickly and readily transmitted through services like Twitter.

It should be emphasised that the same is true in China, on its own localised Twitter-like platform, Sina Weibo, albeit with Chinese characteristics. A symbolistic example of a political leader engaging with a grassroots campaign on social media is a campaign named ‘taking a photo with our national flag’ initiated by the author in 2014, marking a first for the Chinese leadership participating in folk activity on social media. The original intention of launching this voluntary campaign was in celebration of the Chinese traditional festival—the

72 In 25 Sep 2014, Chinese authority newspaper People Daily posted president Xi’s snapshot with national flag joint to the campaign and pushed this campaign to a new high.
Mid-Autumn Festival, and the 65th Anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Before the participation of national leaders, it had not been imagined an official force would engage with this campaign. In my first Weibo post, I simply wrote: ‘Let’s all pray for China’, posted a picture with the five-starred red flag and wrote blessings for our mother land. Although this campaign has been criticised by many western media outlets, academic staff and commentators as ‘one of the illustrations to this current wave of (Chinese) nationalism’, in that period this campaign was one of the most popular topics on Sina Weibo, and more than 200 million people participated. Since this campaign, President Xi and his social media group have attempted to diversify the ways in which—based on the social media platforms’ disseminating logic—his governing theories, concerns about the interests of people and close relationship with different groups are transmitted to the public. For instance, on 26 December 2016, while visiting the PLA newspaper office, President Xi used Sina Weibo to post his New Year’s blessing and ardent hopes to the PLA soldiers. In one day, this was reposted more than 300,000 times. In the period of the APEC summit 2017, an animated cartoon posted by Chinese state outlets, with Xi as the main character, was widely shared on social media to disseminate Xi’s visits and his APEC speeches to online audiences. Moreover, as per Manya Koetse’s observation, in recent years more and more key political concepts, events and ideological messages have been spread online through animations, with a central role for Xi Jinping. E-activities, including E-diplomatic practices on social media platforms like Weibo and its siblings, have become standard practice for Chinese political leaders to maintain an online presence for shaping their positive images and communicating their thoughts with the public. In addition, not only are Chinese political leaders using Chinese social media

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74Xi Jinping's speech to soldiers posted on Weibo—On media innovation and integration—习近平军报发微博谈媒体创新与融合. Cyberspace Administration of China, 2 June 2016, online: www.cac.gov.cn/2016-02/06/m_1118008403.htm
75Xi Jinping posted this Weibo, and got hundreds of thousands of reposts' 习近平发的这条微博，已经有几十万网友转发. 81, 27 December 2015, online:www.81.cn/zgjd2016/2015-12/27/content_7422189.htm
platforms like Weibo to communicate and interact with Chinese society, but also many foreign leaders or official departments or non-governmental organisations, from major powers, medium or mini-states, have attempted to utilise Weibo to promote their initiative and influence in China and then utilise this platform to assist them to realise specific objectives. According to a China News report in 2015, the first foreign political leader set up an account on Weibo was Kevin Rudd (@陆克文先生), the former Prime Minister of Australia, followed by former and current heads of state, including, Nicolas Maduro from Venezuela (@尼古拉斯马杜罗), David Cameron (@英国首相), (this account is now in use by Theresa May from the UK), Shimon Peres from Israel and Narendra Modi from India. As reported by China News, ‘Weibo has become an important platform for foreign political leaders to approach Chinese netizens, and also a diplomatic arena for many countries in China’. Indeed, as one of Sina Weibo’s senior managers Mr Kong said in a formal interview, according to Sina Weibo’s internal data, as of December 2017, there are more than 200 foreign dignitaries, governmental or diplomatic personnel and the heads of international organisations etc., who have set up Weibo accounts. There are eight typical features of these persons and organisations in their use of Weibo, as summarised by Professor Yang Guohua and his postgraduate student Yang Tengfei (June, 2013):

1. Covering a wide range of fields and doing their utmost to cater to the public interest. The range of their posts cover political, economic, historical and cultural fields more or less, they try to attract more attention from netizens by introducing rich topics;

2. Various posting methods have been actively used. Texts, pictures, hyperlinks and micro-videos which can make their Weibo contents more informative, improve the readability, and enrich the attraction, are all actively utilised;

3. Launch activities for interacting with netizens. For example, the international organisations such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and TRAFFIC (The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network) launched an activity on Weibo to encourage netizens to provide information about illegal wildlife tradings. On the one hand, it contributes to protect the wildlife; on the other hand, it makes their relationship with Chinese netizens closer and improves their image;

4. Broadcasts help the public to become familiar with them. Institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program usually post their daily activities. The World Bank often shares information about economic observations of regions and countries around the world, its outlook and judgment on future economic trends, and its economic assistance policies to poor areas and countries as well. The main content of the United Nations Development Program is to introduce its daily works, for example, assisting economic planning for its member states, providing funds to member states for promoting their economic development, and helping developing countries to utilise their natural resources in a better way etc.;

5. Combine the hottest issues with skillful agenda-setting. In order to attract attention, they frequently target Chinese society’s hot issues and then make comments or contrasts, sometimes guiding these issues in conjunction with national conditions and values. For example, on the issue of air pollution, the US embassy responded to an issue that Chinese society demanded information on when it began to post the daily data of the air quality index (PM 2.5), and actively guided the discussions which put tremendous pressure on the Chinese Government. As the air pollution issue, along with democracy, freedom and human
rights, etc., had also been mentioned several times on its Weibo account, the aim was to guide Chinese netizens to focus and move forward;

6. Fully conduct public diplomacy. Weibo is an advantageous platform for public diplomacy. In order to shape a good public image, it shares the philosophy of governance, cultural connotation and even lifestyle with the audience. Some foreign dignitaries frequently release information about their charitable activities in their free time and their understanding of international friendship, and thereby successfully achieve the goal of the formal goal of enhancing soft power;

7. Maximised freedom and interaction with Chinese netizens in real time. Weibo is a kind of self-media, which can partly evade the Chinese Government’s censorship. Compared with other ways of interacting, Weibo provides a relatively free platform for government agencies, political leaders and international organisations to communicate and interact with netizens in China;

8. Conveying values in a subtle way. On Weibo, international leaders seldom express their political and ideological values directly, but will convey values and ideologies by releasing comparative information and posting interesting stories.

*The ambivalence of E-diplomacy*

The general consensus in the literature reviewed is that E-diplomacy has a profound and immediate ability to impact and influence public debate and public opinion.\(^\text{78}\) According to Nichols, diplomacy in the traditional sense was of utmost significance during the wartime, in terms of both state-level negotiations and convincing the general public that the rationale

behind the battlefield was justified, or in the national interest.\textsuperscript{79} In the current context, it is hoped that diplomacy will serve to prevent the outbreak of such conflicts. E-diplomacy has a role to play here. Positive influence and cross-border communication provide a platform for improving understanding, breaking down barriers and preventing unnecessary conflicts, through the generation of a better rounded public consensus.

But the tools of E-diplomacy are a double-edged sword. Indeed, as positive sentiment and efforts may propagate quickly, so too may the negative and nationalist, even dangerous fascist, sentiment utilise the same means to achieve potentially very dark aims—precisely what proponents of the Internet would hope to prevent. After WikiLeaks and similar organisations engaged in the leaking of confidential government files, an international storm ensued. Many praised the leaks and criticised government for lack of transparency and conspiring to cover-up atrocities or actions not within the national constitution and laws, but many also condemned the whistleblowers for harming national security. Indeed, the potential for espionage or effort to take down ‘from within’ cannot be overlooked. For example, one such phenomenon is the sentiment among many Chinese citizens that the US employs ‘foreign forces’ within China to propagate negative information about the government and subvert it from within the nation’s borders. Whether or not such a conspiracy exists, the moral hazard made possible by a tool as instant and evolving as social media is a point of contention for policymakers dealing with the changing environment within which they must govern the bounds of the Internet. Freedom of speech, for example, may find itself at odds with perceived national interests at times, and this is a point for policymakers to contend with. In the words of Nichols, ‘Even some curtailment of free speech may be permissible and needed

in extraordinary times. But the threshold must be high for undertaking such operations. And they must be limited in duration. After all, security, secrecy, and surveillance seem to mutually reinforce each other. President Obama knows as much. In fact, he attempted to undermine this triad via Executive Order (EO) 13526. The order against excessive secrecy and classification is clear: ‘In no case shall information be classified... in order to: conceal violations of law, inefficiency, or administrative error; prevent embarrassment to a person, organization, or agency... or prevent or delay the release of information that does not require protection in the interest of the national security.’

It is important to emphasise that E-diplomacy is neither absolutely negative nor absolutely positive. It is complementary to traditional diplomacy in many ways, but at the same time, it presents a challenge for the public and policymakers to come to terms with the challenges this new platform presents, as well as the opportunities that it presents.

*Towards a definition for E-diplomacy*

As mentioned, E-diplomacy is a fuzzy term for a variety of reasons. There is no consensus as to the precise meaning of E-diplomacy or its siblings digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy and open diplomacy, due to the fact that it is a new and ever-evolving notion. The ways in which it applies and therefore how we should conceptualise it in attempting to understand its mechanism and significance, varies across national borders, due to the fact that each country has its own strategy, specific conditions, goals and set of people and customs.

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80 As introduced, the background of this order is that ‘this order prescribes a uniform system for classifying, safeguarding, and declassifying national security information, including information relating to defense against transnational terrorism’. Online: https://www.archives.gov/files/isoo/pdf/cnsi-eo.pdf

Hanson, in discussing the possibilities for a ‘digital Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)’ provides, therefore, a general but useful starting point in defining E-diplomacy: E-diplomacy is…the use of the web and ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives. Hanson also argues that E-diplomacy is not only a necessary realm for government agencies to enter, but an inevitable trend for the future. The Internet age gives rise to the possibility of allowing public participation, to an extent, in diplomacy. At the very least, Hanson argues, the Internet is a sound gauge for public opinion and a measure of the reach of government communication.

We should therefore understand E-diplomacy in such a light that allows it to be distinct from high-profile traditional diplomacy in the ‘state visit’ sense, but complementary to the processes that state-to-state relations and high-level international politics involve.

Government departments engage in E-diplomacy when they disseminate information of use to their expatriate citizens abroad, when they promote their nation abroad, and when they, on behalf of their government, transmit information relating to their national interest. Individual leaders and politicians practise E-diplomacy in marketing their own personal ‘brand’ and building a following of supporters online, generating discussion around issues they see as pertinent to their worldview and their nation’s interest while, to some extent, democratising the decision-making process, especially in less free environments in which citizens would seldom have any direct influence over government policy. Activists are actors in E-diplomacy when they release information with which they intend to influence international public sentiment and therefore generate discussion around a certain topic, or draw attention to themselves and their cause. Finally, individuals also engage to some extent in E-diplomacy—

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particularly ‘Internet celebrities’ or key opinion leaders who, through the publication of a post or comment on a topic, can reach a wide audience and generate discussion around a certain topic—when they represent themselves, their nations and what they believe to be in the national interest, their interest and, perhaps in their mind, the interest of humanity.

Each of these groups contributes to the E-diplomatic debate in their own way and their roles are ever-changing with technology. In China, Sina Weibo is a novel platform for such a free environment of information sharing, in a country in which the government and citizens were usually in contact via one-directional media such as television for the transmission of information. In the current age, although there are still some limitations such in Xinjiang and on specific issues, compared to before almost each and every netizen’ has the potential and possibility to be an E-Diplomat, and almost each and every person has a voice.

Traditional diplomacy has not died but rather, it remains as a formality, a final pillar in the process. E-diplomacy is changing this process and complementing it, with the instant participation of people across the world in discussion and decision-making, up to the highest levels of government.

iii. The evolving process of E-diplomacy

The initiation of the evolving process of E-diplomacy can be seen as having been derived from ‘the beginning of the end of the old diplomacy’ (Jyotika Ramaprasad, 1986, page 69). Assuming we pass judgement only from this proposed time, E-diplomacy is certainly a new notion for diplomatic studies. Although academics, diplomats and other commentators discuss E-diplomatic issues mainly on account of the development of the
Internet and ICTs, or in other words based on the background of the digital age, there remain a plethora of other definitions of E-diplomacy that have continued to emerge in recent times. Among these definitions, academics broadly define E-diplomacy as the use of social media for diplomatic purposes and, in some cases, treat E-diplomacy as an equivalent to public diplomacy. Bjola and Holmer, for example, refer to ‘The adoption of digital diplomacy, which we broadly define in this volume as the use of social media for diplomatic purposes … (And) a common understanding of digital diplomacy as a mere cost-effective form of public diplomacy.’

Similar to the understandings expressed by academics, official departments such as the US Department of State define E-diplomacy as: ‘The complementing of traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted instruments of statecraft that fully leverages the networks, technologies, and demographics of our interconnected world’. Specifically, the United States Department of State has embraced E-diplomacy in utilising newly innovated and adapted instruments of statecraft like multimedia and social media to reach the public.

Even in light of this, the Lowy Institute for International Policy insists that ‘there is no agreed definition of E-diplomacy. A slightly revised working definition is the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives, by which the understandings of E-diplomacy become broader and can eschew a simple equate with social media.’ From the author Fergus Hanson’s viewpoint, the E-age and E-diplomacy were initiated far earlier than the so-called digital or cyber age, and the connotation or extension of E-diplomacy is deeper and wider when judged more comprehensively from its overarching historical and time

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85 Hanson, F., 2012. Revolution@ State: the spread of ediplomacy. Sydney, NSW: Lowy Institute for International Policy.
dimensions. Indeed, since the discovery of electricity and the subsequent invention of electrical devices such as the telegraph, radio broadcasts, telephone and television, people's lives have been profoundly changed. Diplomats are not excluded from this: When Britain’s Foreign Minister Lord Palmerston was told about the invention of the telegraph, his reaction was: ‘This is the end of diplomacy’. He was right in sensing that rapid communications would pose a threat to old-style personal diplomacy.”

Using today’s concepts and standards, with a sense of history to estimate this change, we could define this in terms of an ‘E-diplomacy 1.0’. The old style of personal diplomacy involving merely a process in which ‘diplomats spoke discreetly to one another about matters of common concern, and just as quietly reached agreements and drew up documents’ had begun to be transformed by this new technology. Not only would the emergence of the electrical telegraph pose a threat or, more precisely, change old-style personal diplomacy and the style of diplomacy at the previous stage, but the invention of other electrical tools such as fax, broadcast, television, internet, and social media played the driving role in making the former diplomatic style sharper.

Many older generations of the diplomatic service still remember vividly the energetic discussions about media diplomacy and public diplomacy. In the discussion at that time, people clearly recognised that the development of communication technology played a key role in the transition from the so-called ‘old diplomacy’, which has been described by scholars as the discreet communication between diplomats regarding matters of common

New diplomacy’ and public diplomacy can be defined in multidimensional terms, but should substantially incorporate a role for the public in diplomatic actions. As a result of these developments and advances in communication technology, a new level of immediacy in events and a new sense of participation have been given to the engaged public, and diplomacy has begun to be used more often as a public phenomenon. At the initial stage, broadcast and television were viewed as crucial components of media diplomacy, forming the basis behind the variations of media diplomacy usually found in the literature, described mainly as television diplomacy or satellite diplomacy. Considering the significance of the label of broadcast and television, which are the fruits of the developing and evolving process of modern industrialisation in the paradigm of electronic and technology, it would be reasonable to conceptualise this diplomatic stage as the E-diplomacy 2.0 stage. It should be emphasised that media diplomacy cannot be completely described as equivalent to E-diplomacy 2.0, although the two significantly overlap.

Along with the constant improvement of modern technologies, the emergence of the Internet has brought an unprecedented impact to the every aspect of the age, including the ways in which diplomacy is conducted. Along with the IT system it is connected to, the communication ability—both one-to-one and one-to-many—of modern people living in the Internet age has undergone a quantum leap. Compared to the telegraph, which underpinned the imperial powers of the 19th century, and broadcast and television, which have reshaped international relations in the 20th century, the Internet is not only a leapfrog of technology, but announces the coming of a new era. Indeed, in light of the impact of the emergence of

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telegraph, broadcast and television, the growth of the Internet can be expected to have similar impacts on diplomacy.

The differentiating feature of the Internet age is that, compared the former two stages, the Internet will generate more significant changes that will occur even faster than before.\textsuperscript{90} Undoubtedly, the Internet has today already become an indispensable working tool for the vast majority of sectors and professions and, for government, ‘the Internet has thrown open governments’ and opened gates to new constituencies who are not limited by traditional geographic or other physical barriers from actively participating in the policymaking process. Increasingly, we are seeing individuals and groups who ‘use the Internet to form virtual communities that can mobilise easily and effectively for advocacy and action’.\textsuperscript{91} The diplomatic sector is no exception. The same applies to experienced diplomats who, as the government’s major component, need to justify their actions before the public and try to gain the necessary support required to implement their policies. In addition, its specific functions do not merely entail the establishment and achievement of foreign policy goals by providing information, negotiation, or execution of the major aspects of diplomatic work like information gathering, which was stipulated in the 1961 Vienna Convention as being one of the major diplomatic functions, but also include consular and administrative matters, as well as public diplomacy that publicises a country’s positions and creates a favourable image in the target country.\textsuperscript{92}

But, this is not the full scope of E-diplomacy. R.H. Solomon aptly stated in 2000 that \textquoteleft\textquoteleft When discussing the role of the Internet in the formulation of US foreign policy, it is

important to keep in mind that we are still in the early stages of the information revolution. Not enough concrete information yet exists to fully comprehend the impact the Internet will have on the practice of diplomacy and, specifically, the development of US foreign policy.Only a few years after he expressed this opinion, the different definitions and new terminologies of E-diplomacy, like twiplomacy, Diplomacy 2.0, Facebook-diplomacy, cyber-diplomacy and digital diplomacy began to gain traction. The milestone symbol was the establishment of the first dedicated E-diplomacy taskforce unit, which was re-established as the office of E-diplomacy under the US State Department in 2002, later, in 2009, the US officially launched its E-diplomacy campaign—21st century statecraft.

Closely behind the US E-diplomatic pace, many countries’ foreign ministries started to embrace E-diplomacy as a means of achieving the aforementioned goals of diplomacy. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office set up an Office of Digital Diplomacy and embedded the use of digital technology across every element of foreign policy work. China set up a public diplomacy office in October 2009, and even in the smaller nation of Sweden, its Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was suggested by Twitter users to be the best-connected world leader in 2013. The speedy propagation of E-diplomatic trends has pointed to the arrival of

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94 Andrea Sandrea, ‘Twiplomacy is bringing diplomacy back to relevancy’, Diplomacy, 4 August 2012, online: http://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/twiplomacy-bringing-diplomacy-back-relevancy
102 Qin Gang, ‘Director of Foreign Ministry information department, Qin Gang, talks about public diplomacy’, fmprc.gov.cn, online: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_ch/wjbxw_602253/t1015836.shtml accessed on 11th June 2015 (外交部新闻司司长秦刚谈公共外交)
E-diplomacy 3.0. To this date, it is difficult to know exactly how long it will last, but more and more people recognise that the capacity of E-diplomatic actions is inextricably related to a country’s future in both diplomatic fields and non-diplomatic fields. In the evolution in the Internet age into the age of social media, it can literally determine the fate of a country—the experience of the Arab Spring is a shocking truth for every country to come to terms with.

iv. Concepts of E-diplomacy, digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy

As a new conception and notion for the field of diplomatic studies, many definitions of E-diplomacy have emerged in recent years. One of the typical definitions suggests that ‘there is no agreed definition of E-diplomacy. A slightly revised working definition is the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives, by which the understandings of E-diplomacy become broader and can eschew a simple equate with social media’. \(^{104}\) One of the most important reasons causing researchers to fail to reach a consensus on the definition of E-diplomacy is that not only have many researchers and practitioners alike not surveyed ‘E-diplomacy’ from the historical and developing dimensions—as mentioned in the preceding section, the current cognition and understanding referred to as ‘E-diplomacy’ should at least be grouped into the 3.0 phase—but also, the reality is that the backgrounds and developing levels of E-diplomacy in different countries vary considerably, and this should be taken into account in any research. It is not prudent or helpful to assume that sweeping statements or generalisations about the nature of E-diplomacy can be made justifiably based on isolated country studies.

Traditionally, definitions and understandings of E-diplomacy have been skewed by a US-led focus. This is due to the fact that in many ways, E-diplomacy in its current

conceptualisation could be said to have originated in the US, and the US has been a leading example of the conduct, application and development of E-diplomacy. In many ways, other nations have followed suit but, in turn, have adjusted their E-diplomatic practices to a manner more suited to their own context. In the United States, due to its leading technology, matured awareness and understandings about E-diplomacy and ‘globalised national interests’, E-diplomacy is now used across eight different program fields, including Knowledge Management, Public Diplomacy, Internet Freedom, Information Management, Consular, Disaster Response, Harnessing External Resources and Policy Planning. However, for most other countries, these conditions may not exist, especially in comparable capacities or demands to the extent that they hold true in the US; thus, a definition which is overly abstract is meaningless for these countries that clearly have different understandings and nuanced applications of E-diplomacy. China has its own special conditions for E-diplomacy, for example, and for Australia as a practitioner in this environment, it is important to explore the specific conditions of this target nation if diplomatic aims are to be achieved. A generalised US-centric definition and application of E-diplomacy would result in undesirable outcomes, at best, indifference, or at worst, diplomatic disaster.

In comparison to those countries with advanced understanding and implementation of E-diplomacy, China is still a new and inexperienced participant in this field. In fact, E-diplomacy in China is emerging along with the nation’s nuanced public diplomacy trends. The earliest Chinese E-diplomacy related department—the management division of the Internet home page affiliated to the Foreign Ministry Information Department—was established in June 1999. The main function of this department was merely to maintain the Foreign Ministry and its agencies’ website as a broadcast fact-heavy page. During the

following decade, E-diplomacy remained a fuzzy concept for China. However, given the emergence of the ‘China Threat Theory’ and its gradual gain in traction in the West, China’s international image took a hit, and was at odds in the eyes of many with China’s official announcement of a ‘peaceful rise’ strategy and benevolent ‘go global, bring in’ strategy. Based on this reality, the Chinese Government gradually realised the importance of domestic and international ‘discourse power’, a tool which can be utilised to achieve profound impact on the populace. As a result, public diplomacy has become an attractive concept and trend in China for achieving public recognition and acceptance.

Apart from this trend, a public diplomacy office affiliated to the Foreign Ministry Information Department (which was upgraded to being a department of public diplomacy directly affiliated to the Foreign Ministry in August 2012) was set up in October 2009, charged with the primary mission of conducting the overall planning and comprehensive coordination of the Foreign Ministry and its branch’s public diplomatic affairs.

The establishments mentioned above can be described as regular progressive adjustments of government bodies facing the challenges of public diplomacy related issues. Then, following the events after Edward Snowden disclosed details of classified US government surveillance programs, the Chinese Government has immediately increasingly adjusted for Internet affairs. In June 2013, the Chinese Foreign Ministry established a special body named the ‘office of internet affairs’ to coordinate increasingly


\[108\] Qin Gang, ‘Director of Foreign Ministry information department, Qin Gang, talks about public diplomacy’, fmprc.gov.cn, online: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/wjbxw_602253/t1015836.shtml accessed on 11th June 2015（外交部新闻司司长秦刚谈公共外交）
frequent E-diplomatic affairs and govern cyberspace, and especially to deal with affairs related to cyber attacks and establish international Internet norms under the UN system. In February 2014, the establishment of the ‘Central Internet security and informisation leading group’, in which Chinese President Xi Jinping is serving as the leader, can be seen as a milestone in the process of China’s efforts in protecting its own Internet security, preserving national interests and pushing forward the development of information technology. The findings of this group are clearly indicative of the Internet pressure faced by the Chinese Government and reflective of China’s attitude toward cyber attacks, online rumours and potential cyber warfare.

Meanwhile, E-diplomacy, being the most important form of public diplomacy in cyber space, is emerging along with this public diplomacy trend. In 2011, China’s former Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi pointed out that in order to innovate the methodology in China’s public diplomacy, the Foreign Ministry should effectively utilise the Internet in order to promote the development of China’s public diplomacy. Therefore, it is not hard to see that China’s nascent understanding of E-diplomacy is very simple and that it is merely a new tool or method for assisting public diplomacy.

However, as the subsequent presence of Weibo has increased, E-diplomacy for the Chinese Government has become more meaningful and indispensable than in the nascent understanding phase. In the Forum of Network and Information Security 2015, Fang Xingdong provided a set of data that indicated, by the end of 2014, the number of ‘netizens’...
in China had risen to 640 million (the latest data provided by the Xinhua Agency is 668 million,\textsuperscript{111} accounting for 46% of China’s population and 22% of global internet users (Jiang, 2015). Similarly, according to Sina Weibo’s report of the third quarter earnings 2015, the number of daily active users has broken through 100 million and the number of monthly active users has reached 220 million.\textsuperscript{112} This means that in China, almost one-third of Chinese netizens have registered Sina Weibo accounts. When compared to the rising trend of Internet and Weibo, the traditional media like television and newspaper has declined severely in viewership. According to the report released by the research centre of the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) in June 2013, traditional media has been severely impacted by new media. For instance, in Beijing the number of homes using TV has declined from 70% to 30% during last three years. Furthermore, the audiences of traditional media are mainly middle-aged and elderly people whose average age is above 40. In addition, younger users, especially those who are highly educated and have a higher income, tend to be the loyal users of new media.\textsuperscript{113} This forms the general trend of China’s media.

Relying on its giant user volume and the general developing trends behind China’s media, Weibo has become the most influential and unparalleled social media platform in China and has therefore become the primary battleground for factions in E-diplomacy. Another important reason to explain this phenomenon is that on other Chinese E-platforms, censorship is far stricter than in Weibo, and the degree of freedom in these platforms is

\textsuperscript{111} ‘The number of our country’s ‘netizens’ rose to 668 million, Xinhua, online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2015-07/23/c_1116022351.htm> accessed on 25th June 2015 (我国网民数量已达 6.68 亿人)
\textsuperscript{113} ‘The new era of media: change is just beginning’, The State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT), online: http://tech.gmw.cn/2013-06/13/content_7940175.htm, accessed on 14th July 2013 (视听新媒体时代：变化才刚刚开始)
relatively lower. On this battlefield, the composition of the participants of E-diplomacy is exceptionally complex, including states, associations of states, international companies, non-governmental organisations and individuals. They compete with each other for ‘discourse power’ and then utilise it to assist themselves in realising their objectives. Among these ‘battles’, the fight between the anti-government group and pro-government group is the most obvious, although the Chinese Government always tries to avoid mentioning this competition. Owing to the existence of this competition, pan-politicisation has become the most remarkable and significant feature of Weibo. It is important to emphasise that the emergence of Weibo can be viewed as a turning point in the process of China’s reform and development, and it has had profound influence on China’s subsequent development process. In this dynamic context, definitions cannot remain static, especially for utility-type definitions like E-diplomacy or, more precisely, E-diplomacy 3.0\textsuperscript{114}; it should be adjusted in turn with events, which means that at different stages of development, E-diplomacy should have different guiding definitions.

As mentioned above, the reason for emphasising E-diplomacy 3.0 here is to make a distinction between it and the previous iterations, E-diplomacy 1.0 and E-diplomacy 2.0. This definition is a utility-type definition, and is judged on the basis of a historical and developing view. In the third phase, it is not necessary to be defined in too much of a narrow sense. A general definition is preferable, which is interchangeable with other similar terminologies. The suggestion of this definition is to enable the practitioners to more easily understand how to practise and realise their objectives. In this definition, the feature of ‘E-diplomacy focusing

\textsuperscript{114} This has been mentioned in the previous chapter that E-diplomacy 3.0, which is interchangeable with digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy alike, is the concrete manifestation of Pan-diplomacy in cyber space. It is an instrument closely linked with new development of information and communication technology, such as hacking techniques and social media, and used by states and non-state actors, including common individuals to fight for initiative and discourse power in an intended region or incident and then using it to assist themselves to realise their specific objectives.
on the public’ has been diluted due to the evolution of E-diplomacy 3.0 and the fact that in practice, the public is only one component in E-diplomacy 3.0 actions.

**v. Conclusion**

Diplomacy has undergone a radical transformation in recent years, buoyed by the emergence of digital platforms in conjunction with widespread internet penetration, especially in developing countries. Access to the internet provides a cheap and efficient platform from which citizens from all walks of life, not only diplomats and governments, can influence the national debate. This has serious ramifications for both domestic and international diplomacy, and may determine the fate of nations.

Now more than ever, governments must take into consideration to the collective ‘voice of the people’ or risk public displeasure, even social collapse, either on the streets or at the ballot box. However, this ‘voice’, often lauded as a positive and empowering development, can hurt or inflame fragile relations between nations. Misinformed and misguided citizens are as dangerous as they are valuable barometers of public opinion.

In this new paradigm of E-diplomacy, each and every internet user has the ability to influence opinion, politics and policy—whether their intent be benevolent or malevolent. This presents many challenges and opportunities to policymakers and the internet-using public alike, as they learn to grasp this ever-changing new age of diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy has not died, but rather, it remains as a formality, a final pillar in the process. E-diplomacy is changing this process and complementing it, with the instant participation of people across the world in discussion and decision-making, up to the highest levels of government.
There is no absolute definition or framework for conceptualising E-diplomacy, but we can essentially understand it as the process of utilising electronic methods and technologies to achieve diplomatic aims. This broadly refers to advancing the national interest, but could just as easily be about advancing personal interests, or the interest of humanity in the eyes of the practitioner. Government departments engage in E-diplomacy when they disseminate information of use to their expatriate citizens abroad, when they promote their nation abroad and when they, on behalf of their government, transmit information relating to their national interest. Politicians practise E-diplomacy to generate discussion around issues they see as important to them and their cause. Activists are actors in E-diplomacy when they release information that they intend to influence international public sentiment, and therefore generate discussion around a certain topic, or draw attention to themselves and their causes. Individuals engage, to some extent, in E-diplomacy when they represent themselves, their nations and what they believe to be in the national interest, particularly those ‘Internet celebrities’ or key opinion leaders who, through the publication of a post or comment on a topic, can reach a wide audience and generate discussion around a certain topic.

Thus, in exploring the nuances of Australia’s E-diplomacy efforts in China, the present thesis will continue with this general definition of E-diplomacy as it stands. As mentioned, this definition will incorporate special conditions based on the actors involved and time period concerned, due to the adaptive nature of E-diplomacy.
Chapter III

The century of E-diplomacy: A silent contest

i. Introduction

Recently new light was shed on evidence of Russian meddling throughout the 2016 US election campaign. Although the US federal investigators are still in the process of investigating the extent to which Russia intervened in the election, many bystanders have come to the preliminary conclusion that the Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to influence the outcome of the US presidential election in favour of Donald Trump. This is a position particularly held by the Democrats and their supporters. The special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, and his team initiated an investigation into whether anyone from Donald Trump’s campaign participated in Russia’s operation in hacking Democratic accounts, having later leaked a trove of embarrassing emails related to Hillary Clinton’s campaign to the media115.

Thus far, at least three typical non-traditional E-diplomatic means by which Russia manipulated the 2016 election have been exposed in the process of investigation.

The first of these is the political advertising on social media that reached the vast majority of Americans. On Wednesday 1 Nov 2017, the House Intelligence Committee provided a series of samples regarding Facebook advertisements and pages that were examined for being linked to a trail of Russian rubles with Kremlin ties. According to a report from the New York Times, the contents included ‘attack[s on] Hillary Clinton and other candidates’, ‘[taking] opposite stands on sensitive issues’ and ‘discredit democracy’. The

objective from the viewpoint of many Americans was ‘to tip the 2016 presidential election in favour of Donald Trump and against Hillary Clinton’. According to a report from the New York Times\textsuperscript{116}, the contents included ‘attack[s on] Hillary Clinton and other candidates’.

Secondly, the hacking was targeted. Distinct from political ads, the target of the hacking was specific to several people and groups. The latest progress indication from the investigation, which was published by the \textit{AP}, demonstrated that a detailed strategy for the hack, which led to months of destructive exposures referring to the Democratic Party’s nominee, had been sketched out. Hillary Clinton’s inner circle of advisors, and her outer circle of 130 party employees, supporters and contractors, were all targeted by the hackers, the identities of whom were deemed by the US intelligence agencies to be backed by Russia. A month later, a Russian-linked intermediary boasted to a policy adviser from the Trump campaign team that ‘thousands of emails’ worth of ‘dirt’ on Hillary Clinton had been obtained by the Kremlin. In spite of the uncertainty surrounding whether or to what extent these hacking actions influenced the outcome of the election, the defeated candidates, including Hillary Clinton, all firmly believe that there is no doubt that the hacking actions and the subsequent leaking tipped the election. In Hillary Clinton’s words, ‘Even if Russian interference made only a marginal difference … this election was won at the margins, in the Electoral College’\textsuperscript{117}.

The third relates to the Russian targets. Distinct from political ads, the target of the hacking was specific to several people and groups. In the latest progress indication from the

\textsuperscript{117} Raphael Satter, Jeff Donn and Chad Day, How Russian hackers pried into Clinton campaign emails, Associated Press, 4 November 2017, online: https://apnews.com/addc2727b0b04c1d80ab6ca30c4dc77e, accessed on 10 Nov 2017
investigation, all the evidence points to an infamous Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Russian ‘troll farm’. The IRA is a well-established Russian company in St Petersburg, and is bankrolled by Russian president Vladimir Putin’s close ally, the Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin. The function of this agency is to make pro-Russian propaganda and sow discordant seeds in those countries perceived as antagonistic to Russia.

BusinessInsider cited a former troll ‘Maxim’ of IRA’s words, interviewed by the independent Russian news outlet Dozhd, about his experience working for the IRA, and outlined the main components and tasks of this secretive factory—this factory was comprised of a ‘Russian desk’, ‘foreign desk’, ‘Facebook desk’ and ‘Department of Provocations’. The task of the Russian desk was to operate bots and trolls to utilise fake social media accounts to pour pro-Trump messages and made-up news onto the internet. The foreign desk was charged with the responsibility of familiarising itself with US public opinion so as to maximise the damaging effects of the ‘discordant seeds’ so surreptitiously placed before. The Facebook desk was set up to push back against the platform’s propensity to delete fake accounts. The primary aim of the Department of Provocations was to disseminate fake messages and sow discordant seeds in Western target countries. In simple terms, as summarised by Maxim, ‘our task was to set Americans against their own government… to provoke unrest and discontent’. They had already partly achieved this goal by directly organising several protests like the ‘upsurge of violence against American citizens’ in August 2016 and ‘Black matters’ on 12 November

119 Sonam Sheth, ‘Our task was to set Americans against their own government’: New details emerge about Russia’s trolling operation, Business Insider, 17 October 2017, online: http://www.businessinsider.com/former-troll-russia-disinformation-campaign-trump-2017-10, accessed on 11 November 2017
2016121. This had the effect of indirectly increasing rally turnout and exaggerating the impact of demonstrations organised by other groups122.

No one can confidently confirm that this is the whole picture, especially regarding Russian E-intervention, and is likely only the tip of the iceberg. However, this event is of great significance because it unveils the silent and murky world of espionage between two of the world’s foremost superpowers that has for so long been hidden from public view. Such espionage was not new to either the American or global community, especially in light of the Arab Spring, usually identified as the ‘Facebook or Twitter revolutions in mainstream media coverage’123. However, the reason why Russian election meddling and Russian E-diplomatic interventions in the US 2016 election have become such a compelling issue is because this is the first time the US has suffered such a large-scale, influential and effective E-diplomatic intervention.

There is no doubt that several years earlier, this sort of E-diplomatic action was recognised as rather extraordinary. But since 2011, major world powers such as the US, Russia and the UK, have all recognised the significance of E-diplomacy, as well as new terms such as ‘21st Century Statecraft’, ‘Digital Diplomacy’ and ‘Innovative Diplomacy’, which were both created and adopted by the US State Department, the UK Foreign Office and Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs respectively. Nonetheless, before Russia's intervention, the US was still blissfully unaware of the extent to which Russian influence could sway the

outcome of something as serious as a presidential election, despite being a superpower with more than a century of experience in statecraft and espionage. Increasingly, public figures have expressed concern about the potential for exploitation, with statements like Representative Jackie Speier’s: ‘America [has a] problem [because] Russia was able to weaponise our own platforms to divide us, to dupe us and to discredit [our] democracy’\textsuperscript{124}. This is partly a lamentation on one of the realities in the century of E-diplomacy; that being so, no matter how experienced you may be in the art of statecraft, nothing should be taken for granted.

Undeniably, diplomacy had been a discreet and meticulous art, with the bulk of diplomatic activities conducted behind closed doors. However, diplomacy can no longer continue with merely 20th century principles. Advances in communication technology render such an approach obsolete. The digitisation of the art of diplomacy is an unavoidable way forward if we are to meet the challenges of tomorrow. While the execution of modern public diplomacy has been revamped to reflect the changes in technology and culture, the essence of effective diplomatic manoeuvring remains untouched. E-diplomacy has already been widely implemented by multiple nations in the form of information management and accumulation. Digitisation has also helped improve processing efficiency, especially in dealing with consular issues such as processing and issuing visa documents and facilitating fast and affordable correspondence with citizens living or travelling abroad. It has also proven useful in emergency situations such as natural disasters, and allows authorities quickly to establish the safety or whereabouts of citizens and foreign nationals\textsuperscript{125}. It is clear that the integration of modern communication technology with the age-old art of diplomacy cannot be reversed. But

rather than simply accept the inevitable, it will be incumbent upon governments to embrace carefully the opportunities such technology presents, without comprising the complex and delicate groundwork that must always be laid.

The following chapter will firstly review the murky history and development of E-diplomacy, and help us understand what exactly it is, how it has changed and what it will become. In the process, it will classify and compare traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and E-diplomacy, and identify differences in their motives, aims and methods. Typical examples such as those conducted by the Nazis, Bolsheviks, the West and the PRC over the past 150 years will be included in the next section.

ii. History of E-diplomacy

The beginning of E-diplomacy was accompanied by the invention of the telegraph and its utilisation in diplomatic practices. The telegraph and its descendants such as fax, broadcast, television, the internet and other E-technological outcomes have brought leapfrog developments to diplomatic practices time and time again. As mentioned in the preceding sections, this process of development has to date reached at least the ‘3.0’ phase. Starting with E-diplomacy 1.0, and following through up to E-diplomacy 3.0, it is necessary to clarify the nuances of these distinct periods, how they have changed diplomacy, and what they mean for the future of this ever-evolving art of interstate engagement.

The telegraph and E-diplomacy 1.0

The invention of the electric telegraph benefited from two developments in the electrical field. The first was the advent of the battery. In 1800, Alessandro Volta, an Italian physicist,
made stored electric currents reliably and then allowed them to be utilised in a controlled condition. The second was the connection between electricity and magnetism discovered by Hans Christian Oersted, a Danish physicist, in 1820. Based on these two developments, physicists of that period started to experiment with how to utilise batteries and electromagnetism principles to establish some sort of communication system. As a result of their efforts, two types of telegraph were invented by the British researchers William Cooke and Charles Wheatstone respectively, and the US researchers Samuel Morse, Alfred Vail and Leonard Gale. The former telegraph system, which was then being utilised for railroad signalling in England, operated through the use of five magnetic needles powered by electric currents that could be moved among a panel of letters and numbers. The latter system, a single-circuit telegraph, was invented by Morse with the help of Vail and Gale, and was a system consisting of a key, wire, battery and line of poles between telegraph stations. When the operator put the key down to connect the electric circuit to the battery, the electrical signal was sent through a wire to a receiver at the other side. Accompanying this system, morse code was later created by Morse and Vail for transmitting messages across telegraph wires. When the first message, ‘What hath God wrought’ was successfully transmitted from Morse to Vail between Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland, on 24 May 1844, the new age of both communication and diplomacy had formally arrived126.

Beginning with this fateful moment, the universalisation of the telegraph was unstoppable. As demonstrated in the map below, only nine years after the successful transmission of the first message, the telegraph network had been expanded to cover the main parts of the United States. Only one state east of the Mississippi, Florida, was not covered by

telegraph. By 1861, the entire American continent was fully covered by telegraph lines and, by 1866, a transatlantic cable connected Europe and the US\textsuperscript{127}.

![Map of the United States and Canada](https://www.loc.gov/item/97683602)

This revolution not only occurred in the US, but expanded to most of the Western world. In the 1830s, there was still no international system of telegraph. However, by the 1910s, telegraph traffic in four nations alone—Great Britain, France, Germany and the US—accounted for an average 250 million telegrams per year\textsuperscript{128}. Although this trend clearly demonstrated the overwhelming development of telegraph, at the time many people, including some diplomats who continued to hold resistant views toward the new technology, did not realise the significance that this transformation would have for future society. Today it is


accepted that the advent of the electric telegraph paved the path for a new era and significantly altered the diplomatic routines of the 19th century. In David Paull Nickles’s words, this trend clearly demonstrated a revolution. In the short run, the telegraph had an enormous effect upon journalism, financial markets and the popular imagination. In the longer run, it greatly influenced military strategy, writing style and business organisation.

On the issue of diplomacy, ‘Telegraphy produced significant challenges and opportunities for those involved in the conduct of diplomacy. After all, international relations, at their core, involve the conveyance of data across international boundaries. Telegraphy, a technology that recast long-distance communication, had the potential to transform diplomacy.’

In summary, this transformation occurred in three realms: firstly, diplomats’ autonomy was changed; secondly, diplomats’ lives and traditional diplomatic processes were changed; thirdly, the establishment of foreign policy towards the effects of the economic and technical characteristics of telegraphy were changed.

Methods for delivering information like carrier pigeons, courier horse and sailing ship began to be gradually replaced by expedited means. The transformation process was chronologically classified by Nickles, in terms of three eras: the period before 1851; the period between 1851 and 1918; and the period after 1918. Throughout this process, the second era was the major period for the integration of the telegraph into diplomatic practice. The emergence of the telegraph marked the first time in history that human beings had effectively separated new communication from old transportation. As with any technology,
change takes time to be digested and applied. On the one hand, during the early Victorian era, dating from the 1830s to the middle of the 19th century, workable electric telegraphs that had been set up in several nations independently were first utilised by the European foreign ministries during the early 1850s; later, the US used it as an important tool after the transatlantic cable was successfully completed in 1866. On the other hand, traditional ambassadors and other diplomats instantaneously found themselves losing freedom of decisions and actions, or in other words, diplomatic autonomy, which had been sharply circumscribed by the connection of the telegraph lines and establishment of diplomatic cable communication systems. The focal points of diplomacy began to fall within the purview of the foreign ministries. Moreover, international relations, the accompanying increasing workloads, and the exorbitant cost of transmitting telegrams, all contributed to a resistance against the extensive adoption and use of the telegram.

However, regardless of these events, the reality was that the emergence of the telegraph significantly transformed diplomacy, and announced the dawning of the era of E-diplomacy 1.0. In *Under the Wire: How the telegraph changed diplomacy*, the first full-length study of this important subject, Nickles called the electric telegraph the ‘first great step into the world of telecommunications’, and predicted that technology would play a major part in shaping the future of the human species and possibly would determine whether human beings have a future. In the book, Nickles attempts to integrate the telegraph into diplomatic practices based on the historical events that have occurred since 1851, when the first Anglo-

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136 Ibid., p.192.
French telegraphic cable was connected, to 1918, when World War I ended\textsuperscript{137}. Nickles systematically sorted the transformations that occurred as a result of the advent of the telegraph, from how this invention affected diplomats and diplomatic routines, to the subsequent requirement for the promotion of signals intelligence that its proliferation demanded, and his disavowal of the rash prediction of the technical achievement of electric telegraphy leading to the demise of the diplomatic service, made by politicians and journalists who resisted the new invention\textsuperscript{138}.

Nickles specifically emphasised that the new development and faster information flow did not lower the potential risk of conflict, because the ‘faster pace of diplomatic disputes invited more emotional and less creative decisions on the part of statesmen, while public opinion, which sometimes moderates over the course of a long crisis, often exercised a belligerent influence on shorter crises’\textsuperscript{139}. In order to manifest the great influence of the telegraph and the development of technology, Nickles made contradictory presumptions that the war of 1812 might have been prevented if telegraphic communication had been established earlier, and if the US and Great Britain had been connected by telegraph during the Trent Affair, it might have been possible for these two countries not to become belligerents. In addition, Nickles highlighted the effectiveness of the publication of the Zimmerman telegram, as it remarkably reduced public resistance to the final declaration of the US to join the war with Germany.

\textsuperscript{138} Davidi Paull Nickes, Under the Wire: How the telegraph Changed Diplomacy, Harvard University Press, 2009, pp.46-47
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, p.191
The aforementioned developments form the basic picture of E-diplomacy 1.0 clearly, starting with the advent of the telegraph, and a chain of reactions such as faster decision-making, reduced autonomy of diplomats, boosted centralisation of foreign ministries, the opening of a new field of intelligence, and information security. At the time there was room for improvement in security awareness, intelligence gathering and diplomatic skills. Compared to the later iterations of E-diplomacy 2.0 and 3.0, although the issue of the public and its opinion had begun to emerge, it was still not the most prominent feature of E-diplomacy 1.0, which was remarkably different from later iterations.

*The E-diplomacy 2.0 and its carriers*

The boundary between the periods of E-diplomacy 1.0 and 2.0 is difficult to define, but it is clear that the evolving process, closely combined with the emergence of new E-technological communication products and the distinction of typical carriers of each period, is specific. The aforementioned period was defined by telegraphy, and the latter one consists of radio, television and other siblings such as fax. Considering the E-diplomatic representativeness and its public orientation, this section will focus on the two carriers—radio and television. Indeed, by the third era, telegraphy was no longer as novel or exciting as before, and had already become a normal communication medium for diplomacy. Especially in the period of the First World War, major governments employed telegraphy more extensively than in the past and as a result, they not only forced themselves to become more adept at using this information transfer tool, but also gradually recognised many of the problems accompanied with utilising telegraphy—such as the cost, garbling, and danger of telegraphic espionage—and continuously attempted to mitigate these risks. Following this progress, radio and later television and other communication technologies were born at the
right moment, and rapidly received far more enthusiasm than the telegraph. Even political leaders and diplomats who had been generally relatively stodgy in their customs, were no exception in this progress.

Typical carrier of E-diplomacy 2.0: Radio and television

The invention of radio and radio-diplomacy

In spite of some controversial issues about who invented radio, the early history of radio is also the history of the development of producing radio instruments and using radio waves. Radio was first applied to communications in 1881 after being suggested by French scientist Ernest Mercadier and adopted by Alexander Graham Bell as an alternative name for the optical transmission system of his new apparatus. Figures such as James Clerk Maxwell, Heinrich Rudolf Hertz, and Guglielmo Marconi contributed either to theories or inventions that would lead to the realisation of radio. In 1890, ‘radio’ was first connected with electromagnetic radiation by French physicist Édouard Branly, an inventor of a version of a coherer receiver called radio-conducteur. By 1895, Guglielmo Marconi made the first broadcast of a radio transmission composed of Morse code from a temporary station and Reginald Aubrey Fessenden—who was recognised by Canadians as the ‘father’ of radio and as the first to actually transmit the sound of the human voice—broadcast a ‘Christmas concert’ to the astonished crews of the United Fruit Company who were out in the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea on Christmas Eve 1906. This was the first radio broadcast in the

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140 Alexander Graham Bell, ‘Production of Sound by Radiant Energy’, Popular Science Monthly, July 1881, pp. 329-330. ‘[W]e have named the apparatus for the production and reproduction of sound in this way the ‘photophone’, because an ordinary beam of light contains the rays which are operative. To avoid in future any misunderstandings upon this point, we have decided to adopt the term ‘radiophone’, proposed by M. Mercadier, as a general term signifying the production of sound by any form of radiant energy...’

141 A. Frederick Collins, ‘The Genesis of Wireless Telegraphy’, Electrical World and Engineer, 10 May 1902, p. 811
world’s history. These and further continuous development of technology made the ‘one to many’ model of the distribution of audio content possibly, and this was the key step for the further applications of radio. Although the development of radio began as ‘wireless telegraphy’, the later boom was closely associated with the development of broadcasting, and without ‘one to many’ distribution, broadcasting could not have been realized.

In the diplomatic field, the development of technology not only formed the important basis for serving the routine diplomatic work mentioned previously, but also created the condition for the innovation and expansion of diplomatic work—radio diplomacy was rising in response to this development. The earliest recorded case of an organised application of radio in international relations and policies was carried out by the Soviet Union in 1926, when Moscow required the return of Bessarabia from Romania. In this case, Moscow employed international radio as an instrument of its foreign policy. In 1929, Radio Moscow was inaugurated in four languages initially, and only four years later increased to 11. The aims were at least twofold: first, to introduce and explain the Bolshevik communist revolution to the wider world; secondly, to propagandise the accomplishments that had been achieved by the USSR. In considering the impact of Moscow radio, it is important not to neglect that a member of its accidental audience expressed concerns to Hugh Dalton at the British Foreign Office that Moscow Radio had broadcast in English and ‘urged revolution repeatedly’. Dalton was quickly made aware of the potential risks and suggested that the Post Office make transcripts of questionable Russian broadcasts, marking the first organised monitoring of international radio broadcasting. It should be emphasised that, after the revolution, the

Bolsheviks employed many popular forms of entertainment, arts forms, and mass media to serve their propaganda purposes. In the field of mass media, the Bolsheviks relied on different media such as posters, newspapers, short film and, as mentioned above, radio programs, to propagate their political values, ideas and ideologies to foreign audiences. In addition, they funded the creation of novels, fables, festivals and monumental sculptures to narrate the Russian revolution history and both depict and mythologise Russian heroes. These events can be collectively classified as public diplomacy; however, only radio diplomacy can be included in the conception of E-diplomacy 2.0, which will be specifically discussed and compared in the concluding section of this chapter.

Compared with the USSR practices as a pioneer in the radio diplomatic field, the majority of other European countries that were engaged with international services were merely focused on their scattered expatriates offshore. For example, Holland, which established a regular international service firstly among the European nations, began transmitting broadcasts to expatriates in 1927. Germany followed in 1929, France in 1931 and Britain launched its own such Empire Service in 1932. However, similar to the rise of fascism in Europe, this situation changed rapidly. Fascist countries like Italy, in order to oppose the British Middle Eastern policies, actively transmitted vitriolic broadcasts in Arabic, which compelled the BBC to establish its first foreign language service, the Arabic service, in 1938. Another fascist country, Nazi Germany, proved itself to be particularly inventive in utilising the new medium. In a typical case, the Nazi Minister of the Propaganda and Enlightenment Department, Dr Joseph Goebbels, arranged for 25,000 pre-tuned ‘German frequencies only’ radio sets to be freely distributed throughout Austria. This meant that German broadcasts owned a near-monopolised position in transmitting information in Austria, and it successfully

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enabled the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938. Similar means were later adopted and
developed by the Allies, and were applied throughout the 20th century, particularly during the
Vietnam war\textsuperscript{146}.

Inspired or irritated by the rise of fascism, the British government finally ended its
ignorance of the value of foreign language broadcasting amid the Munich crisis. In 1938, just
two days before the Munich conference, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain
asked the BBC to transmit German, French and Italian versions of a speech to targeted
nations, in order to present the British case to the targeted countries’ people directly.
Although this exercise was initially delayed by technical failures and faults of timing, the
British government ultimately realised its objective by secretly employing the private station
Radio Luxembourg for such activities\textsuperscript{147}. As a result, the British policy was broadcast to the
targeted countries, particularly Germany, and it was the first time the German people had
been presented with the British case. Gerard Mansell\textsuperscript{148} described what the British had done
during the Munich crisis, particularly to Germany, and it was the first time for the German
people themselves\textsuperscript{149}. With this encouraging experience, the British gradually became positive
users of radio diplomacy and actively applied radio broadcasting as a new avenue for
enhancing public diplomatic skills. This development endured a certain level of turbulence,
because the aftermath of the Second World War required the British Labour government to
gather more resources for rebuilding Britain, fulfilling its socialist commitments such as
setting up the social welfare system, and reconstructing its domestic broadcasting
infrastructure. As a result, a concerted effort had been made by the Labour government to

\textsuperscript{147} W.J. West, Truth Betrayed, London: Duckworth, 1987, p.22
\textsuperscript{149}Ibid
curtail the BBC’s operations abroad. The typical opinion was, in the words of Hugh Gaitskell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that such ‘frills’ as international broadcasting could no longer be afforded by the British, and propaganda could be sacrificed without serious effect\textsuperscript{150}. Nevertheless, the opposing opinion was expressed by R.A. Butler and Major Tufton Beamish from the Conservative Party that broadcasting is ‘one of the most vital [instruments] that we can use in our general defence arrangement\textsuperscript{151}, and as that the expenditure on the European services would be a gilt-edged investment.\textsuperscript{152} Even though this debate persisted for a time, the British Government soon recognised that it could not abandon the defence against Russian propaganda, unless the US could take the burden alone\textsuperscript{153}. In 1948, the British Cabinet made a decision that a systematic attack on Russian Communist propaganda should be launched through ‘anti-Communist publicity’\textsuperscript{154}. This occurred after the British government had received the review of British abroad information efforts, made by the Drogheda Committee in July 1953, which identified three essential targets for the British overseas information activities: primarily supporting British foreign policy; secondly, preserving and strengthening the ties between Commonwealth and Empire; and thirdly, promoting trade and protecting overseas investment. As a milestone, the BBC formally confirmed its relationship with the British Government’s strategies in foreign policies\textsuperscript{155}. Compared to the British, the US had little or no experience with international broadcasting in the 1930s\textsuperscript{156}. Following the establishment of the Voice of America (VOA), this situation changed and the VOA rapidly transformed into the US State Department’s largest propaganda program section during the

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid P: 223
\textsuperscript{151} Hansard 484, 21 February 1951, Cots. 1268-1272,
\textsuperscript{152} Briggs, Asa, Governing the BBC (London: BBC Publications, 1979), Pp. 517
\textsuperscript{154} Briggs, Asa, Governing the BBC (London: BBC Publications, 1979), P: 510
\textsuperscript{155} Gary D. Rawnley, Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda, the BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64, Studies in Diplomacy series, 1996, p. 21
\textsuperscript{156} Marsha Siefert, Radio Diplomacy and the Cold War, Journal of Communication, June 2003, pp. 365-368
Cold War\textsuperscript{157}. In addition, the US Government was not content with merely one channel for overseas propaganda, especially one that was subject to apparent governmental interventions. It conducted a bold experiment to establish a disguised private broadcaster with no visible governmental connections, and Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) were born out of this experiment. RFE started to broadcast to Eastern Europe in 1950 with the languages of the ‘bloc’ and when RL was set up in 1951, it started transmitting to Russia and the Soviet empire—several days before the death of Stalin—in Russian and 18 other languages used in the Soviet empire\textsuperscript{158}. The objectives stated by Arch Puddington, the former deputy director of the New York Bureau of RFE/RL (1985–1993), and George Urban, the former director of RFE (1982–1985) appointed by President Reagan, were ‘to bring about the peaceful demise of the Communist system and the liberation of the so-called satellite nations’\textsuperscript{159}, and to represent the ‘conscience for all Western democratic nations as well as the interests of the Eastern nations we were addressing’\textsuperscript{160}. In fact, during the Cold War, the US international radio broadcasts had been growing exponentially, as described by Gary D. Rawnsley\textsuperscript{161}, and international radio broadcasting in that period made by far the largest contribution to the dissemination of propaganda. In the process of the booming of radio broadcasting, the US suffered similar twists and turns to the British. In 1953, the report about the US overseas information efforts, prepared by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations under the chairmanship of Senator Bourke Hickenlooper, concluded that:

\textsuperscript{158} Marsha Siefert, Radio Diplomacy and the Cold War, Journal of Communication, June 2003, p.367
\textsuperscript{160} George R. Urban, Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 114
\textsuperscript{161} Gary D. Rawnsley, Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda the BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64. Studies in Diplomacy series, 1996, p. 9
The US is judged abroad by its actions more than by mere rhetoric. Rhetoric may help people to understand action, but it is no substitute for policy. Thus a vigorous and clear-cut foreign policy enunciated badly and simply by the highest ranking officials of the US can do as much or more than large appropriations for information.\footnote{Whitton, John B., Propaganda and the Cold War: A Princeton University Symposium (Connecticut: Public Affairs Press, 1963) (Reprint), p. 7}

It seemed a negative recognition and a warning for the US propagandists and the further development of the US international broadcasting. However, merely three years later, while the US propagandists sought to utilise the revolt in Hungary, this recognition began to change in the sense that it was recognised that integrating communications into the foreign policy process was necessary, and the USIA director ‘offer[ed] suggestions as to the possible effects on public opinion of a proposed move, in terms of method, substance and timing. Lack of liaison in this matter…can be very harmful to the national interest’\footnote{Ibid.} In 1961, these ideas were reiterated by President Kennedy and finally came to fruition.

On the one hand, the question of how to take advantage of radio diplomacy was a contentious one for diplomats, and a central concern for policy makers, individuals and institutions alike. On the other hand, there was the question of how to control the propaganda activities that emerged as a new anxiety for international relationships. The first attempt at setting up fundamental rules for regulating the content of international broadcasts was made by the League of Nations and encouraged the application of radio as a peaceful tool for creating better mutual understanding between peoples\footnote{Philip M. Taylor, The Projection of Britain, (Cambridge: CUP,1981), p.190}. In 1936, the League of Nations initiated an International Convention regarding the Utilization of Broadcasting based on the Cause of Peace. This convention required the signatories to desist from transmitting content,
‘which to the detriment of good international understanding, is of such a character as to incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of a territory of a High Contracting Party’\textsuperscript{165}. Despite its limited influence because of the refusal of fascist Germany and Italy among the great powers at that time to sign it, the attempt of this convention was still praiseworthy and a basis for further efforts was established. With the establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War, another attempt proceeded. In 1949, the ‘Essentials for Peace’ Resolution was adopted by the General Assembly, calling on all nations ‘to refrain from any threats or acts, direct or indirect, aimed at impairing the freedom, independence or integrity of any state, or at fomenting civil strife and subverting the will of the people in any state’\textsuperscript{166}. Furthermore, in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, it was stipulated that the member states must ‘refrain from spreading subversive propaganda hostile to the government of a foreign country in times of peace’\textsuperscript{167}. Similar to some international resolutions and conventions, they were the collective will of the UN, but still needed to respect the individual members’ discretions which always limited the effects of the UN resolutions or conventions. In addition, while member states decided to justify the legality of their actions, theoretically they can find whatever could help them in international laws. One typical case in the 1950s was about opposing the jamming of the VOA by the USSR. The US cited the Declaration of Human Rights as the legal basis to appeal to the UN. In retaliation, the USSR invoked both a 1936 Geneva resolution and the UN Resolution 841 to condemn broadcasts designed to ‘incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with internal order’\textsuperscript{168}. Such ambiguity in

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166}UN Resolution 290(IV). Essentials of Peace
international law forced states to seek different means for either controlling the propaganda activities or for achieving the objectives of their propaganda. However, the specifics of this are beyond the scope of this thesis, but it reflected how important the broadcasting was. In that period, radio broadcasting was one of the most influential mediums. As Terence H. Qualter put it, ‘…radio is superior to all its predecessors. It is immediate and it is universal, being bound by neither time nor space. There is no perceptible time-lag between broadcast and reception. A radio message circles the globe in an instant. It is universal; the only unstoppable medium. Radio can ignore frontiers and boundaries, for jamming and banning are rarely fully effective and may even be counterproductive. Radio can penetrate where it is officially not wanted. This makes it pre-eminent as an instrument of international propaganda.’

The invention of television and television-diplomacy

The monopoly of radio on E-diplomacy did not last long. The turning point was the emergence of the first rudimentary ‘television’ when the image of a face in motion was successfully transmitted by radio in the demonstration made by Scottish inventor John Logie Baird on 26 January 1926. It was a promotion of his first public demonstration of televised silhouette images in motion on 25 March 1925\(^\text{170}\). One year later, television was for the first time successfully demonstrated by a 21-year-old inventor, Philo Taylor Farnsworth, in San Francisco on 7 Sept 1927. Some 16 years before that, some crude experiments in the transmission of the images had been conducted by inventor Boris Rosing\(^\text{171}\). However, all of this was just the beginning—without the popularisation of television and support of the

\(^{169}\) Terence H. Qualter, Opinion Control in the Democracies (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 218-219
multinational and global networks and services, television would have been unable to achieve
diplomatic objectives. The global society took nearly a half century to meet these two
preconditions.

On the hardware side, a new system of television using a cathode-ray tube (CRT) for
both transmission and reception was demonstrated by Manfred von Ardenne in August 1931,
although due to the lack of a camera tube the CRT could only be used as a substitute for a fly-
spot scanner.\textsuperscript{172} On 25 August 1934, an all-electronic television system with a live camera
was publicly demonstrated by Philo Farnsworth\textsuperscript{173}. In 1940, a colour television patent for the
‘trichromatic field sequential system’ was authorised based on the work of Guillermo
Gonztps\textsuperscript{174}. John Logie Baird demonstrated the first colour transmissions\textsuperscript{175}, first colour broadcasts\textsuperscript{176}, and first practical hybrid system\textsuperscript{177}. In August and September 1940, the
Columbia Broadcasting System field-sequential colour system was demonstrated to the
Federal Communications Commission\textsuperscript{178} and to the press\textsuperscript{179}. As a competitor, in February
1941 the National Broadcasting Company launched its first field test of colour television.
However, from 22 April 1942 to 20 August 1945, the prohibition made by the War Production
Board for limiting the manufacture of new electronic devices like television and radio sets for
civilian use, had slowed the process of introducing colour television to the public\textsuperscript{180}. Although
the first national colour broadcast for the Tournament of Roses Parade in 1954 had been
conducted, in the postwar period the relatively high price and lack of colour programming

\textsuperscript{172} Albert Abramson, Zworykin: Pioneer of Television, University of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 111
\textsuperscript{174} ‘Patent US2296019 – Chromoscopic adapter for television equipment’, Retrieved on 22 March 2015
\textsuperscript{175} John Logie Baird, Television Apparatus and the Like, US patent, filed in U.K. in 1928
\textsuperscript{176} Ray Herbert, Crystal Palace Television Studios John Logie Baird and British Television, online:
http://www.bairdtelevision.com/crystalpalace.html, accessed on 20 Jan 2018
\textsuperscript{177} Iain L. Baird and Malcolm H.I. Baird, ‘The World's First High Definition Colour Television System’, online:
http://www.bairdtelevision.com/colour.html, accessed on 20 Jan 2018
\textsuperscript{180} Bob Cooper, ‘Television: The Technology That Changed Our Lives’, Early Television Foundation, online:
http://www.earlytelevision.org/color_tv_cooper.html, accessed on 20 January 2018
impacted the all-electronic colour television’s market expansion\textsuperscript{181}, and in the following 10 years, black and white was still dominant. This situation gradually changed with the colour transition, with more than 50\% of prime-time programming in colour, the emergence of the first all-colour prime-time season in 1966 and the first all-colour network season in 1972. The sale of colour television equipment ushered in the most explosive growth since the mid-1960s, as shown in the following ‘Number of TV Households in America’ diagram provided by the Buffalo History Museum. It is clear that the milestone of colour sets’ sale surpassing black and white sets was in 1972 and, by the end of 1970s, colour sets took the majority of the market share. In recent years, new types of television like digital television, 3D television and smart televisions have emerged; however, the golden age of television diplomacy has passed with the booming of the internet.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Number of TV Households in America}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Number of TV Households} & \textbf{Year} & \textbf{Number of TV Households} \\
\hline
1950 & 3,950,000 & 1960 & 9,500,000 \\
1951 & 4,025,000 & 1961 & 10,000,000 \\
1952 & 4,050,000 & 1962 & 10,500,000 \\
1953 & 4,090,000 & 1963 & 11,000,000 \\
1954 & 4,120,000 & 1964 & 11,500,000 \\
1955 & 4,150,000 & 1965 & 12,000,000 \\
1956 & 4,180,000 & 1966 & 12,500,000 \\
1957 & 4,200,000 & 1967 & 13,000,000 \\
1958 & 4,220,000 & 1968 & 13,500,000 \\
1959 & 4,240,000 & 1969 & 14,000,000 \\
1960 & 4,260,000 & 1970 & 14,500,000 \\
1961 & 4,280,000 & 1971 & 15,000,000 \\
1962 & 4,300,000 & 1972 & 15,500,000 \\
1963 & 4,320,000 & 1973 & 16,000,000 \\
1964 & 4,340,000 & 1974 & 16,500,000 \\
1965 & 4,360,000 & 1975 & 17,000,000 \\
1966 & 4,380,000 & 1976 & 17,500,000 \\
1967 & 4,400,000 & 1977 & 18,000,000 \\
1968 & 4,420,000 & 1978 & 18,500,000 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
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\begin{center}
\textbf{COLOR TELEVISIONS}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Number of % of TV Households with Color TV} \\
\hline
1964 & 3.1 \\
1966 & 3.22,040,000 & 9.6 \\
1968 & 13,700,000 & 24.2 \\
1970 & 23,400,000 & 39.3 \\
1972 & 27,600,000 & 45.2 \\
1974 & 32,800,000 & 52.6 \\
1976 & 39,400,000 & 60.1 \\
1978 & 44,950,000 & 67.3 \\
1980 & 48,500,000 & 70.8 \\
1982 & 51,200,000 & 74.0 \\
1984 & 54,900,000 & 77.0 \\
1986 & 56,900,000 & 78.0 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Source: The Buffalo History Museum, Number of TV Households in America.


Following the BBC’s adoption of television for commercial purposes in 1932, television gradually evolved to be a major medium of news and entertainment. As Mitchell Stephens, as described, following the BBC’s adoption of television for commercial purposes in 1932, the program was captured by a single camera, and the limitations of early cameras forced actors in dramas to work under impossibly hot lights, wearing black lipstick and green makeup (the cameras had trouble with the colour white). The early newscasts on CBS were ‘chalk talks’, with a newsman moving a pointer across a map of Europe, at that time consumed by war. The poor quality of the picture made it difficult to make out the newsman, let alone the map. Despite being slowed during the Second World War, the development of television seemed unstoppable, particularly in the US. For instance, the Radio Corporation of America, a leading American electronic company, invested $50 million at the earliest stage for promoting the development of electronic television, and employed the Russian-born scientist Vladimir Kosma Zworykin, who was a participant in Rosing’s experiments, to lead this exploration. In 1939, the opening of the New York World’s Fair and a speech made by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt were televised; this was the first time the president had appeared on television. Along with the explosion of sales of television sets, the golden years of television was in the 1970s. Since then, ‘prime-time TV’ became a real-time method of broadcasting. American people were able to access global news at the time of occurrence, and this became deeply integrated into their daily routines. According to Mitchell Stephens’ evaluation, actors in drama had as much effect on contemporary American society as television. Before 1947, the number of US homes with television sets could be measured in the thousands. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of US homes had at least one television set, and those sets were on for an average of more than seven hours a day. The typical American spends (depending on the survey and the time of year) from two-and-a-half to almost five hours a day watching

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183 Ibid
television. It is significant not only that this time is being spent with television but that it is not being spent engaging in other activities, such as reading or going out or socialising.

All of these factors made television diplomacy possible. More precisely, television became a two-way channel for both collecting information and a powerful tool for exerting public diplomacy, or in other words, conveying diplomatic messages. The typical case was the ‘CNN effect’, although some scholars like Eytan Gilboa suggested replacing this term with the broader and more neutral term of ‘controlling actor’ to describe the media’s roles in policymaking, diplomacy and international relations, which is not the topic that should be discussed in this research project. However, abundant materials collected by Eytan Gilboa were useful for proving the effect of television news and television diplomacy. During the time shortly after the outbreak of the Gulf War, the effect of shaping public opinion was so prominent that a psychologist James Turner described this, ‘We are concerned about people getting virtually addicted to news … afraid to miss every little thing that might happen’, while being interviewed by The Washington Post. ‘Restaurants, hotels, and gaming establishments seem to be suffering from the CNN effect. People are intensely interested in the first real-time war in history and they are just planting themselves in front of the TV’, said lodging industry analyst John Rohs when asked by The New York Times. It is clear that the CNN effect is the epitome of the effects of the development of television. It reflected ‘the changing attitudes of the international community, which gets more information faster than ever before with much of that information being about trends in the US’. The impact of this transformation was highly influential. For instance, General Valery Minilov, a Russian

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185The Washington Post, an interview with James Turner, 23 Jan 1991, b1
officer, when responding to the criticism about the Russian military actions towards Chechens, emphasised those political statements made by ‘senior American and British officials, including Tony Blair, were based on the “CNN effect” and misinformation. They are making political statements based on information that has not been verified, has not been proved, but is spread on a mass scale’\textsuperscript{188}. This impact was directly realised by John Shattuck\textsuperscript{189}, who was the former US Assistant Secretary of State and the highest-ranking US foreign policy maker: ‘Live television coverage does not change the policy, but it does create the environment in which the policy is made’\textsuperscript{190}. Other western officials expressed similar views. Boutros Boutros-Gali, the former UN Secretary-General, shared his view that ‘pictures relayed around the world by CNN have led people to demand that their governments, through the UN, take action’\textsuperscript{191}. A more assertive statement made by him was that, ‘CNN is the sixteenth member of the Security Council’\textsuperscript{192}. Moreover, as cited by Philip Seib in \textit{Media and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century}, David Owen, who was the former Foreign Secretary of the UK, not only observed the media’s call for intervention in civil wars was not new, but also stated that ‘what is different today is … The TV camera in Sarajevo recording minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, in real-time … conveys an immediacy and has an impact that no newspaper … carries’\textsuperscript{193}.

Since the global television news was realised and the cable news network (CNN) drove broadcasting to almost around the globe in the early 1980s\textsuperscript{194}, many cases can be quoted, all

\textsuperscript{188}Aris, B. ‘Russia Shrugs off Protests over Chechen Civilian Dead’, The Daily Telegraph (London) 17, 6 November 1999
\textsuperscript{191}Epstein, E. ‘Boutros-Ghali Expects Criticism to Fade’, 26 June 1995, San Francisco Chronicle A5
\textsuperscript{192}Minear, L., Scott C., and Weiss, T. The News Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. 1996, p.4
\textsuperscript{193}Philip Seib, Media and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century, Palgrave Macmillan (New York) 2005, P5
\textsuperscript{194}Whitemore, H. CNN: The Inside Story, Boston: Little Brown. (1990)
reflecting how television information represented by CNN shaped public opinion and became involved in the process of domestic and international policymaking. Under the demonstration effect of CNN, or inspired by it, BBC World Television, which had already established a world radio network, Sky, Fox News, and NBC, or even non-western news networks like Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia, all drew up plans to develop global television networks. Among them, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia were driven by CNN’s strong presence in Middle East conflicts; another aim of their participation in an international service was to balance the dissemination of real-time news.

In summary, although radio and television are increasingly broadcast via the Internet nowadays, and increasing volumes of visual and acoustical news have been released by YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and their siblings, in the foreseeable future radio and television will certainly evolve or be bypassed in the trend of new and high-speed technological development; however, radio and television both played very important roles in the specific period of E-diplomacy 2.0. In the internet age, E-diplomacy has been updated to its 3.0 phase.

*The internet and E-diplomacy 3.0*

In comparison with the medium of the first two phases of E-diplomacy, people affected by the current period are not unfamiliar with the internet. However, controversies are not absent from the history of the carrier of E-diplomacy or its ‘origins’ and evolving process. In common understanding, the epoch-making event of the internet age is recognised as the emergence of the 4-node ARPANET network in 1969, which is supported by scholars like
Salus\textsuperscript{195} and Hafner and Lyon\textsuperscript{196}, and systematically refuted by Martin and Daniel\textsuperscript{197}. This is a topic sufficient for another research project. Although some academic controversies are still proceeding, the modern internet system was set up based on the ARPANET’s Transmission Control Protocol (TCP)/Internet Protocol (IP). Since 1969, around the golden age of television, the Internet had already initiated its journey to universalisation. In the 1970s, commercial networks on a global scale were established, and later, in the 1980s, electronic commerce such as automated teller machines and supermarket checkouts became commonplace, and desktop personal computers became a reality as well. In the 1990s and later, the internet came into its golden age, and the emergence of email services, electronic forums, online shopping and social media shaped the experience of the internet.

Among these, the emergence of social media like Facebook, Twitter and their siblings, and in China, QQ, Weibo and WeChat, have been closely tied with the updating process of E-diplomacy. Before these social media networks became popular, some scholars such as David Rothkopf, John Arquilla and David Ronfeld as mentioned in first chapter had already realised that the development of the new technologies would change world politics in the 1990s. Fergus Hanson (2012) recognised that, ‘The origins of E-diplomacy at State can be traced to this same year—1998—and the East Africa bombings, when a Blue Ribbon Panel investigating the attacks concluded State was poorly placed to internally communicate’. The symbolic event of the beginning of E-diplomacy 3.0 could be seen as the US State Department establishing its E-diplomacy unit named the Taskforce on eDiplomacy in 2002, which was a response to the requirement to improve the US capacity to communicate and interact with the wider world since the popularity of internet in the world. Shortly before and

\textsuperscript{195}Salus, P. Casting the Net, Reading: Addison-Wesley. 1995
\textsuperscript{196}Hafner, K. and Lyon, M. Where Wizards Stay Up Late, New York: Simon & Schuster. 1996
\textsuperscript{197}Martin Campbell-Kelly, and Daniel D Garcia-Swartz, The history of the internet: the missing narratives, Journal of Information Technology (2013) 28, pp. 18-33
after this year, a handful of scholars like Wilson P. Dizard (2001) and Evan H. Potter (2002) began to explore this new field, but most of them focused mainly on the case of the US; therefore, the number of research outputs, such as published studies and papers, is extremely limited. Until 2009, after Hilary Clinton mentioned ‘21st Century statecraft’ in her speech, the academic field and public debate started to pay specific attention to ‘E-diplomacy’, which in this thesis is equal to E-diplomacy 3.0.

However, the outbreak of the Arab Spring—which had driven a revolutionary wave in the Arab world, overturned multiple regimes and the serious consequences of which are still impacting the stability of Middle Eastern region and global community—was extremely stimulating for the global public to focus on E-diplomacy; it was the first time for the global community to become acutely aware of the pertinent effects of E-diplomacy. Inspired by the US and the Arab Spring, increasing number of countries started to engage with E-diplomacy. Many countries' foreign ministries started to embrace E-diplomacy as a means of achieving the goals of diplomacy in the internet age. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office sets up an Office of Digital Diplomacy and embeds the use of digital technology across every element of foreign policy work. China set up a public diplomacy office affiliated in October 2009. Even in the smaller nation of Sweden, its Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was suggested by Twitter users to be the best connected world leader in 2013198. The speedy propagation of E-diplomatic trends has formally announced the arrival of E-diplomacy 3.0. Typical cases of E-diplomacy 3.0 have been emerging in succession since the early period of the 2010s. Not only are the so-called black box operations of ‘Russian meddling’ and ‘Arab Spring’ carried out by Russia and the U.S typical cases of E-diplomacy, but the politicians or governmental departments setting up social media accounts, and using social media or new media products

to propagandise their new ideas, values and ideologies, are all E-diplomatic activities. Similar to the problem in defining E-diplomacy, how to classify E-diplomatic activities requires still more discussion and exploration. Based on the cases that occurred in the phase of E-diplomacy 3.0, and guided by the offensive neorealism view of John Mearsheimer, this thesis undertakes the classification of E-diplomatic activities by the metric of final effects, and its categorisation into at least three typical categories: positive, negative and rational E-diplomatic activities.

Among them, positive and rational ones are easily understood. The former refers to E-diplomatic activities which are intended to actively promote diplomatic working efficiency, improve communication and interaction, and strengthen the consensus. This includes activities such as: Prime Minister Narendra Modi posting, ‘Congratulations to President Xi on getting re-elected as CPC General Secretary. I look forward to further promoting India-China ties together’ on his Sina Weibo after Xi Jinping was re-elected as CPC General Secretary199; the US Embassy in Australia publishing200 on YouTube to introduce its new Ambassador to the Australian society before his formal appointment; the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade actively utilises different social media for communicating and interacting with the global society201. All of these activities have clearly brought positive effects for international relations, and it is not difficult to summarise them as positive E-diplomatic activities. The third, rational E-diplomatic activities, is simply the use of E-tools for routine diplomatic works; publishing notices and information on E-platforms such as official websites can be summarised as rational E-diplomatic activities lacking subjectivity and active emotional involvement, and will not bring positive or negative effects.

199 https://m.weibo.cn/5581682776/4167008604077587
200 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZ3U5NzHgdw
In contrast to positive and rational ones, negative E-diplomatic activities always tend to lead to negative impacts on international relations. The targets of negative E-diplomacy usually involve spying, smearing, regime overthrow, and manipulating elections etc. This is the dark side of diplomacy. In fact, before the diplomatic cables sent from US missions to the US Department of State were released by WikiLeaks during 2011-2012, the major perception about diplomacy was the ‘images of ambassadors and envoys as unfailingly tactful and articulate professionals making the case for world peace, and with a distaste for the dark and warlike side of world politics’\textsuperscript{202}. In exception to cases like ‘Russian meddling’ and the ‘Arab Spring’ mentioned above, the well-known typical cases are the US and British diplomats eavesdropping on Kofi Annan before the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003\textsuperscript{203} and the US diplomatic instruction from Hillary Clinton to spy on Ban Ki-moon and other top UN officials and to gather all sorts of their information in 2009\textsuperscript{204}; ‘The US to spy on top UN officers to Manipulated Climate Accord\textsuperscript{205}. Former US Ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman, suggested that the US call upon the young people. ‘They’re called the internet generation … and they are bringing about change the likes of which is going to take China down’ in a Republican Presidential debate in 12 Nov 2011. The common characteristic of these activities is making the negative effects in the international relations and the negative effects made by some cases like ‘Arab Spring’ are inestimable. Concisely, using the final effect as a measure to categorize the E-diplomatic activities is an enforceable method for recognition and classification.

\textsuperscript{204} Booth, Robert; Borger, Julian ‘US Diplomats Spied on UN Leadership—Diplomats Ordered To Gather Intelligence on Ban Ki-Moon—Secret Directives Sent to More than 30 US Embassies—Call for DNA Data, Computer Passwords and Terrorist Links’. The Guardian, 28 November 2010, accessed on 18 February 2013
\textsuperscript{205} Carrington, Damian., ‘WikiLeaks Cables Reveal How US Manipulated Climate Accord—Embassy Dispatches Show America Used Spying, Threats and Promises of Aid To Get Support for Copenhagen Accord—WikiLeaks Cables: Cancún Climate Talks Doomed To Fail, Says EU President—Cancún Climate Change Summit: Week One in Pictures’. The Guardian, 3 December 2010, accessed on 18 February 2013
Classification and comparison of traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and E-diplomacy

Diplomacy continues to transform itself, and even simply focusing on the dimension of E-diplomacy, as demonstrated above, change is the only constant. Accompanying this process of change, many new concepts like newspaper diplomacy, radio diplomacy, television diplomacy, airplane diplomacy, public diplomacy or people’s diplomacy, E-diplomacy (digital diplomacy or cyber diplomacy or twitter diplomacy or social media diplomacy) etc. have become prominent in succession and created some confusion. For the majority, the definition of diplomacy or traditional diplomacy is ‘the management of international relations by negotiation; the methods by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist’ explained in the Oxford English Dictionary\textsuperscript{206}, which was endorsed by British diplomat Sir Harold Nicolson, a founder of the modern academic discipline of diplomatic studies, in his core text Diplomacy\textsuperscript{207} (1939) revised in 1963. This definition, although ill promoted, acknowledged that diplomacy is ‘a broader range of diplomatic processes than merely negotiations, including the range of representative and consular functions, as well as the role of the practitioners: the ambassadors, envoys, and other professional diplomats’. It had already attempted to distinguish diplomacy at that moment from the diplomacy of earlier times since the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, when the meaning of diplomacy was simpler and generally referred to a process: the art of negotiation, and how to use negotiation effectively to achieve objectives of the state\textsuperscript{208}.

\textsuperscript{206}Oxford English Dictionary. 1933, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 385-386
\textsuperscript{208}Pauline Kerr and Geoffrey Wiseman, Diplomacy in a Globalizing World: Theories and Practices, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 69-70
In fact, with the development of communication technologies, the emergence of telegraph, radio, television and internet, on the one hand, has made a broader range of diplomacy possible; on the other hand, the demands of understanding more, participating more, and interacting more with diplomatic departments and staff and foreign affairs have become a trend as well. As one way of responding to this trend, the concept ‘public diplomacy’ was universally acknowledged firstly as being used by a retired foreign service officer, Edmund Gullion, who was also the Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, to express its modern meaning: ‘the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and their impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications’, although the scholar Nicholas J. Cull\textsuperscript{209} recognized that ‘public diplomacy’ was not coined by Edmund Gullion in 1965 and he was merely the first to use the phrase in its modern meaning.

Similar as the other concepts and definitions, the term of ‘public diplomacy’ has evolved by the works of different scholars and diplomatic practitioners. This process can be partly demonstrated on a timeline that defines public diplomacy as:

‘government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television’\textsuperscript{210}.

…And it remains indispensable to [national] interests, ideals and leadership role in the world and other important sectors of foreign societies. Public diplomacy is carried out through a wide range of programs that employ person-to-person contacts; print, broadcast, and electronic media, and other means\textsuperscript{211}.

‘The conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of nongovernmental entities (political parties, corporations, trade associations, labor unions, educational institutions, religious organizations, ethnic groups, and so on including influential individuals for the purpose of influencing the politics and actions of other governments\textsuperscript{212}, as stated by former Senior Director for Public Affairs at the National Security Council, Jill A. Schuker, in July 2004\textsuperscript{213}.

In addition, a former diplomat John Brown commented on public diplomacy indirectly, saying that ‘at best, public diplomacy: Provides a truthful, factual exposition and explication of a nation’s foreign policy and way of life to overseas audiences; Encourages international understanding; listens and engages in dialogue. At its worst, propaganda: Forces its message on an audience, often by repetition and slogans; Demonizes elements of the outside world; Simplifies complex issues and history; Misinterprets the truth or deliberately lies.’\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{210}US Department of State, Dictionary of International Relations Terms, 1987, p. 85
\textsuperscript{212}Alan K. Henrikson, Definition - Public diplomacy, Sensagent, April 2005, online: http://dictionary.sensagent.com/Public_diplomacy/en-en, accessed on 20 November 2017
Moreover, scholars such as Nancy Snow also described the trend of public diplomacy in the 21st century that is dominated by fractal globalization, pre-emptive military invasion, information and communication technologies that shrink time and distance, and the rise of global non-state actors (terror networks, bloggers) that challenge state-driven policy and discourse on the subject\textsuperscript{215}.

By comparing these definitions of traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and E-diplomacy which are detailed in the first and second chapters, the similarities and differences between terms can be summarized at least in the six dimensions of subject, object, medium, form, motive and aim, and means:

First, the similarities and differences in the subject dimension can be distinguished throughout the process of evolution. During the traditional diplomatic period, the subjects of diplomacy were usually political leaders, and officials, excluding the participation of other people. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, when the telegraph was invented, not only were the operators of the telegraph, many of whom were not officials and diplomats, particularly spies, partly involved into the diplomacy, although limited, others gained the ability to participate as well. As stated by David Paull Nickles\textsuperscript{216}, Petersburg reported, ‘I have discovered beyond a doubt that the Russian Government has in their possession our entire cable code’. A Russian spy in the American embassy had made photographs of the codebook. Obtaining diplomatic information had become very important. Moreover, in the public diplomacy field as mentioned in the previous definitions, the media, journalists, global non-state actors (terror networks, bloggers), political parties, corporations, trade associations, labour unions, educational institutions, religious organisations, ethnic groups and so on

\textsuperscript{215} Nancy Snow, Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy, 2009
including influential individuals, all have the chance to become involved in diplomacy. The range of subjects has enlarged exponentially. In reviewing the subjects of E-diplomacy, particularly the E-diplomacy 3.0 phase, the range of subjects has further expanded to common individuals, according to the definition of ‘E-diplomacy 3.0’ mentioned in the first chapter. Of course, the overlap among these subjects is the state actors, and this has not changed since the beginning of diplomacy. What should be emphasised is that those subjects using traditional tools like slogans, newspapers, journals and public speeches for shaping public opinion, do not overlap with the subjects of E-diplomacy.

Secondly, in the object dimension, the objects of traditional diplomacy were similarly as simple as the subjects of traditional diplomacy, in that state actors mainly included political leaders and diplomats. This is the rationale for Adam Watson (1982) to characterise diplomacy in such simple terms as ‘the dialogue between states’. From the perspective of public diplomacy, ‘public opinion’ is a crucial point of public diplomatic work. In order to achieve the best public diplomacy outcomes, not only do those platforms which can influence audiences abroad and public opinion need to establish themselves, they also need to create and provide the contents or provocation of events and push those things which can help shape public opinion. In contrast to E-diplomacy, public diplomacy not only focuses on E-users, but also the traditional audience.

In contrast to public diplomacy, the objects of E-diplomacy are combined with routine E-diplomatic work, and some specific targets which are isolated from the public, like hacking targets or E-attacking targets. These cannot be mixed with public diplomacy.
Thirdly, in the medium dimension, traditional diplomacy is usually conducted through official emissaries, conferences and dialogues between state leaders. For public diplomacy, any medium beneficial for shaping public opinion can theoretically be recognised as a medium of public diplomacy, including traditional mediums like brochures, newspapers, caricatures, and E-media such as telegraph, radio, television, internet and concomitant social media. In contrast to public diplomacy, the medium of E-diplomacy is always closely connected with E-technology.

Fourthly, in the form dimension, the form of traditional diplomacy is limited by the traditional medium, so it is very simple. With the development of technologies and diplomatic thinking, the diplomatic forms have become more and more abundant, and some old forms of diplomacy have been updated to modern styles. For instance, letter writing has been replaced by E-mail, face-to-face communication has been replaced with the telephone, and traditional broadcasting ways like radio and television have faced serious competition from the new media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. In addition, in the traditional period, oral and written are the main choices. While coming to the E-age, music, cartoon, film and even memes (emoji) are all useful forms for both public diplomacy and E-diplomacy.

Fifth, in the motive and aim dimension, whether traditional diplomacy or public diplomacy or E-diplomacy, the essential motive and aim is obviously to protect, maintain and enlarge the national interests. However, the motive and aim for traditional diplomacy is usually to impact the decisions of foreign policies directly and, for public diplomacy, to influence foreign policymakers indirectly, and directly intervene in public opinion which can influence the environment where the decision will be made. In addition, because traditional diplomacy mainly combines direct negotiations and communications with state actors, beyond
the potential for influencing decision-makers, it is impossible to make other effects. This is distinct from public diplomacy and E-diplomacy, which utilise different methods to impact public opinion and some other conditions, and finally lead to positive, negative or rational results.

Sixth, the means dimension, combined with traditional diplomacy, is usually for threat of war to state, physical threat to specific people, territory allocation, economic interests and other benefits exchange. However, in the public diplomacy period, public opinion has become a powerful weapon for realising diplomatic targets. In the E-age, not just the influence of public opinion has been further magnified, new means like hacking, viruses and other technical attacks have emerged. Increasing means have been engaged for the process of realising diplomatic aims.

In conclusion, this chapter began with the latest typical case of E-diplomacy as a means for representatively introducing what E-diplomacy is, what effect it can have and what the silent contest is like. Based on this first impression, this chapter attempted systematically to review the murky history and development of E-diplomacy according to the timeline, discussed the three main phases of E-diplomacy since the advent of telegraph, and explained what they are precisely, how they have evolved and what effects they have caused. In the process, this chapter attempted to classify and compare traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and E-diplomacy, identify similarities and differences from subject, object, medium, form, motive and aim, and means.
Chapter IV

The development of E-diplomacy in Australia and its efforts on China’s Sina Weibo

i. Introduction

After reviewing the E-diplomatic basic theories, historical context, main academic discussions, related literature and comparisons relating to E-diplomacy, digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy, and comparing the similarities and differences among E-diplomacy, traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy in the preceding three chapters, a preliminary understanding of E-diplomacy has been established from the historical and global perspective dimensions. However, due to being positioned at different stages of development, levels of technological advancement, national conditions, practical needs and diplomatic philosophies, in different countries, the understandings and practices of E-diplomacy are not comparable and, more precisely, the gap is large. In some countries, such as the US for example, as stated previously, the first Taskforce of E-diplomacy was established in 2002 and deployed its workforce towards at least eight areas; in some other countries such as Eritrea, Niger and Chad, the penetration of internet users among the total population is only 1.4 %, 4.3 % and 5.0 % respectively in light of this, E-diplomacy is a long way off for these countries.

217Miniwatts Marketing Group, Internet Users Statistics for Africa, April 16, 2018, online: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm accessed on 24 April 2018
Even among the more technologically advanced countries, E-diplomacy is still a novelty for most. Although some academics have noticed the E-diplomatic trend, the mainstream of E-diplomatic research is focused on the US. In countries like Australia, scholars such as Fergus Hanson concentrate on case studies related to the US as well. For instance, his report *Revolution@ state: The spread of E-diplomacy*,\(^{218}\) for the first time mapped the fast-growing E-diplomatic efforts of the US State Department and *Baked In and Wired: E-diplomacy@State*\(^{219}\) reviewed the US core E-diplomatic efforts in public diplomacy, internet freedom and knowledge management. Governments, as mentioned in the proceeding chapters, except the US, the UK, France, Canada, Australia and Russia, opened up their practices in the field of E-diplomacy more or less around 2010. For Australia, the turning point of its E-diplomatic development can be seen in Hanson’s article ‘A Digital DFAT: Joining the 21st Century’, published in November 2010. This policy brief effectively inspired the fast promotion of E-diplomatic capacity. Only several months after the publication of Hanson’s policy brief, DFAT set up its first social media account @dfat on Twitter in 2011, and now most Australian heads of mission are on Twitter. Moreover, some Australian ambassadors often share regular blogs, and more social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn are utilised to assist DFAT’s E-diplomatic works.\(^{220}\) In September 2015, DFAT questioned its E-diplomacy efforts, ‘Do we change minds?’, to which the answer was given, ‘It’s hard to tell for sure. But DFAT has made a good start and we want to build on that.’\(^{221}\)

Thus, in order to better understand the development of E-diplomacy in Australia before evaluating its real effects in China in the following three chapters, this chapter will review the

\(^{218}\)Hanson, F., 2012. Revolution@ State: the spread of ediplomacy. Sydney, NSW: Lowy Institute for International Policy.
\(^{219}\)Fergus Hanson, ‘Baked in and Wired: eDiplomacy@State’, brookings.edu, online: http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/10/25-ediplomacy-hanson, accessed on 4th June 2013
\(^{221}\)Ibid.
evolving process of Australian E-diplomacy, summarise the current situation of Australian E-diplomacy and, as a case study, analyse what has been done in China, at the same time outlining and comparing the major discussions about E-diplomacy among Australian governments, academia and media.

**ii. Background**

Contrary to many people’s understanding, Australian E-diplomacy 3.0 in fact started as early as the 1990s. This phase can be roughly divided into at least two periods—the time when Fergus Hanson’s policy brief was published and before DFAT’s first Twitter account was created. In the first period of the Australian E-diplomatic 3.0 phase, DFAT undeniably had delayed on the trend of E-evolving, as guided by the Australian understanding of public diplomacy—‘a means for communicating with populations of other countries, influencing opinion overseas’222. However, some public diplomatic practices utilising some functions of E-diplomacy had been tried by DFAT, including initially an early E-diplomatic exploration which was launched with an initial web presence on 24 April 1995, and the department maintained both a website for headquarters and generic websites for posts abroad223. Not only DFAT, but also other departments such as the Australian Tax Office and the Health Insurance Commission, engaged with the E-evolving process.

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222 Abbas Abbasov, Digital Diplomacy: Embedding Information and Communication Technologies in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nov 2007, the Australian National University, p. 19, http://www.academia.edu/1058526/Digital_Diplomacy_Embedding_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_in_the_Department_of_Foreign_Affairs_and_Trade accessed on 24 April 2018

223 Fergus Hanson, A Digital DFAT: Joining the 21st Century, November 2010, the Lowy Institute for International Policy, p. 4
In fact, an initiative for building an E-government in Australia was a trend in 1990s, and Australia had been pioneer in the government IT sphere until 1999. These accumulations laid the foundation for Australia’s future development in E-diplomacy, which is no long monopolised by the foreign ministry. As a study conducted by the Lowy Institute found, ‘18 of 19 Australian federal departments now have a dedicated international policy area. This internationalisation of the bureaucracy and the low cost of international communications has removed foreign ministries’ former monopoly over inter-government communications’. This change is consistent with the plurality of E-diplomatic subjects mentioned in the definition of E-diplomacy 3.0.

During DFAT’s E-evolution process, even though some improvements had been made, overall it was sluggish. The main reasons were summarised by Abbas Abbasov as: ‘In the first place, the overall deceleration and lower priority of DFAT. After 1999, some disruption caused an overall delay, there was not any sustained spending initiative on Australian e-governamental reform, and even at the peak time, DFAT had not been actively engaged in the process.’

Secondly, the impetus for reform was blocked by budget cuts in DFAT. In this period, as shown in data of 2008–2009, Australia was the 15th economic entity and its defence budget was ranked 12th in the world. However, compared with the $22 billion defence budget, DFAT only received $1.1 billion. Indeed, the ‘Australian accent on military seems to

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225 Fergus Hanson, Revolution@State: The Spread of E-diplomacy, 27 March 2012, the Lowy Institute, https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/node/85181 accessed on 24 April 2018
226 Abbas Abbasov, Digital Diplomacy: Embedding Information and Communication Technologies in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nov 2007, the Australian National University, p. 19-21
be remnant of the Cold War period and does not correspond with the contemporary concept of soft power\textsuperscript{228}. The small amount was only one factor; slow rate of growth was another important variable. From 1996 to 2008, the public service staff increased by 25% to 30%; however, the budget change was not proportional to the growth of public services, and contracted by 11%\textsuperscript{229}. Without the support of an adequate budget, reform was out of the question.

Thirdly, it was hard for an older generation to recognise the great power behind the E-transformation. According to figures from the State of the service report 2009–2010\textsuperscript{230} by the Australian Public Service Commission, 74.1% of the Senior Executive Service (SES) are aged 45 years and over, and ‘the median age of the SES is 49 years, which has not changed since 2005. From 1997 to 2004, the median age was 48 years’\textsuperscript{231}. Meanwhile, ‘the median age of ongoing Australian Public Service (APS) employees was 42 years (44 years for men and 41 years for women) …Representation of young people (that is, those aged less than 25 years) fell again from 4.6% to 4.0%: 0.1% younger than 20 years and 3.9% aged 20–24 years’\textsuperscript{232}. The composition of age helps explain why DFAT had a ‘less likely positive attitude to changing traditional ways of conducting diplomacy’\textsuperscript{233} and why it was resistant towards the new trend. People cultivated and raised in different eras carry the traits of that era, a reality that is hard to change quickly.

\textsuperscript{228} Abbas Abbasov, Digital Diplomacy: Embedding Information and Communication Technologies in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nov 2007, the Australian National University, p. 20
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid, p.3
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid, p.187
\textsuperscript{233} Abbas Abbasov, Digital Diplomacy: Embedding Information and Communication Technologies in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nov 2007, the Australian National University, p. 21.
<https://www.academia.edu/1058526/Digital_Diplomacy_Embedding_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_in_the_Department_of_Foreign_Affairs_and_Trade> accessed on 26 April 2018
Put simply, in the first period many issues delayed the evolving process of Australian E-diplomacy, but the start was completed and this laid the foundations for further development. Particularly inspired by the US, countries like the UK, Canada, Sweden and Australia all gradually realised the challenges of the development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for their national security, foreign policy priority and state interests. In 2010, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard identified that new trend as ‘something that was a blockbuster at 10 a.m. when it’s announced, has been tweeted about by 10.05, has been blogged about by 10.30…That’s the nature of the cycle and I think we are still adapting to that change’

These networks and capacities definitely cannot be built up overnight—the growth and maintenance require cultivation and time. Since the first Twitter account was set up, Australia has been experiencing rapid promotion in the E-diplomatic field. By April 2018, based on public information on DFAT’s official website, DFAT had already established 100 Twitter accounts, 95 Facebooks accounts, 24 Instagram accounts, 17 LinkedIn accounts, six blogs, five Youtube accounts, four Flickr accounts, three Wechat accounts, two Sound cloud accounts and one account on Sina Weibo, Renmin Weibo, Youku, Google, Podcast on BuzzSprout respectively. These accounts have covered at least 153 countries as listed on the official website. One of the latest accounts is Instagram: @AusHCIIndia, established on 20 April 2018. These accounts are run by DFAT, Australian embassies, consulates, high commissions, international organisations and institutes. The Australian politicians’ accounts are not included in this statistic. In addition, 14 accounts are set up in the US, 12 in China (including one in Hong Kong and three in Taiwan), 11 in Indonesia and one in India; this partially reflects the foreign priorities of Australia.

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234 George Megalogenis, Trivial pursuit: leadership and the end of the reform era, Quarterly Essay No. 40, 2010, p.73

Not only has Australia been learning how to harness social networking, two other areas have been developed, according to Fergus Hanson. In 2013, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced an Australian Cyber Security Centre would be established, in order to ‘strengthen the digital defences of key departments and work with businesses to ensure their systems are well protected’. Ms Gillard emphasised that ‘the behaviour of countries would once again dominate Australia’s national security thinking, ending an era in which ‘non-state actors’, such as terrorist groups, posed the greatest risk’.

Although issues like budget cuts and a dramatic decrease in staff were still looming, as well as the Abbott Government’s cuts in aid combined with the scrapping of the country’s AusAid program with DFAT, the new trend of diplomacy has promoted the seeking of a balance between the limitations of realistic conditions and the requirements of working development. A new way was led by Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop with the vision that ‘Recent trends suggest that E-diplomacy—which speaks to wider public audiences who increasingly shape government decisions—is the shape of things to come. Learning from the trendsetters in this field—Sweden, France, the UK and, to different ends, Russia—will be important and likely more cost-efficient moving forward’. The Australian Government has begun to recognise that the emergence of the E-diplomatic trend has potential for resolving the contradiction that the financial pressure has limited the government to invest more on its diplomatic missions, to consistently improve Australia’s international presence.

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237 Elliot Brennan, Budgets, Diplomacy and Australia’s Foreign Aid, The Diplomat, 24 May 2015, online: https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/budgets-diplomacy-and-australias-foreign-aid/, accessed on 25 April 2018
238 Ibid.
By the time of the Turnbull Government, the Prime Minister further stated that ‘Government needs to embrace new technologies, leverage data and innovate the way public services are delivered’\textsuperscript{239}, in his speech to the Cebit e-government conference on 6 May 2015. One month later, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop shared her view with the Lowy Institute for International Policy, stating that ‘technology is changing the world, and it is important that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade embraces this change, and harnesses it, to the greater advantage of our nation and to the promotion of our value’\textsuperscript{240}. This direction has been very clear, and DFAT launched its Digital Media Strategy 2016–18 in November 2016, announcing that exponential growth in digital communications is one of the challenges facing a modern foreign service, ‘driven by technology, the communications landscape is more congested than ever. With a rapidly proliferating number of voices online, the competition for attention has never been greater. DFAT needs to work harder and smarter online to be heard above the noise. Challenge presents opportunity. Enhanced digital engagement offers us the means to better connect with government and non-government organisations, business and community groups, and draw on these conversations to design and deliver responsive policies, programs and services. Taking action to meet this digital challenge is the purpose of this strategy’\textsuperscript{241}.

These changes constitute the foundation of Australian E-diplomacy, and nowadays, ‘no aspect of DFAT’s work…is untouched by digital information, digital communication and digital tools’. The importance of E-diplomacy can be seen as having reached a consensus in Australia. However, in recent years the arguments over E-diplomacy still revolve around

\textsuperscript{240} Julie Bishop, Address to Lowy Institute, 11 June 2015, online https://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/Pages/2015/jb_sp_150611a.aspx, accessed on 25 April 2018
issues like what effects have been produced, how Australia can promote its E-diplomatic capacity, and which directions of E-diplomacy can be explored in the future. In the next section, the main ideas and opinions will be reviewed.

### iii. Debate in Australia, from official to public opinion about E-diplomacy

As a relatively fledgling research and practical field, the existing systematic research resources are limited, particularly the outputs referring to Australia, and most discussions are scattered. While considering the question of the usage of E-diplomacy, the Australian scholar Sarah Logan, a digital politics research fellow from the Australian National University, recognised the utilisation of social media would not become a replacement for traditional activities. Sarah Logan said: ‘when I think about E-diplomacy, my immediate urge is to kind of dampen some of the excitement around this issue...If it’s just ambassadors on Twitter, it’s just an intensification of processes that already exist. When it is interesting is when you have states and diplomats engaging in the new information environment, using those tools to do new things, to respond to new challenges’\(^{242}\).

But in the view of the Lowy Institute’s Alex Oliver, the capacity for widening the diplomatic conversation and engaging different stakeholders while facing disputes and issues is the truly beneficial use of E-diplomacy. ‘It’s one way of reaching these foreign publics, these individuals, these non-state actors, these civil society organizations...It’s a way to communicate with them. E-diplomacy is a tool of public diplomacy which in itself is a tool of

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a nation’s soft power\textsuperscript{243}. Surely Oliver and Logan both believe an effective E-diplomatic practice cannot be only broadcasting political messages or transmitting propaganda, but also involving genuine public engagement. In the view of Antony Funnell, a Walkley award-winning journalist and broadcaster, it is not easy to determine exactly what E-diplomacy constitutes: ‘Depending on who you talk to, it encompasses everything from online polling of overseas populations to the provision of digital tools for dissidents fighting against oppressive regimes, to online education support for minorities and disadvantaged communities\textsuperscript{244}.

Beyond these varied ideas, the leading Australian researcher working on E-diplomacy, Fergus Hanson, who has been examining this frontier field since its inception, has redefined E-diplomacy as ‘the use of the web and ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives’ and comprehensively introduced the size and scope of E-diplomacy and its international practices, and also detailed the basic framework for pushing Australia’s transformation from traditional diplomacy to E-diplomacy. In Fergus Hanson’s mind, ‘a root and branch E-diplomacy overhaul is needed if DFAT is to stay relevant and keep pace with other benchmark foreign ministries\textsuperscript{245}, notwithstanding the old generation in academia and DFAT still had no enthusiasm or expectation with E-diplomacy. In the eyes of another younger scholar, Danielle Cave, E-diplomacy is a foreign policy essential, and when utilised properly, E-diplomacy ‘is a persuasive and timely supplement to traditional diplomacy that can help a country advance its foreign policy goals, extend international reach, and influence people who will never set foot in any of the world’s embassies\textsuperscript{246}.

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Fergus Hanson, A Digital DFAT: Joining the 21st Century, November 2010, the Lowy Institute for International Policy, p. 1
\textsuperscript{246} Danielle Cave, ‘Does Australia do digital diplomacy’, 17 April 2015, online: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/does-australia-do-digital-diplomacy accessed on 26 April 2018
After being criticised for being too slow in picking up the new trend of E-diplomacy to position Australian social media platforms as the most prominent consular information streams during the Arab Spring\(^{247}\), the later Australian leaders such as Julia Gillard, Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop, as mentioned in the former section, have clearly and profoundly recognised the challenge brought by the development of new technology, and have positively and actively driven E-transformation, pushed Australia to enhance its soft power, and advocated for the government to develop its E-diplomatic capacity for the country’s national interests in 21\(^{st}\) century. However, as an exception, using the excuse of financial pressure, the Abbott government cut both DFAT and even the ABC’s budget to save money. The direct result was an end to the Australian role ‘in soft diplomacy efforts in the Asia-Pacific region’ according to Susan Harris Rimmer and Benjamin Day, international political scholars from the Australian National University. They argued that ‘the absence of a robust and strategic vision for Australia’s soft power projection, one that adequately incorporates E-diplomacy and international representation, was the root problem. The fact that these irritants regularly distract us suggests that our strategy is inadequate. Decisions about the proper level of investment should fall out of that strategy’\(^{248}\).

While focused on the issue of the effects of DFAT’s E-diplomatic efforts, a short news article was published by DFAT, which was full of undisguised self-congratulation between the lines:

‘Today, most of our Australian heads of mission are on Twitter and two-thirds of posts are on Facebook…joining the thousands of DFAT staff who are using their LinkedIn profiles


to network professionally…use tools like Tweet Deck to listen to debates and conversations on social media to inform their work. If digital diplomacy were simply about numbers, DFAT would be world leaders: @dfat, with more than 41,000 Twitter followers, is more popular than its English language Canadian, French and Japanese counterparts. Paul Grigson’s @DubesAustralia is the most popular foreign ambassador’s account in Indonesia after only the US Embassy’s… Australia’s official presence on Chinese social media platforms Weibo and WeChat are reaching up to 435,000 people every day…having large numbers of followers isn’t the full story…diplomacy is…more about persuasion…Australian heads of mission and diplomats are encouraged to think creatively about pursuing social media opportunities to shape debate and manage potentially negative issues…Influencing foreign and domestic audiences is perhaps the ultimate challenge in public diplomacy. DFAT’s used social media to inform the public about issues such as Australia’s response to floods in Burma, our humanitarian contribution to Iraq and Syria, and explaining the benefits of free trade. Clearly, it is not hard to feel DFAT’s self-satisfaction with its own job.

However, it was not accepted by everyone. After firstly citing the case made by Canadian diplomats in Hong Kong, who posted to Facebook with the following words for commemorating the year’s anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre that: ‘Like Hong Kongers today, Canadians remember the events of June 4, 1989. The promotion of democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law lie at the heart of Canada’s values and foreign policy priorities’, a commentator in The Age criticised that ‘reaching tens of thousands, this was deft digital diplomacy at its finest. The post avoided direct mention of China, Canada’s second-largest trading partner, yet it powerfully and persuasively


\[250\] Danielle Cave, Global diplomacy has gone digital and Australia has been left behind, 23 Sep 2015, https://www.theage.com.au/opinion/global-diplomacy-has-gone-digital-and-australia-has-been-left-behind-20150922-gj66tg.html accessed on 24 April 2018
aligned Canada’s democratic values with those of Hong Kong citizens attending a remembrance service for the pro-democracy demonstrators killed in Beijing in 1989. Meanwhile…diplomats at Australia’s consulate were uploading Facebook posts about their breakfasts…Australia’s digital diplomacy is all gum and no teeth…government…has continuously failed to embrace the internet as a tool of international influence…”251. In the commentator’s words, the Australian online offering is lacklustre, and rarely reflected Australian ‘often-muscular foreign policy’ and ‘Australia’s half-hearted attempt at digital diplomacy also severely misjudges the power of the internet—and this is where it gets dangerous’252. A similar opinion was shared in 2012 by BBC foreign correspondent Nick Bryant, ‘at a time when E-diplomacy is reshaping the conduct of foreign affairs, DFAT’s online footprint hardly makes an impression’, and, with respect to the Foreign Minister, ‘for a politician whose maiden speech roamed garrulously from the Greek Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy to Norman Mailer…and from the Tang Dynasty to Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilisations…keeping track of his tweets is more like looking at some caged exotic bird, with luminous, multicoloured wings but no room in which to spread them…Most of his tweets are sparse, bullet point headlines…With only 140 characters at his disposal, the Bob Carr of the caramel voice and golden pen often comes across as strangely monochromatic’253. This comment was rejected by DFAT. Dennis Richardson, the then DFAT secretary, said ‘we are not at the forefront of it and we do not apologise for that’254. Not only was DFAT criticised during the second period of E-diplomacy 3.0, indeed much criticism had flooded during the first period. ‘…among the worst websites hosted by any arm of the federal

251 Ibid.
252 Ibid
253 Nick Bryant, Our ambassadors are voiceless in brave new world of E-diplomacy, 20 July 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/international/2012/jul/20/ambassadors-diplomacy-internet
254 Ibid.
government and do nothing to capitalise on the main reason people visit the websites (for visa and immigration purposes). There is no serious effort, for example, to promote major Australian exports like education and tourism or to attract quality skilled migrants’. This was the criticism made by the Lowy Institute to the public websites of Australian embassies overseas. Australia’s embassy websites were characterised by the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee (FADTC) as ‘quite old and tired’. The United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) described the problem with the website of the Australian embassy in Belgrade as ‘it is very basic and has no imagination’. The response from DFAT’s Dennis Richardson was, ‘I would let their criticism stand. I do not think we are in the business of defending everything we do as being the best. I think some of their criticisms of our website are probably justified’. In addition, DFAT emphasised that ‘in the current budgetary situation improving its websites was less of a priority than increasing on-the-ground diplomatic representation’, which was directly refuted by the Joint Committee as, ‘it is not a competition between E-diplomacy and increasing on-the-ground representation’.

In order to guide DFAT and Australian other E-diplomatic practitioners, official and non-official spheres have each contributed their knowledge and strategies. Although it was hard to predict which platforms would finally prove most effective, and for which purposes

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these platforms might best be utilised, Fergus Hanson firstly set out the latest platforms which could be used for E-diplomatic purposes in three categories for DFAT to consider, and then put forward three recommendations: ‘1) Provide additional funding and establish an E-diplomacy branch within DFAT…2) DFAT needs to increase its risk appetite and be ready to back its staff when controversies surrounding new media arise…3) Review restrictive DFAT media guidelines with a view to making it much easier for staff to engage online’.

Compared with Fergus Hanson’s practical advice, three recommendations were provided by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade: ‘The Committee recommends that 1) the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade immediately refurbish Australian embassy websites to make them more informative, attractive and user-friendly…2) the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade establish an Office of E-diplomacy, subject to the external review, the Government White Paper and any increase in resources…3) the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should make better use of social media platforms to promote Australia’s foreign policy, trade opportunities, and the Department’s role to the wider Australian public and key audiences in Asia and the Pacific’.

Both sides have evidence to underpin their arguments, particularly in the dimension of estimating the real effects, therefore it is not easy to precisely determine the real effects of E-diplomatic activities and actions. However, the E-problems should be resolved through E-tools and E-methods. In the following three Chapters (5, 6 and 7), the research will introduce big data with respect to Australian involvement in specific cases, and then estimate the real
effects made by the Australian E-diplomatic forces. Before that, in the next section, the question of using China’s Sina Weibo as a case study will be introduced.

iv. Why use China’s Sina Weibo as a case study?

Why China?

In order to answer this question, there are at least two points that need to be addressed: the first is why China, and the second is why Sina Weibo. For the first one, the rapid development of the internet and social media in China have brought more profound changes to China's diplomacy than of any other country, which has provided abundant material for this research project. This can be clearly shown in the following comparison of the features of China’s diplomacy before and after the emergence of Weibo.

The features of China’s diplomacy before and after the emergence of Weibo

Since launching its ‘opening-up and reform’ policies in 1978, China’s diplomacy has been guided by its five principles of peaceful coexistence. China’s diplomacy has served primarily its established national strategy, with pursuing economic development as its central task. The features of China’s diplomacy in this period can be summarised in terms of the following 10 factors: the three interlocked goals of development, sovereignty and responsibility; maintaining ‘a low profile’ while ‘acknowledging some accomplishments’; a principled, yet restrained stance in pushing for an improved international order; multi-tiered, mutually complementary diplomatic endeavours; four close-knit diplomatic fronts; intrinsically compatible concepts of ‘a harmonious society’ and ‘a harmonious world’; the

renewed principle of non-intervention; the evolving ‘people first’ concept thinking; guidelines with continuity and innovation; and an orderly, gradualist diplomatic transition²⁶³.

Broadly speaking, during the last three decades China’s diplomacy was focused mainly on the process of shaping the external environment and establishing a positive image of China in the global community, in order to obtain more opportunities for economic collaboration and thereby, maintaining economy stability and prosperity domestically. Thus, the focus of China’s diplomacy was inevitably on dealing with different relations with the external environment, including relations with governments, international organisations and global firms. Meanwhile, the Chinese Government has tried to separate Chinese society from the outside world and only publicised its own accounts to its citizens, in order to underpin the stability of its regime. As a result of this primarily domestically focused strategy, the domestic public can generally be seen to hold similar stances. For that period of consensus, the government had relatively little unrest on its hands, and did not have to deal with domestic discontent during that period.

Following the emergence of Weibo and its siblings however, diplomats—and, indeed, any other actors, including foreign ones—can no longer afford to ignore the domestic environment because China’s diplomacy has taken on some new characteristics in the process of coming into the Weibo age.

The directionality of diplomacy has been transformed

As stated above, the focus of China’s diplomacy before the emergence of Weibo was to develop, expand and maintain foreign relations. In other words, it was separated from internal

²⁶³ Wang Yizhou, ‘China’s Diplomacy: Ten Features’, Contemporary International Relations, Volume 19 Number 1, Jan/Feb 2009
affairs and rarely affected by the domestic public. However, in the Weibo age as defined above, there are diverse participants in E-diplomacy with interest in various diplomatic issues, such as foreign aid, debt forgiveness and the Foreign Ministry’s attitudes towards some special events (generally, to criticise it for being too ‘soft’ or ‘weak’); usually they subjectively connect these diplomatic issues with internal affairs like domestic poverty or the government’s harsh attitude toward its citizens, in order to mount a comprehensive anti-government force. China’s Foreign Ministry can no longer afford to avoid communicating with civil society. For example, when the Chinese Government announced the provision of aid to Macedonia by providing 23 school buses on 25 November 2011, there was great dissatisfaction on Weibo. This backlash was the result of the fact that just a few days prior to this donation ceremony, a series of school bus accidents occurred, caused by poor manufacturing standards, including the accidents in Xinjiang province (14 April 2011, three dead and six injured), Liaoning province (20 July 2011, 17 injured), Shaanxi province (26 Sep 2011, seven dead and five injured), Gansu Province (16 Nov 2011, 21 dead and 43 injured). Notably, many of these school buses were not buses and were in fact adapted from trucks. Although this so-called aid was later clarified in terms of ‘commercial co-operation’, the damage to the government’s image caused by this sort of event and the ensuing discourse is difficult to remedy.

In addition to this, the common view in the pro-government group is that there are ‘hostile forces’, a phrase often used by Chinese Government—including ‘special penetration and subversive forces’ funded and trained by some potentially hostile countries, independence

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forces of Tibet, Uyghur and Mongol nationalities, and other activist groups like the Falun Gong—with ulterior motives from within and outside China, that are attempting to utilise China’s problems in its transitional and transforming phase to generate domestic and international distrust of the Chinese Government and the Chinese Communist Party. Among these so-called ‘hostile forces’, the special penetration forces supposedly funded and trained by the US are seen as the most active and influential group, by the Chinese patriot netizen cohort. The basic strategic plans are generally considered as similar to what the US supposedly carried out in the last century in subverting the Soviet Union, whereby the Truman administration left no stone unturned, ‘from psychological warfare waged by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and a variety of cultural and intellectual front organisations to subversion by agents parachuted behind enemy lines’, to contain and undo Soviet power²⁶⁶. Now, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rapid rise of China, the US is perceived by that cohort of users as having ‘turned its gun’ on the PRC and CCP as their latest ‘imaginary enemy’²⁶⁷.

There is no open admission or concrete proof of the US government’s concerns that China is its imaginary enemy, nor would the US openly regard its activities as ‘subversive’. However, it is undeniable that the US has appeared to hold sharply contrary understandings about the nature of the actions of China, based on its own standards and values although, in the words of former Reagan administration official Paul Craig Robert, who said in a live program with RT news, ‘It’s [US government] always lecturing everybody else, but it never follows its own advice…we don’t mind using modern technology to undermine other

governments so that we can install our puppets and control them. But we certainly don’t want anyone revealing our own criminal actions or our own war crimes, the way Bradley Manning did … This should show the world what a hypocrite the United States is! These words can be summarised as referring to the fact that standards and values that frequently cannot be followed in the US, can instead be utilised as a means for undermining other countries.

More precisely, from the perspective of the US government, as the US Department of State says in a statement on its official website, ‘Internet freedom is a foreign policy priority for the United States … Our goal is to ensure that any child, born anywhere in the world, has access to the global Internet as an open platform on which to innovate, learn, organise, and express herself free from undue interference or censorship … To do so, we are supporting the efforts of Americans and committed partners worldwide to bring down the walls that are denying the people of the world connection and access to each other's ideas and services on the Internet …’

Moreover, Hillary Clinton also regarded these sorts of activities as obligatory duties of the US in her first internet freedom speech, stating that ‘new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress. But the United States does. We stand for a single internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas. And we recognise that the world's information infrastructure will become what we and others make of it. This challenge may be new, but our responsibility to help ensure the free exchange of ideas goes back to the birth of our republic.’

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reduce her tone in requiring unlimited Internet freedom, forced by the influence of the case of Wikileaks, in her second internet freedom speech in 2011.

Regardless of official statements, China’s governing bodies and their supporters have their own understanding. The People’s Daily commented that the ‘United States has a tradition of creating an “imaginary enemy” and China seems to have qualified as its “imaginary enemy” from cultural, historical, and social perspectives’. Upon entering the new century, although the Cold War mentality had not been suitable for comprehensively understanding and developing relations between major powers such as China and the US, the crucial international political competitions have not ceased, and the frictions between the US and China have continued to increase. The US does not appear to believe that an entire overthrow of the government of the PRC is achievable through military actions. Thus, in order to eliminate this potential threat and establish a pro-western, particularly pro-US, political ruling force, the US is perceived to prefer a strategy involving the domestic disintegration and collapse of current China from the inside of the state and society, by swaying its ideological foundation, instigating negative opinions and discontent with the government, and denying the legitimacy of the current government and ruling party.

It should be emphasised that, before the era of the internet and the Weibo age, due to the limitations of China’s supervisory systems, other countries’ so-called penetrating activities were suppressed. However, since the advent of the internet and in particular Weibo, these penetrating forces are perceived to have been provided a chance to establish direct connections with numerous people and communicate with them instantly. Based on this condition, they can provoke public sentiment with no difficulty.

For instance, in 2012 the American embassy in China used Weibo to publish its own reports on air quality in Beijing. The air quality was measured by using American standard which is more stringent than the one used by the Chinese Government\(^\text{272}\). This subsequently generated a series of social media chain reactions, especially on the platform of Sina Weibo. The public sharply criticised the Chinese Government’s dereliction of duty, and sentiments of disappointment with the government were incited. Indeed, in comparison to those ‘hidden’ actions which will be mentioned later, the US has employed unfriendly public diplomacy such as this.

These ‘hostile forces’ are now supposedly working together unprompted, and one of most significant ‘common denominators’ of these forces is that they all attempt to deny the legality of Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As the Lieutenant-General of Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA), Li Dianren, has put it, ‘Weibo has already become the new frontier utilised by hostile forces for ideological and cultural penetration and even subversive activities\(^\text{273}\). Although it is hard to measure the exact influences of these activities at this moment, the negative effects cannot be ignored. Thus, Weibo has unavoidably become the new focus of China’s diplomatic work and the direction of China’s diplomacy has therefore changed from one-focus (focusing on external region) to two-focus (domestic and external areas).

*The states and methods of diplomacy have changed*


Before the emergence of Weibo, China’s diplomacy had, for a long period of time, been kept distance from public view. In the Weibo age, although sometimes the Foreign Ministry and its staff are reluctant to change their tune, this situation has already changed because of the huge pressures from civil society—if it does not make any change, it would automatically lose the chance to compete for the initiative and discourse power on Weibo, which could directly threaten China’s security. In order to compete for the public discourse power and initiative properly, the Foreign Ministry was the first to open a Sina Weibo account among the central ministries. On 13 April 2011, the Foreign Ministry posted its first message on its Weibo account named waijiaoxiao ling tong (‘diplomacy resources’) and announced the advent of its era of Weibo. Later, it also launched its accounts on Tencent Weibo and People’s Weibo owned by The People’s Daily. The followers of these three Weibo accounts have reached 7,515,616, 3,239,334 and 1,139,637 respectively, as of June 2018. In addition, almost all of the branches of Foreign Ministry have launched their own Weibo accounts since 2011 as well. This was a necessary and effective way for the Foreign Ministry to enlarge its discourse power in the Weibo sphere. Obviously, after launching Weibo, the daily workload of the Foreign Ministry was boosted exponentially. The director of the Foreign Ministry Information Department, Qin Gang, introduced a policy that required the operation teams of the Foreign Ministry’s Weibo to work all year around and collect, on a timely basis, the latest social public opinions and demands. Qin Gang used one vivid example to introduce this development. In 2013, at China’s Spring Festival holiday there was one young woman who used Weibo to ask for help and assistance because her father suffered from a cerebral haemorrhage when they were traveling in Nepal. At that time, the operator

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275 Sina@外交小灵通, http://t.cn/zHEqW3A
276 Tencent@外交小灵通, http://e.t.qq.com/wj_xlt
277 People@外交小灵通, http://t.people.com.cn/wjxltrmb
was having a reunion dinner with his parents; however, he noticed this message and immediately contacted colleagues in Nepal to organise a rescue operation. In addition to coping with this type of incident, the Foreign Ministry’s Weibo is also constantly answering questions from the public and providing basic knowledge relating to diplomacy, visas, special countries’ political circumstances and early warnings. In addition, the Foreign Ministry is pressured to respond to trending diplomatic events of interest to the public as soon as possible, such as the Ghanaian Government’s crackdown on Chinese illegal gold mining.

 Accordingly, the activity of the Foreign Ministry has been significantly boosted.

The participants of diplomacy have diversified

Since Zhou Enlai proposed the five principles of peaceful coexistence—mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence—these principles have been understood as the formal diplomatic principles for China. According to these principles, China’s diplomacy is dominated by the government and primarily focused on developing relations with foreign countries. However, this diplomatic monopoly was severed following the emergence of Weibo because, in the Weibo age, each person is effectively a diplomat. Weibo not only provides a free, direct and highly effective platform for its users to connect with the outside world, including interactions with diplomats, diplomatic organs and other Weibo participants mentioned in the preceding discussion, but it also makes them more influential in affecting diplomatic activities through criticising, supervising these activities.

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and sometimes directly becoming diplomatic hotspots or leading to serious diplomatic consequences because of Weibo’s amplification effect. For instance, after a deadly bullet train collision occurred on 23 July 2011 in eastern China, ‘none of the major state-run newspapers even mentioned the story on their Sunday front pages. A user of Sina Weibo…first broke the story and increasingly popular social media outlets then provided millions of Chinese with the fastest information and pictures as well as the most poignant and scathing commentaries’\textsuperscript{281}.

Weibo served as the most efficient and timely reporter of this accident. At that time, almost all major Western mainstream media collected information from Weibo and it seemed that each user who grasped firsthand information and trenchant comments about this accident could serve as an effective Foreign Ministry spokesman who could transmit information to the international community and have a serious impact on China’s international image. In fact, this was proven by the widespread, famous comments from a series of anonymous Sina Weibo users: ‘The government treated human lives like nothing’, ‘This is a country where thunder can cause a train crash, a running car can make a bridge collapse, drinking powdered milk can lead to kidney disease…Today’s China is a bullet train racing through a thunder storm—and we are all passengers on board’\textsuperscript{282}. These Weibo comments were directly cited by many Western media outlets and caused negative influences on China’s image. These considerable diplomatic pressures can no longer be ignored by the Chinese Government or any actor that hopes to have influence on Chinese public opinion.

Not only have these major accidents provided opportunities for individuals to act as a diplomat, but other smaller-scale events have had similar impacts. Since diplomatic activities


\textsuperscript{282} Ibn
have become more transparent and the veil of diplomacy has been lifted by Weibo, more and more individuals gradually gained competency in utilising Weibo to express their own appeals. For instance, Tanghui, a protagonist of a landmark event for against labour camp authorities in China, won her appeal on 15 July 2013283. This case was one of the hottest topics on the Weibo platform in the second quarter of 2013 and is regarded as a milestone in opposing the Chinese labour camp system284. Tanghui, as an individual with no influence, successfully utilised Weibo’s amplification effect, attracted sympathy and attention of the people who are against China’s labour camp system from both domestic and external areas to exert pressure on the judge and Chinese government.

International pressure is usually seen as de facto becoming an effective and influential weapon for opposing the Chinese Government. Thus, based on Weibo’s amplification effect and its free, direct and highly effective spreading and communicating platform, everyone has a chance to take on the role of a diplomat and sometimes make individuals more influential in affecting diplomatic activities or conducting serious diplomatic consequences.

On Sina Weibo, the entire online community has been roughly divided into at least three main branches or five groups on the basis of political orientation. The three main branches consist of the pro-government branch, the anti-government branch and a medium branch. Five groups have evolved from these three main branches: the ultra-conservative group (jizuopai ‘far left’, or wumao’ 50 cent army’), neoconservative group (ziganwu ‘government supporters’), ultra-liberal group, speculators and observers. Among these groups, the ultra-conservative group and neoconservative group make up the branches of pro-government—this group has a distinctive characteristic of nationalism; the members of the anti-government

branch mainly come from the ultra-liberal group—this group has a strong pro-western feature; speculators are a fickle lot that are sometimes pro-government and sometimes anti-government—their positions waver with the political trend and personal interests; observers are those who do not actively engage to express their political standpoints and comprise the largest branch, the medium branch, of the Weibo society —this group pays little attention to political issues, except when their own interests or benefits are linked to politics.

Each of these branches has its own capability to impact China’s diplomacy. For instance, in the case of Chen Guangcheng285, while Chen was under house arrest, the ultra-liberal branch was using Weibo to amplify their support for him; when Chen escaped, they worked together to help him flee to the US embassy in Beijing286. Later, this event directly caused a diplomatic breakdown between China and the US287. Not only does the anti-government branch impact upon China’s diplomacy, the pro-government branch also evidently affects it. In the case of the Diaoyu-Senkaku Island dispute, to a large extent there was the pressure from the ultra-conservative group and neo-conservative group—for instance, in orchestrating the nationwide anti-Japan protests driven by the pro-government branch that occurred on 15 Sep 2012288, which pressured the government into insisting on its harsh attitude on the issue of the territorial dispute at hand. For the medium branch, although they usually maintain silence on sensitive political issues, they sometimes also declare their attitudes on domestic and external events through using the ‘repost’ key in Weibo and to exert

285 Chen Guangcheng is a controversial figure. For the Chinese Government, he is a barefoot lawyer with no license who always positions himself against the government. For some western countries, he is a Chinese civil rights activist who has worked on human rights issues in China's rural areas.


pressure on the government. In short, in the Weibo age the Chinese Government can no longer monopolise the dominating power of diplomacy, as the participants in this new-era diplomacy become diverse.

The difficulty of diplomacy has become complex

Another significant change of diplomacy caused by Weibo is that the difficulty of diplomacy has increased. It is hard to imagine that some diplomatic activities, like Henry Kissinger’s secret trip to China in July 1971, could happen again in this information age, especially when Twitter, Facebook and other micro-blogs are widely used by Internet users from every corner of the world. Similarly, in the Weibo age China’s new-era diplomacy faces far more difficulties than ever before. Not only do the new situations, such as the apparent emerging diplomatic focus, increasing appeals and pressure from civil society, and diversified participants mentioned above, complicate China’s new-era diplomacy, but also diplomatic processes are becoming increasingly transparent and widely supervised by civil society.

On Weibo, the public can easily obtain the latest diplomatic information relating to the Chinese Government’s diplomatic activities and efforts and are able to make a judgment about the effects of diplomacy, the costs of diplomacy, and the efficiency of diplomacy, according to the information they receive from Weibo. This is not the same as past diplomatic information which has generally been purified and selected by the government, whereas the information from Weibo is a mix of fact and fiction, and sometimes is deliberately fabricated by certain individuals with ulterior motives. For example, because of Weibo, claims such as ‘North Koreans kidnap Chinese fishermen’\(^{289}\) can be viewed by civil society. In the earlier traditional period, the government would not allow the spread of this type of information. The

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leaking of this type of information has given rise to a wave of anti-North Korean sentiment which China’s civil society gradually forms. A vivid example is the existence of a reputable Weibo account, which had 1.44 million followers as of 29 August 2013, named zuojiacuichenhao. The holder of that Weibo pretends to be a North Korean and uses clownish words and presents foolish images to show ‘his national features’ which in fact are insinuating that North Korea has outdated political structures and a ridiculous lifestyle\(^\text{290}\).

In addition, civil society’s demands for diplomatic transparency become increasingly fierce. For instance, as a response to civil society’s appeals for government departments to publish their ‘three public consumptions’ which include vehicle purchasing and maintenance, overseas trips, and official receptions, the State Council required all central ministries to open up in 2011. However, the Foreign Ministry, using so-called ‘confidentiality’ as an excuse, refused to open up. This behaviour provoked widespread dissatisfaction on Weibo, which later exerted pressure on the Foreign Ministry\(^\text{291}\). In the Weibo age, the traditional working patterns can no longer be maintained and are usually challenged by civil society, especially when some E-diplomacy participants are intending to challenge it. Thus, the difficulty of China’s new-era diplomacy has become much greater.

**Why SinaWeibo?**

As a study of E-diplomacy, the choice of target research platform is important. Within the booming internet society in China, for example, there are countless social platforms. Four platforms alone have over 100 million users each, those being WeChat, Sina Weibo, Momo

\(^{290}\)Sina@作家崔成浩, http://weibo.com/choiseongho

\(^{291}\)People.com.cn, ‘Publishing three funds has nothing to do with ‘confidential’’, people.com.cn

and QQ zone. Among these social networking platforms, Sina Weibo is the most suitable for studying E-diplomacy. The reasons can be summarised in five points:

The number of users, especially active users, is huge. According to the latest data updated in April 2018 from Dreamgrow.com292, as shown on the following Data Chart 4.1 and 4.2, among the Global Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites Ranking, Weibo is ranked No.5, and its active users amount to 0.376 billion. This tremendous user base underpins the basic audience of E-diplomacy in China. Despite WeChat and QQ zone having more active users per month than Weibo, as shown on Data Chart 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, 0.989 billion for WeChat and 0.563 billion for QQ zone, other features limited their adaption and integration with E-diplomacy compared to Weibo.

Data Chart 4.1, Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites:

![Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites](https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/)

Source:https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/

Data Chart 4.2, Social Network Monthly Active Users:

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292 Dreamgrow.com is a professional supporter of the source of social media and content marketing information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social network</th>
<th>Monthly Active Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>2,130,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>1,500,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>800,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qzone</td>
<td>563,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weibo</td>
<td>376,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>330,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>330,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask.fm</td>
<td>160,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>115,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>112,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>111,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>106,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VK</td>
<td>97,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odnoklassaniki</td>
<td>71,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetup</td>
<td>35,300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/

**Data Chart 4.3, Top 10 Most Popular Social Networking Apps:**

Source: https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/
Data Chart 4.4, Social Networking App Monthly Active Users:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Networking App</th>
<th>Monthly Active Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp (owned by Facebook)</td>
<td>1,500,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger (owned by Facebook)</td>
<td>1,300,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WeChat</td>
<td>999,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram (owned by Facebook)</td>
<td>800,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QQ Chat</td>
<td>783,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QZone</td>
<td>652,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viber</td>
<td>249,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINE</td>
<td>218,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YY</td>
<td>122,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/

Stronger disseminating power and wider spreading ranges are important. As analysed by the China Internet Network Information Center\textsuperscript{293}, although Wechat, Sina Weibo and QQ zone are all comprehensive social networking platforms, there are still some distinctions in user attributes, interests and habits. The circle of Wechat is a relatively closed community, and information interactions mainly happen between acquaintances. The purpose of 70.3% Wechat users is to interact and improve bonds between friends, and 50.7% is for sharing daily lives. Compared to Wechat, Weibo’s information dissemination is based on social and public relations, and the content in Weibo is relatively more transparent and openly accessible. The purpose of 60.7% users is to get trending news in a timely manner. The feature of QQ zone users is a split in difference between Wechat and Weibo. In other words, the information

dissemination in Weibo is not restricted by acquaintances’ circles, and can cover more ranges from different groups, disciplines and ages. The real disseminating power of public issues is clearly stronger than Wechat and the other platforms.

E-diplomacy is more manoeuvrable on Weibo. As a relatively more transparent and open social networking platform, this determines if a topic or social media product is controversial enough or cleverly designed, and the possibility of becoming a national concern is larger than on the other platforms. Meanwhile, as a comprehensive application platform, Weibo covers almost every classical social networking function, including posting, reposting, watching video, listening to music, sharing photos. Therefore, if E-diplomatic practitioners are smart enough, theoretically their E-diplomatic designs will not be restricted with tools and methods. In addition, compared to other platforms, Weibo shares parts of its disseminating powers to systematic rules. That means, in Weibo, if you can be familiar with these rules, it is not hard to get better exposure. In most of the other platforms, this power is in the hands of the platform’s editors. The operability on Weibo provides a possibility for evading public opinion control by the Chinese Government, such as using memes, words in pictures, metaphors.

Both dominant and recessive E-diplomatic subjects are gathering on Weibo. On one hand, the emergence of this situation is a result of being attracted by Weibo’s features mentioned previously; on the other hand, it is conducive to gaining support from forces that have similar interests, values or purposes. These subjects gather around Weibo, seeking out hot or potentially hot issues every moment and, upon discovering an issue that fits their own targets of E-diplomacy, will organise forces for supporting and enlarging the influence without any hesitation. In this sort of iterative process, different subjects will naturally merge
into a large dialogue of similar interest, value or purpose. Every online celebrity, especially in political field, is supported by its own community.

The resources of E-diplomatic cases are abundant on Weibo. Different kinds of E-diplomatic cases occur every day on the platform. The first international spotlight case was the deadly bullet train collision that occurred on 23rd July 2011 in eastern China, as mentioned above; while no state-run media reported this accident, Sina Weibo became the unique source for international media. At that time, even the smallest private Weibo account and its owner could take on the role of a ‘Foreign Ministry spokesman’, although most of them were not aiming for the Chinese Government’s image and attempted to attract foreign attention by attacking the Chinese Government. A recent well-known case occurred on 25 April 2018; the US embassy’s Weibo account posted a state government web link of an article titled, ‘The US condemns China’s repression on Uighurs’²⁹⁴. This article immediately attracted a lot of concern. At the time of obtaining the following screenshot on 27 April 2018, within only 48 hours, this Weibo post had been reposted 2856 times, received more than 6200 comments, and was read 1.07 million times. One of its purposes was clear, as shown in the article—the spokeswoman of the US State Department Heather Nauert’s recent concerns regarding the issue of human rights in China. Exerting pressure of public opinion from within the mainland toward the Chinese Government is a common practice, and the Weibo platform is the core stage of these manipulations. Of course, not every case is so dominant, and most of them are secondary ones. The abundance of these cases makes Weibo the best research platform for E-diplomacy.

²⁹⁴ https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4232658931867910
Screenshot Chart 4.1, the US embassy’s Weibo post ‘The US criticizes China’s repression on Uighurs’:

Source: https://m.weibo.cn/1743951792/4232658931867910

Screenshot Chart 4.2, the US State Department Spokeswoman posted her concerns on Twitter on China’s repression to Uighurs on 19 April 2018:

Source: https://share.america.gov/zh-hans/u-s-criticizes-chinas-repression-uighurs/
In addition, China—as one of most important and influential countries, and coupled with its communist characteristics and speed of development in the field of internet—has become an experimental zone for E-diplomatic practices, competitions and even struggles. There is no other E-diplomatic atmosphere comparable to China in terms of complexity. This background has made Sina Weibo the best platform for E-diplomacy research.

v. Australia’s current efforts on Sina Weibo

The Australian efforts consist of at least three parts: official efforts, non-governmental organisations and companies’ efforts and individual efforts. According to the information introduced by Kong Lingxu, a senior manager of Weibo, there are 147 Weibo accounts are verified as institutes, including official institutes, non-official institutes, media and companies. There are at least 13 official accounts held by Australian official departments, such as the Australian Embassy in China295, the Education Department of the Australian Embassy, the Commercial Office of the Australian embassy in China, the South Australian Tourist Commission296, and other Tourist Commissions from different states such as South Australia and Western Australia, as well as the Gold Coast. Among these official institutes, the Australian Tourist Commission’s Weibo account has the largest influence and most followers in China, with a following of over 0.9 million as of April 2018; its average daily views reach over 0.1 million. In second place in terms of followers, the South Tourist Commission has 0.87 million followers; however, its daily view count is lower than 10,000. The South Australian Tourist Commission and the Australian embassy in China come in at

295 Weibo Account ID: #澳大利亚驻华使领馆#
296 Weibo Account ID: #澳大利亚旅游局#
297 https://weibo.com/u/1874205745
positions three and four, 0.27 million and 0.21 million followers respectively, and the average daily views of them are all lower than 5000 as of April.

Among non-official institution accounts, the university, migration and education assistance agencies and more than 20 Australian universities have official Weibo accounts, and some universities are running alumni accounts. In the media field, two federal media organisations, SBS and the ABC, are running Weibo accounts. SBS has more than 90,000 followers, while the ABC has 150,000. However, the average daily view count for SBS is 10 times higher than for the ABC, reaching around 10,000. Compared with these two national media organisations, the media run by Australian Chinese are clearly more influential. Within these Australian Chinese-run media, sydneytoday is the most influential one. It has 180,000, and the average daily view count is around 100,000, nearly tenfold that of SBS. Those Weibo accounts usually focus on business issues; however, many these accounts are also actively introducing the positive aspects of Australia to their Chinese audience for their commercial purposes.

Among all of Australian institutes’ accounts, the Australian Tourist Commission is the most professional and enthusiastic one. It has mastered the skill of dissemination and the rules of Weibo, and has continuously provided content which is well-crafted and fitting for broad dissemination to its Weibo audience. Since the establishment of the account in 2010, it has published more than 8500 Weibo posts as of April 2018 and organised many Weibo Topic activities. One Weibo Topic (similar to Twitter’s hash tag) ‘I am in Australia’ initiated by the Australian Tourist Commission obtained 0.24 billion views, and this topic is the best

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298 Weibo Account ID: @今日悉尼
299 Weibo Topic #我在澳大利亚#
known and popular in the tourist field. Other campaigns initiated by the authority, such as ‘Sino-Aussie Tourist Year’ (62 million views), ‘Australian outstanding scenery’ (33 million views), ‘Australian cute pets’ (15 million views) and ‘Aussietube’ (11 million views), were all popular and welcomed by the audience. According to a Tourism Research Australia survey in 2017, the international visitor spending was AUD$39.8 billion and, if the Australian Tourist Commission’s Weibo merely convinces the daily active followers (more than 0.1 million) to visit Australia, that would equate to a revenue of AUD$100 million. It is unsurprising that effective E-diplomatic efforts by the Australian Tourist Commission’s Weibo account have the potential to arouse one million or more Chinese to visit Australia and improve the Australian national image in China.

Compared to the Australian Tourist Commission, as a professional user of Weibo, my first impression of the Australian Embassy’s operation is that the skills are outdated and weaker than the Australian Tourist Commission. Many details can serve as evidence for this hypothesis; furthermore, in the following chapters and cases studies, big data will shed light on this. Firstly, the contents provided by the Australian Embassy are more like short traditional news posts, using words and expressions not well suited to the current popular trend. Secondly, it is rare to see the Australian Embassy utilise Weibo’s rules for expanding its influence. In recent years, only one Weibo Topic ‘Australian Foreign Policy White book’ was launched by the Australian Embassy; however, if we see this Weibo Topic as a

300 Weibo Topic #中澳旅游年#
301 Weibo Topic #澳大利亚美景#
302 Weibo Topic #澳大利亚萌宠#
303 Hannah Sinclair, a growing number of Australians are taking trips interstate and regionally, contributing to international tourism spending trends, 22 June 2017, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australian-tourism-spending-hits-record-121-billion accessed on 27 April 2018
304 According to the data provided by Xinhua agency, average spending of Chinese people in international tourist is nearly 5000 Chinese Yuan, equal to 1000 AUD
305 Weibo Topic #澳大利亚外交政策白皮书#
house, the Australia Embassy did not renovate it and even forgot to register itself as the host of it. Based on this, it is not unexpected that during the four months since the first Weibo was posted until when the seventh and last Weibo was posted, the total views of this Weibo Topic amounted to only 270,000. The details of this case will be analysed in Chapter 7. Thirdly, the interaction rate is very low. This situation can be observed from two sides. On one side, its daily view count is much lower than the Australian Tourist Commission, which is lower than 10,000, although it has a supposed 210,000 followers. On the other side, the number of reposts, comments and likes usually remain within single digits, and it is rare to see any interaction between the Australia Embassy and its followers in the comments section. Fourthly, the contents posted by the Australia Embassy lack the necessary traits for effective dissemination. For instance, in commemoration of Anzac Day, the Australian Embassy posted a Weibo on 25 April with a link to a cartoon introducing the history and meaning of Anzac Day. It was a good choice to use the cartoon to spread Australian history and values. However, this cartoon is the original English version, and the Australian embassy posted it and did not add even a Chinese subtitle. It would not be unaware that its primary audience comprises Chinese users. Finally, the daily activity of the Australian Embassy’s Weibo is much lower than that of the Australian Tourist Commission. These two accounts were both established around 2011, but the post count of the Australian Tourist Commission is now nearly double that of the Australian Embassy. When I attempted to use Weibo as a means of contacting the Australian Embassy, I did receive a response from it one day after I sent the invitation. To be fair, although the Embassy’s social media skills are not keeping up with current trends, the account is maintained.
vi. Conclusion

After reviewing the evolving process of Australian E-diplomacy, it is clear that since the early 1990s, Australia began its exploration of E-diplomacy, regardless of whether or not this was an intended pursuit. However, some issues such as budget cuts, dramatic staff decreases, the resistance of the old generation and other distractions, have caused the evolving process of Australian E-diplomacy to be delayed; after the turning point around 2011, Australia has accelerated its progress. Although the consensus of instilling the E-diplomatic practices and building a culture of routinely incorporating E-diplomatic tools and media in all aspects of modern foreign service work has been reached by the Australian public and officials, the debate over E-diplomacy still revolves around the issues of what effects have been made, how Australia can promote its E-diplomatic capacity, and which directions of E-diplomacy can be explored in the future. Among these arguments, the question of how to estimate the real effects of Australian E-efforts always disturbs the practitioners and observers. To judge it only by intuition or simple observation would be unfair to the practitioners of Australian E-diplomacy. In order to show, relatively objectively, the real effects of Australian E-diplomatic efforts, in the following three chapters the research will collect big data from three different and typical cases for analysis. In the case of Li Bingbing’s medical problem in Australia, the analysis will show what had been done and the real effects achieved by Australian E-diplomatic efforts in a non-political and non-international case taking place in Australia. In the case of Horton’s accusations that Sun Yang was a drug cheat, the analysis will demonstrate what efforts have been tried and what real effects have been achieved in the non-political but international case involving Australia. And in the case of the South China Sea disputes, the analysis will reveal the efforts and effects of Australian E-diplomacy in the political and international case directly made by the Australian official forces. As an
outstanding research target platform, the big data and observations from Sina Weibo can be beneficial for deeply and objectively analysing Australian E-diplomatic efforts in China.
Chapter 5

Case study of Li Bingbing's Experience in Australia and Problems of Australian Medical System

i. Introduction

The preceding four chapters have systematically reviewed the basic theories, history, main academic discussion, related literature and comparisons relating to E-diplomacy, digital diplomacy and Cyber diplomacy; compared the similarities and differences among E-diplomacy, traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy; and provided background for the social discussion of E-diplomacy in Australia and Australian diplomatic efforts in China. Based on the theoretical framework outlined in these four chapters, the following fifth, sixth and seventh chapters will analyse three typical cases related to Australia’s presence on China’s Sina Weibo, including the actress Li Bingbing’s medical dilemma in Australia, the Australian swimmer Mack Horton’s doping allegations against the Chinese swimmer Sun Yang, and the effects on public discourse that have resulted from Australia’s strong assertion of its political position on ‘the issue of Chinese territorial claims’. Respectively, the three cases can be defined as: a ‘non-international and non-political case’ taking place in Australia; an ‘international but non-political case’ involving Australia, and an ‘international and political case’ directly related to the Australian Government.
These three cases have been chosen, as they ostensibly appear to be non-diplomatic issues in the traditional sense of diplomacy. To provide practical evidence for the theoretical background for E-diplomacy expounded upon in the previous chapters, the study of these three cases will provide a comprehensive angle to observe the possible influence on the image of Australia in China from cases of different types, assess whether these cases might influence the China-Australia relationship, as well as the extent of possible influences, and observe the extent to which Australian Government and non-government forces have taken measures in these different sorts of cases, and then assess the subsequent effects.

Given the dearth of research on these three cases within the context of E-diplomacy, the main sources of information for this study include:

- Professional ‘big data’ of public opinion from Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University located in Shenyang (China) provides the background data. Data from Baidu Index will also be used and referred to.

- Direct opinions from persons concerned, including Li Bingbing and Sun Yang, and people from China and Australia familiar with the relationship and key issues, were collected by means of interview and questionnaire. Other groups of people are also included, such as present and former government employees (whether or not directly participating in E-diplomatic activities), non-governmental personnel related to the carrying out of E-diplomacy, academic researchers and practitioners in E-diplomacy, academic researchers working on China-Australia issues exclusive of E-diplomacy, media staff in both countries, and representatives from business platforms, such as administrative staff from Sina Weibo.
Attitudes and opinions of relatively extensive Weibo users from opinion polls on Weibo.

Various content and views in the discussion from the media and ‘We media’.

The remaining section of Chapter 5 discusses the case of Li Bingbing’s encounter with the Australian medical system, including background information, the review and analysis of the discussion of Li’s case from Weibo and social opinions in China and Australia, the assessment of action by Australian authorities and other forces, and the assessment of the possible influence this event would have had on the reputation of Australian medical services in China.

**ii. Background Information**

This section will provide a general introduction to Li’s case. At the end of 2015, Li Bingbing, a Chinese actress, published an article in Weibo. The content was related to the awkward predicament she faced in seeking medical services in Australia. On 29 November 2015, Li went to Australia for a film shoot and it is reported that on that day, Li had been suffering from a fever for 16 days. However, Li was unable to receive a definite diagnosis from an Australian hospital, so she was forced to return to Beijing. She was reported to have been diagnosed and treated immediately, and recovered from her illness one week later. In her article, Li said: ‘Now I truly understand that not all foreign things are better than domestic ones, just as we all have our own strong and weak points. You could say that the medical conditions and services here in China are ample and developed. Compared to foreign employees, the Chinese medical staffs are intimately familiar with the Chinese habits, and can cure patients effectively and flexibly. Thank our Chinese angels in white! I will not forget this
experience.’ This section of the article soon went viral in China, because before this incident, there was a popular consensus in China that foreign things, including medical services, were better than domestic ones. This incident had a strong impact in acting as a turning point for this perception, and Australia’s medical quality and condition came into question, which contrasted to the image of high medical quality that Australian officials were actively promoting. As of March 31 2018, 15,933 people had reposted it, more than 200,000 had liked it, and its page view count had reached 9,780,000 unique visits.

Screenshot 5.1, Li’s Weibo

Source: https://m.weibo.cn/1192515960/3923159218157696

Screenshot 5.2, Li’s article ‘Suffering with the medical dilemma in Australia, thumb up medical care made me recover.’
According to data from the Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University, between 10am and 12am (midnight) on December 23, 2015, the data system collected 58,471 related reports. Reports on Weibo got the highest proportion, exceeding 74%. In second place was WeChat and the number of reports was 9,922, close to 23%. As for the rest, 2,696 reports came from news websites, 1,955 from apps, 294 from paper media (electronic edition) and 189 from forums.

Data Chart 5.1, trace data of Li’s case (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)

In regard to popular keywords, in order of hits, they were:
Li Bingbing

2. Australia

3. to be in hospital (v.)

4. homeland

5. Peking Union Medical College Hospital

Moreover, the most popular keywords related to the Australian medical system included transfusion, emergency treatment, privilege, medical system, medical environment, general medical practitioner and free medical treatment.

Popular keywords chart 5.1, Popular keywords in trace reports (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)

When it comes to regional attention data, Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan, Zhejiang, and Hunan were the top five. Objectively, the regional data reflects the fact that developed regions in China, especially Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Taiwan, are more open to the rest of the
world and cities with a larger number of foreign residents and overseas students pay more attention to news like Li’s case.

Geographical distribution maps 5.1, the distribution of regional attention to Li’s case (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)

Geographical distribution maps 5.2, regional data of Li’s case (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)

In regard to the trends surrounding the news report, there was a mass of reports within the short period after Li published the article on 23 December, peaking soon after. In the following two days, an obvious trend of decline was evident in various reports. However, on
27 December, the volume of reports reached a second peak due to the influence of new information including a rebuttal article titled: ‘Australian doctors respond to Li’s unsatisfying medical experiences’, and the reaction of Li’s team. It took almost one week for related news to level off. In the era of instantaneous information propagation on the internet, it is rare that a single issue of a celebrity can remain popular news for almost one week.

Data chart 5.2, the trend of reports related to Li’s case (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)

In Li’s case, 96.1% of Weibo users agreed with Li’s thoughts, 2.5% observed neutrality, and only 1.4% expressed opposition to Li. To some extent, the data indicates that most Weibo users show sympathy for Li’s experience. They also agree with Li Bingbing on her assertion that there are existing problems in the Australian medical system, and that the Chinese medical services have some advantages.

Online opinions distribution chart 5.1, Chinese Weibo users’ attitude (source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute of Shenyang City University)
In addition to the reference of ‘big data’, in March 2018 this researcher conducted a survey titled ‘Australian E-diplomacy in China’ on Weibo and five questions were included:

Have you heard about Li Bingbing’s medical problem in Australia?

Have you heard about the drug cheat dispute between Sun Yang and Horton?

Have you heard about the dispute over the South China Sea between China and Australia?

Do you know about the concept of E-diplomacy?

Did Australia take measures to reduce the negative impact of the above events?

By 31 March 2018, 2,874 Weibo users had filled out the questionnaire and 2,391 of them have had heard about Li’s case, 83% of the total.

Screenshot 5.3, the survey on Australian E-diplomacy in China
The data and information above will be provide references and solid data support for the following analysis.

### iii. Review and Analysis of Related Discussion from Weibo and Social Opinions in China and Australia

This section will review and analyse the main public opinion related to Li’s case and assess both countries’ actions. Based on the data and content collected, representative opinions are given in the following angles:

**Personal experiences:** Many participants share their own or relatives’ and friends’ experiences. They believe that the Chinese medical services can meet the needs of Chinese more effectively. Such opinions are a further extension of Li’s idea. The comments below were collected by *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*.
@AIMEE_妹: ‘This reminds me of my experiences in Australia last year. Food poisoning almost killed me, but the only thing that Australian doctors did was giving me an intravenous saline drip and prescribed febrifuge. The doctor failed three times to draw blood. What’s more, that doctor told me to do a handstand for half an hour because my blood pressure was not high enough. What a joke!’

@Annie 智慧爱当当: ‘When I was in Canada, my landlord’s mother wanted to see a doctor but waited in line for months. I felt a sense of security in my homeland.’

@青燕小黄宇: ‘The same thing happens in America. Admittedly, the foreign medical system offers a good service attitude, but it is not reliable when dealing with common diseases, really. Last year around this time, I encountered a similar problem to Li Bingbing, but it was pneumonia. American doctors put me on plenty of antibiotics, which resulted in acute renal failure! Thanks to my strong body, I recovered in the end.’

@hattie 沁: ‘Korean doctors do the same thing. Cold, fever, inflammation, headache, sore throat... no matter what symptoms you have, they just prescribe three pills, every time the same pills. I have no choice but to take them, although I doubt their prescription.’

@啊哦 MMMMM: ‘My boyfriend contracted chickenpox so he went to the doctor. He had a blood test and was told the result would be given a week later. After a week, the result came out but my boyfriend had almost recovered.’

@Juno 晓婷: ‘Now I know Chinese medical service is much better than other countries’! My husband got stomach bleeding but to my surprise, even an emergency treatment needs an early appointment! We waited for a total of one week! We were required to be diagnosed, examined and in the end, got medicine in three different hospitals! Compared to such experiences, waiting in line in China is not a big deal at all! At least we can solve all the problems in one single hospital in China. What a challenge in America!’
@xxx_cyr: ‘When I was studying in Spain I once had herpes. The first doctor prescribed antibiotic and one week later, it was not effective. The second doctor gave me antiviral drugs. Consequently, I had an allergic reaction and my face swelled. My herpes became cheilitis. The third doctor prescribed some unguent and hormone pills, which was slightly effective. In a month and a half, I felt like I had been a guinea pig. I really wanted to go back to China!’

@乔纳金的味道: ‘Foreign hospitals really waste time, so even a minor illness may turn into a serious one that needs emergency treatment. I was considering a physical examination for one year. Every time I thought of wasting months of time in waiting for results of blood test, X-ray, and B-ultrasound scanner, I would give up the idea of a physical examination.’

Ding Chang, a netizen in Canada: ‘If a clinic believes your illness is severe enough, it will arrange a specialist for you, but that also requires an appointment. The appointment time is not limited, so it may be up to one year. It also depends on the state of your illness. I made an appointment with a doctor specialized in intestine and stomach disease and I have waited for a year and a half. Now the time is still uncertain and my illness has gone.’

Wang Xiaomei, an Australian netizen: ‘I am a medical student and I was in the biggest hospital in Melbourne as an exchange student. On the first day there, I visited a patient at home with a consultant specialized in nerves. The patient was an old lady for whom clinical symptoms and physical examination had shown that she had multiple sclerosis. Half of her body was suffering from paralysis. The consultant suggested an MRI and told her to wait for about two months. She was so happy that she thanked the consultant multiple times. I could not understand it.’

Patti Smith, an Australian netizen: ‘Successfully making an appointment is the best thing. At least you know how much time to wait for. Five years ago I did a physical examination and it was a benign tumor then the doctor told me to wait for his call. But there
was no call during the five years and 2015 was about to pass. On summer vacation I went back to China and it took me just three days to ensure an operation. One week later I left the hospital and recovered another week later. I still had one month left on my vacation.’

The voice of the health media and medical staff in self-media. Some of them strongly supported the Chinese medical system, some called on net users to give rational remarks, and others opposed the criticism of the Australian medical system based on Li’s case.

@医学微直播: ‘[Li Bingbing went back because of a serious fever and the Chinese hospital gave an amazing performance]. Li Bingbing suffered from a fever in Australia for 16 days and she could not even walk. Unfortunately, Australian doctors failed to give a definite diagnosis so Li had to go back by air overnight, and it was later confirmed to be suppurative tonsillitis. At present, her fever is under control.’

@烧伤超人阿宝: ‘Li’s is an individual case so we should not conclude that Chinese medical performance is better or Chinese medical system is better than that of Australian hospitals. Indeed, Australian doctors missed the diagnosis of a common disease in a time period of two-weeks, which almost resulted in serious consequences. If Chinese doctors had done this and Australian doctors had saved her life, Chinese netizens would all criticize the Chinese medical staff.’

@选择中医董洪涛: ‘Chinese acupuncture is best at dealing with diseases like cold and fever. Recently film star Li Bingbing had a fever and sore throat in Australia but ended up going back to China for a cure. I believe she would recover in one day if she had chosen acupuncture in these acupoints: Shaoshang, Shangyang, the tip of the ear, Fengchi, Fengfu, Dazhui, Quchi, Waiguan, Hegu, and Shenzhu.’

@耳科赵医生: ‘A fever of 16 days must not be simple tonsillitis and even doctors at the Peking Union Medical College Hospital said it was a rare phenomenon (original text in Li’s
article). Australia’s population is not much larger than Beijing’s, so no wonder the
Australian doctors could not fix the problem.’

@肿瘤专科医生: ‘Happiness comes from comparison. Convenient and cheap Chinese
medical care is based on the sacrifices of the medical staff but this cannot persist without
institutional guarantees. Chinese people should thank the staff and value the system.’

Some organisations and individuals with knowledge of Australia expressed different
opinions. They argued that the Chinese medical system was largely different from that of
foreign countries and attributed Li’s experiences to her ignorance of the intricacies of the
Australian medical system. ‘Response to Li Bingbing’s experience in Australia: what is the
Australian medical system?’, an article from a WeChat account named Sydney Huabao (悉尼
画报)’ attracted the most attention. The article pointed out that Li Bingbing and her
colleagues did not have knowledge of the Australian medical system and that they should
have seen a general doctor to deal with minor diseases like a fever, instead of seeking help
from an emergency treatment specialist. Those without a sound command of English would
be better off contacting overseas Chinese doctors. Australian general doctors receive strict
training and have rich clinical experiences, so they were not the same as so-called ‘barefoot
doctors’. It also gave a detailed introduction to the Australian medical system and criticised Li
Bingbing for seeking privilege in Australia. ‘Here is a tip: understand a country’s medical
system before traveling or studying there. They are not like China where you solve every
health problem in big hospitals. Moreover, there is no privilege in Australia even if you are a
star or even the prime minister’, said the article. Many self-media accounts reposted the
article, including @澳大利亚资讯社, @澳大利亚新鲜事, and @澳洲新石器留学移民.
Personal accounts like @澳洲黄文勇, @AustralianCat, and @球球在猫本 published similar remarks in defence of the Australian medical system.

Screenshot 5.4, @澳洲黄文勇 announced his opinion on Weibo (it is a comment so no link is provided here)

‘I have been to both public and private hospitals. Relatively speaking, public hospitals are less efficient. ’ ‘Australian hospitals boast great medical equipment and they are prudent in using antibiotics.’

Screenshot 5.5, @AustralianCat’s comment

‘It is an indisputable fact that Australian hospitals have advanced equipment. Mediocre doctors exist everywhere in the world. A good command of English helps when seeing a doctor. Here, doctors do well in dealing with chronic diseases and they take extra care of the elderly.’

Furthermore, on the issue of Li’s case and the related attention received from Chinese and Australia netizens, the Chinese channel of SBS invited Mr Zhang, an employee of the
Australian Department of Health, to give a detailed introduction about the Australian medical system and provisions for the use of antibiotics on 28 December, five days after Li Bingbing published her original article. SBS hoped that as a result of the TV program, Chinese netizens would treat the issue in a more rational way and avoid prejudice and misunderstanding due to individual and extreme cases.

Screenshot 5.6, @澳大利亚 SBS 广播公司’s content

As shown in the above screen capture, SBS’s efforts made certain achievements. More than 71,000 people read the Weibo post, and 140 reposted it. This was one of the scarce, timely responses from the Australian media. On the one hand, the voice of the Australian Embassy in China, Tourism Australia, and Austrade, whose Weibo accounts are ordinarily active, was absent. On the other hand, Chinese official media sources such as the People’s Daily, Global Times and China Daily have reported more on Li’s case in their Chinese and English editions with a clear intention of indicating existing problems in the Australian medical system, and to promote the image of Chinese medical care. Outside the Chinese mainland, a number of Chinese and English language media including New Tang Dynasty TV, Sydney Today, LianheZaobao, Yahoo Singapore and United Daily News have given ample
attention to this issue. Besides the issue itself, the media more or less reported on the positive aspects of the Australian medical system. For example, *Melbourne Today* affiliated to the Media Today Group Pty Ltd, the most influential Chinese-language new media in Australia, invited manager Danny Burrows, the director of Watteclinic, to elaborate on the advantages of Australian free medical care, strict education and training for Australian doctors, the strict standard of medical equipment used in Australia, the differences between Australian public medical care and private medical treatment, and the advantages of private medical care. Objectively, such news helped to reduce the negative influence of the issue outside the Chinese mainland.

Compared to the media mentioned above, it seems that Australian authorities gave no response to Li’s influential case. The lack of an Australian official voice magnified the negative influence from unreliable news sources, which may do harm to the good image and reputation of the Australian medical system in the Chinese mainland. Is the lack of an official voice attributable to a lack of attention to medical issues? In fact, positive publicity of Australian medical care has appeared in many Australian official Weibo accounts like the Embassy, Austrade and Education Department. Even the personal account of @陆克文先生 (@Kevin Rudd) posts similar content related to medical care. For example:

@澳大利亚驻华使领馆 (@The Australian Embassy in China ): Improvement of Pakistan ophthalmic health services, supported by Australian NGO Cooperation Program (page views: 16,000)

Remote pregnancy monitoring services for pregnant women in the countryside (page views: 27,000)
@澳大利亚政府教育推广官方微博 (@Australian government education promotes official weibo.)@澳大利亚贸易投资委员会 (Australian Trade and Investment Commission): the University of South Australia taking part in developing an app called ViaTherapy for stroke patients (page views: 5,369); Australian experience in the care of the elderly (page views: 4,889).

However, compared to Li’s article in Weibo, with a page view count of close to 10 million, the above-mentioned examples had little impact.

To better understand this issue, this researcher contacted Ms Liu Ting in the Public Affairs and Culture Section, who was in charge of the new media group of the Australian Embassy in China, to confirm that the embassy knew of Li’s issue and understand the measures that were taken in response so that the negative impact on Australia from such an influential public issue could be reduced. Unfortunately, Ms Liu told me, ‘I am sorry to inform you that my colleagues cannot take part in the survey because we are engaged in the organisation of many activities. Sorry again that we cannot help you.’ Here, it should be mentioned that contact was realised through @澳大利亚驻华大使馆 (Australian Embassy in China), so it is at least proven that the account provides an effective method of communication, which is praiseworthy. The embassy and Australian authorities might not have the key information to calm related public opinion, so I contacted Li Bingbing and her team, receiving the following response: no Australian authorities had contacted them in regard to this issue. At least it indicated that even if the Australian Government and related organisations had tried to reduce the bad effects caused by the opinions, they did not intend to contact Li and her team to learn about the information and plan a response. Besides Li Bingbing’s team, in 43 responses in the form of interviews and surveys, many people who
have paid close attention to the issue or were related with it say that they have not heard of any attempt from Australian authorities to mitigate the negative impact, including Ms Xu Haijing (Chief reporter of Xinhua News Agency in Australia), Ms Nila (reporter of Chinese channel of SBS), Dr Chen Yingxi and Dr Wu Dan (doctors of medicine at the Australian National University), Mr Kang (former employee in Chinese Embassy in Australia), Ms Wu Di (Australian Studies Center of Renmin University), Mr Kong Lingxu (senior director of Sina Weibo), Mr Yu (director at Ministry of Commerce of the PRC), Ms Chen (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC) and Mr Peng (Cyberspace Administration of China).

By comparison, when faced with the inaccurate or exaggerated information released by foreign celebrities and institutions, the Chinese Government often responds actively through different channels to minimise negative effects. For instance, when Elon Musk posted several tweets complaining about the trade imbalance between China and the US in auto-related fields, Wan Gang, the former Minister of Science and Technology soon responded: ‘Musk and I have known each other for some time…We often communicate, and discuss the issues of electric vehicle development and our advantages. In our discussions, I did not receive an indication of his complaint about China’s policies…Apart from electric cars, there are also other fields in which we can cooperate. I suppose that, as long as we maintain civilised and productive discussion, cooperation in science and technology between China and the US will be pushed forward to mutual benefit. At present, new energy vehicles from many countries have entered the Chinese market…such as the BMW I3 and other automobiles from Volkswagen, Audi AG, General Motors and Ford Motor Company. These vehicles were produced in Sino-foreign joint ventures, and enjoyed the same treatment as our domestic companies’ (Sina News, 2018).
In another case, in 2006 the *New York Times* reported that some zoos in the state of Georgia complained that the rent of pandas was so high that they couldn’t even afford to keep them. Knowing this, a member of staff from the State Forestry Administration of China soon responded on *People’s Daily*: ‘I have heard this sort of concern before, but we have not received any official requirement from the US … those American zoos just expressed their own opinions via the media, which is not an official mechanism for soliciting policy change. Therefore, China would not respond officially…but the Forestry Administration will continue to collect information and place emphasis on the related news’ (People.com.cn, 2006). This response does not signify that China is more conscious of using E-diplomacy than Australia, but instead demonstrates that an in-time response to hot topics can reduce the negative effects to an extent. There is a certain educational value for Australia in this case. It is worth noting that Australian new media platforms in China have made attempts to promote and praise its medical system; when they are facing this negative news, an appropriate reaction and explanation of its medical care will bring about a better effect. The next section will assess the
influence that the ‘Li Bingbing case’ has exerted on the image of the Australian medical system in China.

iv. Assessment of the influence on the image of the Australian medical system in China

This section will assess what influence ‘Li Bingbing case’ has exerted on the image of Australian medical system in China from four vantage points: how it was visibly reflected by the big data, what conclusions could be drawn from the data comparison, whether it affected the Sino-Australia healthcare industry cooperation and investment, and the drawbacks for professionals.

(1) Obvious Results Reflected by the Big Data

According to the data provided by the Lvdao Public Opinions Institute, it took over one week for the ‘Li Bingbing case’ to drop off the list of trending topics, which is rare on China’s internet, where hot topics are usually heatedly discussed for two days at most. Apart from the long period of discussion, this case spread more widely than other topics. The article, ‘An Embarrassing Experience in Australia: Seeing a doctor here is different than my experience in China, where I was cured’, posted by Li Bingbing on Weibo was read more than 10 million times by Chinese netizens; according to Chinese internet standards, a view count of 100,000 times signifies that a topic has become ‘hot’ (or is ‘trending’). In this case, although the number of people who were influenced by reposts and follow-ups is unclear, the far-reaching effects caused by celebrities and hot topics should not be overlooked. Sina Weibo provided a major platform for the dissemination of this information, where it accounted for 74% of all
reports. In regard to the content, most users (96.1%) of Sina Weibo agreed with Li Bingbing’s opinion, and those who objected to her or remained neutral accounted for a mere 1.4% and 2.5% respectively. It can be concluded from the data that the majority of the public approve of Li’s stance, that being that Australian medical care was not better than that of China, because it was Chinese treatment that cured her in the end. However, this trend combined netizens’ subjective criticism and negative impressions of the Australian healthcare system. From the areas involved in this discussion, people in top-tier cities and regions like Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan and Zhejiang paid attention to this topic most because in these areas the foreign immigrants, overseas students and people who engage in international business and other activities are more than those in other regions of China. Indeed, they are a major part of the promotion of Sino-Australia communication. In this way, this expansion covered the ‘targeted clients’ in business terms. In regard to duration, this case had a long-lasting influence even two years later: of the 2,874 netizens surveyed, more than 83% (2,391 netizens) had heard about the ‘Li Bingbing case’.

(2) Conclusions Drawn from the Data Comparison

Data Chart 4 Data of the keywords ‘Australia’, ‘medical care’ and ‘hospital’ a month after ‘Li Bingbing case’ (1 Jan 2016–31 Jan 2016) (source of data: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

Data Chart 5.5 Searching trend of the hot word ‘Australia’ (no data of hot word ‘Australian medical care’ on Baidu Index) during November 2015 and January 2016 on Baidu Index
Data Chart 5.6 Searching trend of the hot word ‘Australia’ during 20 Dec 2015 and 12 Jan 2016 on Baidu Index

According to the data comparison from Data Chart 3 and Data Chart 4, the search frequency of keywords ‘Australia’, ‘medical care’ and ‘hospital’ was lower than 1000 on WeChat and Sina Weibo – ranging from 250 to 750 a month before ‘Li Bingbing case’ (24
Nov 2015–22 Dec 2015), though it rose slightly on December 22. Following this, the overall frequency rose to 43,332 from 21,080, and the number of WeChat and Weibo posts doubled, reaching a point of between 1,000 and 1,500 by the end of January 2016. Compared to the ‘Li Bingbing case’, WeChat is usually the most frequently used social network platform in people’s daily life and plays an important role in spreading news rather than Sina Weibo. WeChat accounted for 85% of the information spread before this case, and it still accounted for over 80% when the discussion had moved primarily to Weibo. WeChat is for daily communication while Weibo plays a significant part in the expansion of public opinion. The comparison also showed that this case made Australian medical care a hot topic for Chinese netizens.

Baidu Index’s data about the keyword ‘Australia’ also reflected the people’s increasing concerns to do with Australia during the period this case examined. It is worth noting that the author collected the data for the keyword ‘Australia’ instead of ‘Australian medical care’ because of the lack of the latter on Baidu Index. Though it was not exactly the same as the former keywords, due to their overlap this data still deserves analytical treatment. More importantly, the similar developing trend reflected by Data Chart 5 and Data Chart 6 could obviously be found—both surged after the case and fell on 1 Jan 2016. Given that there were no other important hot topics during this time, the ‘Li Bingbing case’ was considered as the most reasonable factor for this change. Apart from this, it is clear that the average numbers in Data Chart 5.5 and Data Chart 5.6 were lower than 8,000 before 32 December 2015. On 25 December, however, a Wechat official account Sydney Huabao (悉尼画报) released the article ‘Australian doctors respond to Li Bingbing’s experience: How does the Australian health care system work?’ to question this case; on 27 December, Li Bingbing’s team responded to this article again. After their responses, the search frequency index soared to a
record high of 18,000. After tensions cooled down, the search frequency for ‘Australia’ on Baidu Index was still higher than before the case, which was consistent with the trend of data provided by Lvdao Public Opinions Institute. It is therefore considered that the ‘Li Bingbing case’ heightened attention among Chinese society and netizens in regard to Australian health care, and the issues of most interest are about ‘Australia’, ‘Australian health care’, ‘hospital’ and so on.

As shown on the trending word chart above, words like ‘Australia’, ‘doctors’, ‘medical science’, ‘nurses’, ‘hospitals’, ‘being hospitalized’, ‘treatment’, ‘left behind’, ‘fever’, ‘blood transfusion’, ‘embarrassing experience in Australia’, ‘health care level’, ‘health care conditions’ which were related to this case became the most concerning issues for Chinese netizens during that time. Some words like ‘the embarrassing experience in Australia’ and ‘left behind’ appeared for the first time when it came to Australian health care. It reflects that the ‘Li Bingbing case’ has left a negative impression of Australian health care among some
netizens, which is obviously against the good image of Australia created by its government and related institutes.

(3) Will it cast a shadow on Sino-Australia healthcare industry co-operation and investment?

The answer to this question is clearly a ‘Yes’, but a single opinion issue will not have a long-term impact on cooperation between the two countries. If issues of this kind occur frequently, the confidence of Chinese investors and society as a whole to the Australian healthcare industry will certainly be shaken; it will even involve other areas like overseas study and travel to Australia, similar to the case of travel for Chinese mainlanders to Taiwan. At first, when the news that mainland tourists were discriminated against and insulted by the local people of Taiwan was exposed, the interest of tourists travelling to Taiwan was not severely affected. When more reports were delivered later, and Taiwan did not effectively deal with negative public opinion after the traffic accidents involving mainland tourists occurred. In this way, even when the Chinese Government did not set limits for mainland tourists and Taiwan provided more discounts, an increasing number of mainland tourists refused to travel to Taiwan. The influence caused by negative public opinions to an industry should not be neglected. The reasons why Chinese investors were willing to invest in Australia in the area of Sino-Australia health care were obviously shown. According to the January 2018 report <Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australian Healthcare>, published by KPMG Australia and The University of Sydney's Business School (2018), ‘Investment has been concentrated on the health supplement and healthcare service delivery sectors in Australia with no large investments in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology or aged care to date. The rise in Chinese healthcare investment reflects Australia’s reputation for developing, testing and producing high-end products and services which can be deployed locally and
exported.’ It is clear that the reputation of Australian health care serves as the foundation of Chinese’s investment. This report also shows ‘a surge in healthcare investment by Chinese companies in Australia in recent years. A$2.55 billion was invested in 2015, A$1.35 billion in 2016 and A$1.58 billion in 2017 through several very large deals’. The total number slid in 2016 and rose to A$1.58 billion in 2017 from A$1.35 billion in 2016. It is not certain whether the slide in 2016 was somewhat influenced by the ‘Li Bingbing case’ or other reasons, but this change can serve as a warning that maintaining a good image of the healthcare industry in China is beneficial to Australia.

(4) Drawbacks from the Professionals

Apart from Mr Zhang, a staff member at the Australian Department of Health, who was interviewed by SBS and the person in charge of Wattleclinic interviewed by Sydney Today (今日悉尼), I also invited two medical graduates at College of Medicine, Biology and Environment of The Australian National University to share their opinions on the negative influence of this case. They both indicated that they learned about this case in real time. Dr Chen Yingxi said after the incident, many of her friends asked her whether the Australian healthcare was as backward as described in the case; some even asked her why she chose such a backward country to finish her doctor’s degree. Dr Chen explained to me, ‘From my understanding, the healthcare system in Australia is very different from Chinese healthcare system. In addition, different perspectives on antibiotic use are possibly another reason for this incident. GPs in Australia are more of a ‘gatekeeper’. Australian doctors are less likely to prescribe antibiotics for a fever; instead, they would advise patients to take a rest. I don’t have details of the ‘Li Bingbing case’. I don’t know how the doctors missed the severe tonsillitis. From what I know, the Australian healthcare system provides universal access to a comprehensive range of services, including three government-funded national cancer
screening programs. Australian life expectancy (82.5 years) is the third longest among the countries of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In terms of disease prevention, I believe that Australia has been doing a decent job compared to many other countries, including the US’. From her perspective, much of the information from this case could have been clarified very soon and should not have brought such a profound misunderstanding of the Australian healthcare industry to the Chinese people.

Ms Wu from the same college held a similar opinion. According to Ms Wu, firstly the healthcare insurance covers all Australian citizens. Therefore, local people do not need to pay for their medical care. The healthcare expenses are subsided through various channels, such as the one from central government, state government and other insurance from private sectors. Australian hospitals can be divided into public and private ones. Citizens are free to choose their healthcare insurance according to their own condition. The prices of drugs are low because a large number of drugs (including some expensive anti-tumour ones) are included in the public benefit system. The medical institutions in Australia provide better insurance and benefits to the low-incomers, the disabled, people who suffer from serious diseases and the elderly. In this way, they will not be trapped into dire straits due to the lack of income. Secondly, the medical workers in Australia enjoy extremely favourable treatment and there are no medical disputes at all. Patients should make an appointment with a general practitioner from the medical centres first. Only when the general practitioners are not able to cure the patients, will they refer you to a specialist. Moreover, patients in Australia should make appointments before they receive medical care; therefore, the number of patients for a doctor is fixed, and every patient has at least 15 minutes to communicate with doctors alone so that patients can be accurately diagnosed and doctors can work in a good state. These are the unique advantages of Australian healthcare, but were neglected in this case; instead, more
misunderstandings arose from it. Judging from that, this public opinion issue indeed brought about some negative influence.

A famous Chinese scholar Liu Yang mentioned that China and Australia have had brushes with each other in recent years. If the Sino-Australian relationship progresses in a friendly fashion, the influence of this kind will soon fade out; but at present it will be utilised by Chinese official sectors to show China’s achievement in healthcare, and will be exaggerated by nationalists and the media, causing more disagreement between the two countries in terms of public opinion.

v. Conclusion

The ‘Li Bingbing case’ is a typical ‘non-international and non-political’ public opinion issue which was expanded by social media, developed into a globally influential one, and which brought about negative effects to a certain country’s profits and image. It is not considered to be a case of E-diplomacy from the common perspective, but the effects it has caused tend to attack the good image of a country or its image of a certain industry, protection of which is the aim of routine diplomacy work. For instance, since 2012 when Xi Jinping took up the post as General-Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, President Xi has particularly emphasised the work of ideology publicity. On the national conference on propaganda work, he pointed out the major task for external propaganda. ‘Dealing with the issues that are about political principles, we should remain on the side of positivity, clarify the facts, and help people realize true value; an important task for our propaganda under the condition of nationwide opening-up is to lead our people to know about China and the world more
objectively. We must be careful through our external publicity work and create more ways to finish that, so that new ideas, concepts and expressions connecting China and the world will appear. It is our duty to tell the China story well and spread China’s voice.\(^{306}\)

Led by this thought, it is believed that an important part for China’s external work is ‘to eliminate the bias and misunderstandings for China from international communities, improve our worldwide influence and create a positive image of our country’\(^{307}\). Therefore, when there is an issue similar to ‘Li Bingbing case’ which causes negative influence on the national image or industry image, China is certain to respond or clarify through official channels or civil organisations to minimise the negative effects. Certainly, China does not perform perfectly in this area, but as demonstrated in the case above, it is clear that China is trying to learn about the latest public opinions, especially the negative ones, and set up a responding mechanism to deal with those issues in time. Its ability to resolve these issues about China is bound to be improved. Compared to China, facing public opinion challenges of this kind, the Australian Government does not have a mature mechanism to deal with them (at least in this case); instead, it was the Chinese people with the knowledge of Australia, the media and some Chinese medical workers, who approved of the Australian healthcare service that helped netizens know clearly about the facts through the information and discussion posted on their social media. According to the results, though these unofficial individuals or institutions did not perform with diplomatic objectives, they actually helped Australia maintain its national image, promote people’s understanding of Australia and defend its interests—utilising E-diplomacy subconsciously. E-diplomacy is complicated because it is different from traditional

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\(^{306}\)Xinhua net, Xi jinping: ideological work is an extremely important task for the party, 20 August 2013, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-08/20/c_117021464_2.htm accessed on 19 Feb 2018 (习近平：意识形态工作是党的极端重要的工作)

diplomacy events; it will cause great impact on a country’s image or interests based on an occasional online issue. It requires the government or the organisations supported by official sectors to respond through the internet channels, which is a passive but effective means for defending national interests, maintaining the image, and reducing negative influence.

In this era when the internet is fast developing and online public opinions influence people’s lives and politics, any government should have the ability to deal with such spot issues. In this regard, the Australian Government did not perform well. Both the released information and the results reflected by the research signify that the Australian Government did not try to take any measures to reduce its bad effects. According to the analysed results, the positive reputation and image created by the official sectors beforehand were compromised by their lack of official voice and the ignorance of the negative influence.
Chapter VI

Case study of Mack Horton’s ‘drug cheat’ accusation against Sun Yang and the questioning of Sino-Australian sportsmanship

i. Introduction

The previous chapter conducted a study on the ‘non-international and non-political’ case of Li Bingbing’s medical distress in Australia. The assessment results show that the efforts made by Australian individuals and institutions to hedge against negative public opinion were limited. Compared with the influence of Li Bingbing’s case, the effectiveness of E-diplomacy in responding to unexpected public opinion outbreaks has not been effectively implemented and the negative impact of the incident on the image of Australia’s national healthcare service has not been effectively hedged against. This chapter will conduct a study on the ‘international but non-political’ case of Mack Horton’s ‘drug cheat’ accusation against Sun Yang. Although the various types of public opinion involved in this case received considerable attention on Sina Weibo, this case is significantly different from the previous case of Li Bingbing. First, the event platforms are different. The case of Li Bingbing was an incident in Australia, but this case took place at an international contest and was widely focused on by the International Olympic Committee, the competent authorities in China and Australia, and the international media. Second, the participants were different. Compared to the lack of positive actions by Australian officials in Li Bingbing’s case, the competent authorities of both China and Australia took action and the international media actively participated in this case. Third, the public opinion spaces are different. Unlike Li Bingbing’s case which was mainly fermented in the Chinese public opinion fields and centred on Weibo,
this case received extensive international attention. Fourth, the impacts on public opinion were different. The case of Li Bingbing caused the Chinese world to raise doubts about the standards and quality of Australian medical service, whereas this case resulted in public debate about the sportsmanship of athletes from China and Australia.

In this case, we will continue to use the professional public opinion data provided by the Lvdao Public Opinions Institute and the Baidu Index, the information obtained from interviews and questionnaires, the online opinion polls initiated by the Sina Weibo platform, and the discussions as seen in the international media, Chinese and Australian media and various types of We-media, as research materials. The following sections will focus on the case of Mack Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang. The content includes a background introduction, review and analysis of the public opinion on this event, assessment of the actions taken by the officials and other forces in China and Australia, and assessment of the impact that the event had on the overall impression of Australian sportsmanship and national image in Chinese society.

**ii. Background**

This section will provide a general overview of Mack Horton’s ‘drug cheat’ allegations made against Sun Yang. On 7 August 2016, Beijing Time (August 6, Rio Time), in the men’s 400-metre freestyle final of the Rio Olympic Games, Australia’s 20-year-old athlete Mack Horton took the championship with a time of 3:41.55, while the Chinese swimmer Sun Yang took silver with a time of 3:41.68. Before and after the game, Horton’s series of statements triggered controversy:
‘It got played up a bit but he splashed me to say hi and I ignored him, I don’t have time or respect for drug cheats...’; ‘I just have a problem with athletes who have tested positive and are still competing...I don’t know if it’s a rivalry between me and him, just me and athletes who have tested positive’; ‘I used the word ‘drug cheat’ because he tested positive ... I just have a problem with him testing positive and still competing.’

In the face of Horton’s series of remarks, Sun Yang gave only one response: ‘On the competition stage, every athlete deserves to be respected and there’s no need to use these sorts of cheap tricks to affect each other.’ In fact, before the event, news involving the two had already begun to emerge. On 4 August, the Sydney Morning Herald reported, ‘Australian distance swimmer Mack Horton has held his nerve after arch-rival and Olympic champion Sun Yang attempted to disrupt his training session at the Rio pool.’ The Chinese side responded quickly. Xu Qi, the leader of the Chinese swimming team, said in an interview with the Xinhua News Agency, ‘These reports are not real. Sun Yang and Australian swimmers are good friends. The reports have ulterior motives.’ Compared with the news on 7 August, this opinion did not cause a significant impact, nor did it receive much attention. However, as Horton’s series of remarks came out during the Rio Olympic Games, they immediately triggered strong sentiments of dissatisfaction in China from official institutions.

309 Barry Svrluga, Australia’s Mack Horton, China’s Sun Yang plain don’t like each other, 7 August 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/australias-mack-horton-chinas-sun-yang-plain-dont-like-each-other/2016/08/07/6c3ba25a-5c53-11e6-9767-76e947fb0cb8_story.html?utm_term=.8decb22936ce> accessed on 19 Feb 2018
311 Ibid
The public opinion debate in China and Australia thus opened and lasted for nearly two weeks.

In the first place, China’s CCTV reporters protested to the administrators against Horton’s remarks at the press conference. Subsequently, the Chinese Swimming Association issued an official protest email to its Australian counterpart in the morning on 7 August, Rio Time, and said:

‘We are concerned about the statement and deeds of swimmer Horton, who we believe has maliciously attacked Sun Yang over the past two days. We believe that his inappropriate comments have greatly damaged the positive relationship of the Chinese and Australian swimming teams, and damaged the image of Australian athletes. This is a sign of poor sportsmanship and morality. We urge the athlete concerned to apologise for his inappropriate comments.’

Several hours later, the Australian Olympic Committee published a statement in response, ‘Mack is entitled to express a point of view. Under the Team Values ASPIRE, the ‘E’ stands for ‘express yourself,’ and that is his right. He has spoken out in support of clean athletes. This is something he feels strongly about and good luck to him.’

As a response, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) spokesman Mark Adams said:

‘People say many things after competition and they’re entitled to say those things…Clearly we want to courage freedom of speech…But on the other hand of

course the Olympic is about respecting others and respecting the right of others to compete. There is a line somewhere there, and each case is different of course, where people should be free to compete in tranquillity. So, yes, we would encourage people to respect their fellow competitors. At the moment, we’ve had no complaints from anyone and no need to take it any further as far as we see.314

After the IOC and the Chinese and Australian authorities aired their opinions, ‘a war of words’315 triggered by this event transitioned from an official confrontation to a heated debate between the Chinese and Australian media, and international public opinion. In particular, when the Australian media reported that ‘Horton has revealed his aggressive appraisal of Sun as a ‘drug cheat’ for whom he had neither time nor respect was a deliberate ploy to get into the head of his main rival, at the same time staking a flag for clean athletes the world over316, the anger of Chinese society on this Australian swimmer were further intensified. The fierce actions of Chinese netizens have attracted the attention of the international media. ‘Horton’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts have been bombarded by Chinese fans, demanding that he apologize to Sun Yang. Within only four days, at least 200,000 comments on one photo post alone had been deleted from Horton’s page317. Given that a large number of comments following Horton’s social media accounts have been deleted, the most intuitive record of this kind of sentiment is mainly reflected in the relevant big data on the Chinese Internet platform.

Data Chart 6.1 The news trend of the keywords ‘Horton,’ ‘Sun Yang,’ and ‘the Rio Olympic Games’ (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

Although there is an 11-hour time difference between Beijing and Rio, as shown in the chart, the first round of comments on Horton’s ‘drug cheat’ accusation against Sun Yang started between 7 August and 8 August. Due to Sun Yang’s participation in the 1500-metre competition, the second round of comments broke out between 12 August and 14 August. After 18 August, the various reports about the Rio Olympic Games mainly focused on the Olympics itself. Therefore, in this chapter, only the relevant data before 18 August has been used.

Data Chart 6.2 The platform tracking data aggregation of the key words ‘Horton,’ ‘Sun Yang,’ and ‘the Rio Olympic Games’ (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)
Different from the total amount of platform data (58,471) and the Weibo platform report proportion (over 74%) seen in Li Bingbing’s case, the platform data of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang almost doubled to 111,466 in total, which shows that this event gained greater attention due to the background of the Olympic Games. At the same time, the number of reports on the Weibo platform was 39,292, accounting for 35.2%; the number of reports on the WeChat platform was 36,950, accounting for 33.1%; and the number of reports on news
websites was 26,514, accounting for 23.7%. Similar to the data trend of news reports, the platform data grew rapidly from 7 August to 8 August. Likewise, because of the 1500-metre race on 13 August, the second upsurge occurred on 12 August.

Online opinion distribution Chart 6.1 The distribution of the views of Chinese netizens on Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

微博网民观点分类：Distribution of the views of Weibo users

赞成：Favourable

中立：Neutral

反对：Unfavourable

时间范围：Time range

Judging from the emotional reaction, the Chinese netizens who supported Sun Yang and demanded that Horton make an apology accounted for 90.1%, those who were neutral accounted for 8.6%, and those who expressed their understanding for Horton accounted for only 1.4%. The data reflects, to a certain extent, netizens’ sympathy for Sun Yang and
opposition to Horton’s remarks. This is also the social public opinion foundation for the international media to pay attention to Chinese netizens’ ‘bombarding’ of Horton’s social media accounts.

Popular keywords Chart 6.1 The tracking hot words of the event of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

Among these hot words, apart from the ones related to the Rio Olympic Games, ‘Horton,’ ‘Sun Yang,’ ‘drug cheat,’ and ‘regret’, some other keywords were related to the event of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang.

Data Chart 6.3 The platform tracking data aggregation of the keyword ‘Horton’ (Source: Baidu Index)
After the event of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang, the search value of ‘Horton’ was once close to 300,000 on the Baidu Index. Before this event, the awareness among China’s online society about Horton was essentially nil.
Data Chart 6.4 The platform tracking data aggregation of the keywords ‘Horton’ and ‘Australia’ (Source: Baidu Index)

搜索指数趋势：Search index trend

整体趋势：Overall trend

PC 趋势：PC trend

移动趋势：Mobile trend

霍顿：Horton

澳大利亚：Australia

搜索指数：Search index

媒体指数：Media index

平均值：Average value

最近：Nearest

24 hours, 7 days, 30 days, 90 days, half a year, one year

自定义：User-defined
Based on the Data Chart 6.3, this chart adds the keyword ‘Australia’. It can be seen through comparison that the maximum amount of attention on Australia deriving from Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang once peaked at 35,063. It can thus be seen that although Horton is an individual, his close relationship with Australia is obvious to China’s online society.

Screenshot 6.1 A common investigation on Australia in China’s E-diplomacy

关于澳大利亚在中国“网络外交”的普通调研

投票选项 最多选5项

Source：http://vote.weibo.com/poll/138712138

关于澳大利亚在中国’网络外交‘的普通调研：A common investigation on Australia in China’s E-diplomacy

结束倒计时：Countdown

参与人数：Participants

这是我的研究课题，希望微博的伙伴们能帮忙简单地完成一下，谢谢：This is my research project. I hope you can help me to finish it. Thank you.

投票选项：Options

最多选 5 项：Max. 5 choices
Have you ever heard about the medical problems Li Bingbing encountered in Australia?

Have you ever heard about the drug accusation dispute between Sun Yang and Horton?

Have you ever heard about the dispute over the South China Sea between China and Australia?

Have you ever heard about E-diplomacy?

Have Australian officials taken any measure to reduce the negative impact of the above events?

In the investigation in Australia on China’s E-diplomacy, posted on my personal eponymous Weibo account, 2647 participants had heard about the drug allegations between Sun Yang and Horton, accounting for 92% among the total of 2874 participants; this issue had the highest recognition.

Judging from the information provided by big data, Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang had far greater impact than Li Bingbing’s case, no matter whether considered in terms of duration, the attention received or its impression on Chinese netizens. The influence of this event on Chinese netizens’ perception of the sportsmanship and national image of Australia will be analysed in the next part of this chapter. The chapter will first review and analyse the voices and attitudes and the resulting representative public opinion of the two sides in this event, from the perspectives of China and Australia respectively.
iii. Review and analysis of public opinion, and Sino-Australian actions and responses in the incident

The main responses from the Chinese side can be divided into three perspectives, which can be clearly seen from the position of the swimming team, the attitude of Sun Yang and the voices of mainstream media such as the Xinhua News Agency, People’s Daily and Global Times. The first is a direct expression of discontent to this event. Both the official protest email issued by the Chinese Swimming Association— *We are concerned about the statements and deeds of swimmer Horton who has maliciously on Sun Yang over the past two days. We believe that his inappropriate comments have greatly damaged the good relationship between the China-Australia swimming teams and damaged the image of Australian athletes. We strongly urge the athlete concerned to apologise for his inappropriate comments.*’ and Sun Yang’s comments—’*On the competition stage, every athlete deserves to be respected and there’s no need to use these sorts of cheap tricks to affect each other*’—only expressed frustration with the event and put forward their arguments.

From this perspective, the Chinese media represented by People’s Daily Online also misrepresented statements to an extent. In order to make the response by the IOC look like opposition to Horton’s remarks, they cited only a part of the comments of the IOC spokesman Mark Adams: ‘We support freedom of speech but on the other hand, at the Olympics it’s also about respecting your rivals. There is a line somewhere between people should be free to speak and have respect for others.’ Moreover, the Chinese media added their own comments: ‘The International Olympic Committee (IOC) supports freedom of speech but there should be a line drawn between freedom to speak and trash talk. *318*’ This kind of situation also occurred

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in the reports of the Australian mainstream media, which will be mentioned in the following section. In addition, the Chinese media also quoted the report from *The Australian*: ‘Why Mack Horton’s cheat call is not fair on Chinese rival’, that introduced the details of ‘Sun Yang taking stimulants’:

Sun Yang tested positive for drugs in the National Swimming Championships of China in May 2014 and was suspended for three months. This incident was caused by an ingredient called trimetazidine in the drug treatment for heart disease. This kind of ingredient was just included on the list of prohibited drugs by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) just four months earlier than the test. After checking the evidence, the WADA affirmed that Sun Yang did not take it on purpose, so as to rebut the argument about Sun Yang’s taking banned drugs.319

From the second perspective, counterattacks were mounted by using the cases of Australian athletes taking stimulants and making insulting remarks. They were promoted by the Chinese media, represented by the Xinhua News Agency. For example, when the Xinhua News Agency reported on the Australian head coach Jacco Verhaeren’s statement: ‘To be honest everyone thinks the same way... we have zero tolerance to drugs. It’s the same as saying we don’t like drug cheats,’—it counterattacked immediately, by reporting:

‘But they forgot the way the so-called ‘strong resistance to banned drugs’ reflected from the five-Olympic-gold-medal owner Ian Thorpe—the one who announced his retirement at the height on the suspicion of taking stimulants at the age of 24. In 2013, the Australian men’s 4×100meters freestyle relay team admitted that they had...’

taken some sedative named Stilnox, a kind of drug banned by the Australian Olympic Committee, before the London Olympic Games.\(^\text{320}\)

Chinese officials wanted to convey to the public that Australia was not as guiltless as it claimed to be. Furthermore, the Xinhua News Agency also cited the uncultivated behaviours of Australian athletes:

‘Australian young tennis player Kyrgios was fined and ordered to apologise to the Wawrinka by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) for making impertinent remarks. In the Rogers Cup of the ATP last year, Kyrgios played against the two-time Grand Slam champion Wawrinka. After Wawrinka successfully took the first set with a tiebreaker, Kyrgios told Wawrinka to his face, ‘Dude, I’m sorry to tell you that Kokkinakis has made love with your girlfriend.’ This was clearly recorded by the microphones on the sidelines.’

The Xinhua News Agency commented that: ‘What is truly distasteful is that they regard the lack of education as a kind personality’\(^\text{321}\). The Xinhua News Agency specifically analysed the reason why Australian swimmers launch attacks against Chinese athletes. Since 2009, China has replaced Australia in the swimming medal standings of different international competitions such as the Olympic Games and World Championships. At the London Olympics, Australia, a traditional swimming powerhouse, won only one gold medal, which made that nation feel very threatened. The improvement by Chinese swimmers largely

\(^\text{320}\) Xinhua net, Chinese swimming association called the Australian swimming association to require Horton to apologize to sun Yang, 09 August 2016, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/overseas/2016-08/09/c_129214850.htm> accessed on 19 Feb 2018 (新华社:中国泳协致电澳泳协要求霍顿向孙杨道歉)

depends on the strategies of ‘going out’ and ‘inviting in’ adopted by the Chinese Swimming Association in 2007. Inviting Australian coaches to help the Chinese squad, and training in Australia, have markedly helped to improve Chinese swimming. However, with the enhanced performance of Chinese players, the Australian Swimming Association clearly felt the threat from Chinese swimming and began to adopt a series of restrictive measures. The Xinhua News Agency’s original text is as follows:

‘Since 2014, the Australian Swimming Association has forbidden 15 most prestigious swimming clubs that have close relationships with China and other countries to provide training to foreign players, and stopped coaches such as Dennis to train foreign and especially Chinese athletes. According to the rules of the Australian Swimming Association, the athletes with the so-called ‘taking banned drugs’ experience are confined to receive training within the territory of Australia, and the foreign players trained in Australia must register in Australian anti-doping agencies so as to be tested out of competitions at any time. Several Australian media outlets have publicised this with strong wording. The Sunday Telegraph even bluntly criticized Sun Yang’s trip to Australia last year,

‘Chinese swimmers use our pools to cheat and dirty our pools’: ‘The relationship between the Chinese and Australasian swimming associations is much worse than ever before.’

The purpose of this series of counterattacks by Chinese officials is very clear—to move Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang away from the moral high ground of anti-doping and protect China’s national reputation.
From the third perspective, offensive statements appeared. Many international media outlets, including the New York Times, Daily Mail, The Guardian and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) have noted the offensive extreme sentiments from the Chinese media, mainly the Global Times, and Chinese people. The Guardian said, ‘[the] Global Times newspaper refers to Australia’s history as a penal colony in response to swimmer criticizing Chinese athlete over doping.’ The original text of the Global Times is:

‘We don’t know if it is Horton who is silly or it’s the Australian media that is evil, or perhaps Australia just has a different moral standard. The message sent is abnormal and aberrant. In many serious essays written by Westerners, Australia is mentioned as a country at the fringes of civilization. In some cases, they refer to the country’s early history as Britain’s offshore prison. This suggests that no one should be surprised at uncivilized acts emanating from the country …’

It is rare that these irrational, impolite and offensive remarks could come out from state media. Such kind of emotion quickly spread widely. The ABC News reported: ‘He is uncivilized, he is arrogant, he will destroy the country’s reputation,’ ‘It is sign of the country that’s going to perish! They cannot behave like Horton!’ …These are some of the anti-Australian comments receiving thousands of likes on China’s social media platform Weibo in response to Olympic gold medalist Mack Horton’s referring to Chinese opponent Sun Yang as a ‘drug cheat’ … But there is no shortage of Government-backed support for such sentiment…In the space of 48 hours, Australia has been the target of multiple hostile editorials and articles—some taking aim at Horton, but interestingly, others targeting


323 Shan Renping, Horton displays no goodwill in remarks over his rival, 08 August 2016, globaltimes.cn, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/999015.shtml> accessed on 19 Feb 2018
Australia over its stance in the South China Sea and towards Chinese investment…’ and thought ‘China, through its foreign ministry and state-controlled media, appears to now be regularly pushing a theme—that Australia is increasingly divided on aligning with the US against Chinese interests in the region. With nationalistic rhetoric increasingly forming part of China’s efforts to exert pressure on this front, Mack Horton’s comments might not be the last time we see an outpouring of patriotic outrage.’

The intense public opinion against Australia under the leadership of China’s official media has not been subject to any restriction under the public opinion control in China. This reflects that the Chinese Government has no objection to exerting pressure on Australian officials and society through fomenting online public opinion. Whether the purpose of the Chinese Government could be described as ‘with nationalistic rhetoric increasingly forming part of China’s efforts to exert pressure on this front,’ as the ABC put it, still requires more comprehensive consideration. However, the rise of this kind of nationalistic sentiment will certainly help the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to capture the attention of the domestic public. It will play a key role in consolidating political power and maintaining social stability.

Unlike China’s one-sided attacks on Horton and Australia, the Australian side has relatively diverse voices and is supported by numerous international media from Europe and the United States. Although public opinion supporting Horton still dominates, there are also some voices similar to the one mentioned earlier—‘Why Mack Horton’s cheat call is not fair on Chinese rival,’. Also, the poll initiated by 7 News Australia on Facebook showed that:‘Earlier today we asked if Australian gold medalist Mack Horton should apologise for

suggesting Chinese rival Sun Yang was a drug cheat. Eighty-six percent of you said yes, he should.\textsuperscript{325}

As the Chinese media and public opinion questioned and attacked, the Australian media and public responded. The mainstream Australian media, represented by the APP, SBS, ABC and SMH, expressed their support by citing Horton, the heads of international and Australian Olympic committees, heads of swimming teams, coaches and athletes. In an ABC report, the attitude of the Australian Olympic Committee was specifically conveyed clearly: ‘Australia has flatly rejected calls for an apology over swimmer Mack Horton’s controversial comments about Chinese swimmer Sun Yang.’ The ABC also quoted heavily from the remarks of the Australian chef de mission Kitty Chiller and continued to reinforce support for Horton: ‘Mack obviously has very strong views about the need for clean sport, as every single one of us does … Mack is in a pretty good place. He’s got probably his best event coming up in a few days and I know he, like all the swimmers, are focused on their own event, their own lane. I would hazard a guess that it wouldn’t affect him at all.’ The ABC also adopted the reporting method of the Chinese media—selecting some of the IOC spokesman Mark Adams’s remarks to tell its readers that the IOC is supporting Australia. The ABC reported: ‘Spokesman Mark Adams has also given Horton qualified support. “People say many things after competition and they’re entitled to say those things,” he said.’\textsuperscript{326} While supporting Horton, the Australian media represented by SBS covered Sun Yang’s three-month suspension for taking banned drugs in 2014 as well as his ‘notorious records’—‘In 2013, he spent a week in jail for crashing a car driven without a license, and last year was involved in an altercation with a

\textsuperscript{325} News Australia, https://www.facebook.com/114503341893201/posts/1362203443789845/
Brazilian swimmer at the World Championships in Russia … Horton said Sun had splashed water at him during training—so as to highlight Sun Yang’s image as a problem youth.

Not only did the Australian media support Horton, but also the Western media more widely. The BBC published China editor Carrie Gracie’s article on 12 August 2016, asking, ‘Does the Chinese public have a victim narrative?’ and used the case of Chen Xinyu, who had failed a Rio drugs test, to ask, ‘Why aren’t there more Chinese voices acknowledging that doping has been a terrible scourge for the national swimming team in the past, or that Sun Yang does not have an unblemished record?’ The Washington Post shared its view that, ‘The spat between Horton and Sun, which Horton clearly frames as good vs. evil, provided a nice little sidelight to the beginning of the Olympic swim meet.’ The New York Times predicted that, ‘Contentious issues will go with them (Horton and Sun): doping, hurt feelings and perhaps even international relations’, and expressed its support of Horton covertly: ‘On Friday, the Chinese Swimming Association confirmed that one of its female swimmers in Rio, Chen Xinyi, had tested positive for hydrochlorothiazide, a diuretic banned for its potential to mask performance-enhancing drugs. On the other side are the United States and Australia, led by athletes like the American swimmer Lilly King and Mr. Horton, who have not tested positive for banned drugs.’

In regard to the attacks of the Chinese official media on Australia, the SMH cited an article titled, ‘Mack Horton and Sun Yang: Chinese newspaper lashes Australia as a country
'at the fringes of civilization’ from the Washington Post, and satirized the Chinese public opinion for its ‘double standards’ at the beginning: ‘Did somebody say Olympic spirit? Umm, no. Instead, a squabble between Olympic swimmers has a whole lot of people in China saying a whole lot of other, not-so-podium-worthy things,’ so as to sneer at the remarks of Chinese media and netizens. Many media, including the ABC, SBS, and Reuters, have reported on the attacks of the Global Times by highlighting the phrases with a political tint like ‘the fringes of civilization’, ‘offshore prison’ and ‘colony’, in the headlines or content. In addition to quoting a large amount of original text from the Global Times, the reports also supported Horton and the Australian swimming by quoting Horton’s comments on Sun Yang, the rejection by Australian swimming to the demands of the Chinese side, and the reports on Sun Yang’s past misdeeds, and gave counter arguments against the comments of the Global Times.

Comparing the Chinese remarks with the Australian ones, the Chinese side presented overwhelming criticism of Horton and completely supported Sun Yang. In the process, there were many extreme remarks. However, the Australian media and Western media that were in favour of Australia instead utilised the viewpoints of different groups of people to support Horton’s remarks, criticise the use of stimulants in the Chinese sports field as pointed out by Horton and satirise the extreme remarks made by the Chinese side. In fact, after Horton made his accusations against Sun Yang, the two-way negative impact of the event on relations between China and Australia could no longer be ignored. Some Chinese people’s negative feelings about Australia have increased, and some Australians’ negative sentiments towards China have also risen because of the extreme remarks of the Chinese media. How should we

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assess the impact of this event in a more detailed way? Given that the study is based mainly on the platform of Sina Weibo, and currently only China has the big data supporting the content of this part, the following section will focus on the analysis of the impact of this event on the impression of Australia and its sportsmanship among China’s online society.

**iv. Evaluation of the influence of the incident on Chinese impressions of Australian sportsmanship**

This part will analyse the intuitive reflection of big data, the feedback information of correlation data, the feedback from professionals and the feedback of Sun Yang to assess whether this event had any significant impact in China of the national image of Australia and its sportsmanship.

**(1) Intuitive reflection of big data**

According to the data provided by the Lvdao Public Opinions Institute, the hotspots involved in this event continued for nearly two weeks, longer than that of Li Bingbing’s case. In terms of data volume, the platform data of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang reached 111,466, nearly twice of that of Li Bingbing’s case. In terms of communication platform, Li Bingbing’s case was mainly based on the Weibo platform, but Weibo, WeChat and news websites all played important roles in the event between Horton and Sun Yang, accounting for 35.2%, 33.1%, and 23.7% respectively. More importantly, in the case of a large platform and a huge amount of information, the mood of netizens still appeared to be one-sided. The netizens who supported Sun Yang and asked Horton to apologize accounted for 90.1%. These data all reflect that the attention triggered by Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang is
unprecedented in China’s online society, and the emotions caused by this event are mainly negative for the impression of Australia’s national image and sportsmanship.

(2) Feedback information of correlation data

In addition to the intuitive data that reflect the high degree of attention of China’s online society to this event, there are correlation data. The Baidu Index value of the Data Chart 5.6 in the previous chapter shows that after Li Bingbing’s case, the highest search value of Australia exceeded 18,000, but after Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang, the Baidu Index search value of ‘Horton’ in the Data Chart 6.3 went close to 300,000, far higher than that of Li Bingbing’s case. Such an index difference of 15 times demonstrates that the concern raised by Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang in the sports field is much more extensive than that of Li Bingbing’s case in the medical field. It can be regarded as an event of national concern in China. In the Data Chart 6.4, the largest concern for Australia from Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang reached 35,063, which is almost double the derivative value 18,000 of Li Bingbing’s case. Furthermore, in the common investigation on Australia in China’s E-diplomacy released on my personal eponymous Weibo account, there were 2647 participants who have heard about the drug allegations between Sun Yang and Horton, accounting for 92% of the 2874 participants—gaining the highest recognition—more than the 2391 participants of Li Bingbing’s case. The correlation data show that the public opinion of Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang is much higher than that of Li Bingbing’s case.

(3) Feedback from professionals

Compared to the one-sided emotion of Chinese netizens, the professionals from different fields have different opinions on whether Australian officials, especially diplomatic, should take action and give interviews. Some professionals support China and believe that
this event has affected the relations between China and Australia, while some think that this event is not important enough to have an impact.

Xu Haijing, the chief correspondent of the Xinhua News Agency in Australia, says, ‘I know Mack Horton and his “drug cheat” accusation against Sun Yang. I think it has very negative impact on bilateral relations. It’s not only about Horton’s words, it’s more about the mainstream of Australian media and public opinion standing behind Horton when the world anti-doping agency actually cleared the accusation against Sun Yang. It’s a typical case of double standards when athletes from Australia and other Western countries who took drugs were selectively forgotten or easily slipped out of public scrutiny. It is also very damaging to bilateral relationship in a way that it hurts the feeling of ordinary Chinese people and led to a negative view on Australian people of whom Chinese people previously regarded as friendly. I didn’t see any efforts by the embassy to lessen the negative impact.’

Professor Huang Rihan, Assistant Dean at the College of International Relations of Huaqiao University, believes that, ‘Horton and Sun Yang’s case had a great influence on Chinese netizens. Horton’s provocations and accusations against Sun Yang make many people not only have doubts about Horton but also the entire sport landscape in Australia, which will ultimately affect Australia’s national image and the Chinese people’s perceptions of Australia. The construction of the Australian Embassy in the field of E-diplomacy is generally lagging behind, and maybe this is related to its domestic decision-making models.’

Mr Kang, former First Secretary of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Australia, says, ‘More reports should be made about why Sun Yang took the drug and what
consequences there were. The Australian sportsmen should have been more careful in their choice of words.’

Mr Gao Lei, a senior editor at the *Global Times* which also played a key role in this event, believes that, ‘the Australian government did not play an important role in this event. The Australian media have written many reports that are full of nationalistic sentiments for the purpose of defending Horton, which make the Chinese public opinion seem dissatisfied and unintelligible. More importantly, the Australian sports world is actually not fair and impartial, and thus Chinese people would regard Australia as a hypocrite because of these media reports, which runs counter to the simple and honest image that Australia wants to present to the world. Moreover, at present a scandal in the Australian sports world will be treated by Chinese people as a proof of the hypocrisy of Australia. However, this event has nothing to do with the Australian Government, and hence the Australian embassy has not taken action to eliminate the impact.’

Ms Wu Di from the Australian Studies Center of Renmin University of China believes that ‘the event of Horton’s accusation has caused a great uproar on the Chinese network and the duration has exceeded many other events of the same kind. It can be said that this event is extremely unfavourable to the establishment of the friendly relations between the two peoples and also undermines Chinese people’s understanding and recognition of Australia. Personally, the Australian embassy did not take timely and effective measures to eliminate the negative impact of this event on the Internet.’

Of course, some professionals have different attitudes from the above-mentioned negative ones. A China scholar at the University of Western Australia, Andrew Chubb, says,
'It was unfortunate that this coincided with the South China Sea stuff mentioned above, because it got linked together and multiplied the ill feeling. I haven’t studied Australia’s public diplomacy over this issue, but I personally don’t have a problem with athletes having a spat… to me this is just entertainment. If some Chinese people get offended about something like that, I don’t think that’s an issue for Australian public diplomacy.’

A China correspondent for Reuters who cannot provide his name says, ‘The story was a massive sensation both in China and Australia. There is no doubt it generated a lot of attention in China, and indeed a fair bit of anger, but the most extreme and most opinionated anger and fury I felt was limited to the usual suspects like the Global Times and certain WeChat accounts. Like much of the online behaviour in China and in the West, that anger dissipates relatively swiftly. I do not consider there to have been long-lasting impacts on the bilateral relationship, or any quantifiable impact on trade, investment, education or tourism as a result of the Mack Horton affair. Again, I feel this is not something the embassy felt like it needed to proactively intervene in—it can hardly control the behaviour of its sportsmen and Horton’s freedom to say what he thinks. Nor does it necessarily feel like it has to intervene in media coverage, whether in English or Chinese.’

Similar views are recognised by a reporter from the SBS, Nila. She believes, ‘It is a personal view from a young athlete, and the managing structure in Australia is different from China, the government does not have much influence on individual sportsmanship.’

As for the impact on Sino-Australian relations, Professor Xu Shanpin from Xiangtan University, who has paid attention to this event, says, ‘Chinese society mostly supports Sun Yang, but this event does not get involved in politics and will not affect the bilateral relations
between China and Australia. As far as I know, the Australian embassy did not take any measure.’

From these interviews, it is not difficult to find that the professionals interviewed who have Chinese backgrounds mostly said they had heard of this event, but the scholars and government personnel studying international relations, Chinese issues, and diplomatic issues with Australian backgrounds all said they had not heard of this event, which to a certain extent reflected the different impacts on the two countries. However, based on the opinions obtained from these professionals, it is reasonable to conclude that the interviewees with Chinese backgrounds generally believed that Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang had a negative influence on the political and civil relations between China and Australia. All said that they did not notice any efforts by Australian officials including those at the Australian embassy to reduce or eliminate the impact; however, the responses of the professionals with Australian backgrounds were often more tolerant and did not take this event too seriously. They believed that China and Australia had different management mechanisms and this event might not belong to the category of Australian public diplomacy.

(4) Feedback of Sun Yang

In order to better understand the opinions of the interested parties, I tried to contact Sun Yang and Horton through social media. I was very happy to receive a complete reply from Sun Yang, but unfortunately I was unable to obtain a response from Horton. Therefore, Horton’s attitude will mainly be referenced to his remarks mentioned earlier. Sun Yang’s views on this event will be based mainly on the content of his interview.

First, what do you think about the impact of this event?
Sun Yang: ‘Horton’s remarks at the Olympics and the World Championships are just words and deeds on his own behalf. In fact, this event was only triggered through the media at that time and made some waves. After the Olympics, it gradually stopped. I think that this event has not brought any substantial impact on the Chinese and Australian societies, and I am still training in Australia.’

Second, how do you see and evaluate Horton’s words and deeds?

‘I don’t want to comment on Horton’s words and deeds. Everyone has their own thoughts, and freedom of speech is also advocated internationally. His words and deeds don’t change anything. No matter what he says, I just need to do what I believe in.’

Third, have the Australian officials (embassy, sports department or diplomatic department) communicated with you or the swimming team or the sports department on this matter, or tried to reduce the negative public opinion influence?

‘No organization has ever talked with me in regard to this matter. In fact, there is no need to talk with me because I don’t care too much about this matter. I’m not sure whether or not there is any official communication.’

Fourth, this event has caused many people to question the sportsmanship of Australia. What do you think about it?

‘Horton’s words and deeds can only represent himself rather than the Australian Swimming Association. It’s too radical to deny the sportsmanship of Australia. Perhaps, this is only a game tactic of Horton to interfere with his opponents. As the captain of the Chinese swimming team, I would like to see this event with a broader mind and tolerant attitude.’
Fifth, how do you assess and evaluate the impact of such events on the bilateral relations between China and Australia?

‘There is no need to make a trifle complicated on purpose. This event is mainly a result of the exaggeration of media. Actually, the fact is not as serious as the media reported. I still had a handshake and photo with Horton after the event.’

From the above, it is not difficult to see that Sun Yang’s attitude differs greatly from the fierce attitude shown by the online society and media of China. Sun Yang’s understanding toward the impact of this event, the identification of Horton’s conduct, and Sino-Australian relations seems to be rational. If this kind of attitude had become known more widely, it would helped to reduce the negative impact caused by the event. Unfortunately, neither side took this opportunity at the height of the public debate.

v. Conclusion

Unlike the non-international and non-political nature of Li Bingbing’s case and other E-diplomacy events that did not demand such a timely response Australia, Horton’s accusation against Sun Yang, as an ‘international but non-political’ event has received a higher degree of global attention. The views of international agencies, Chinese and Australian sports management agencies, the Chinese and Australian media, parties involved, and Chinese and Australian people have had a substantial impact on public opinion in both countries and around the world, as well as on the international images of China and Australia among different groups of people. Both China and Australia have realised that this event should be handled better, to protect their national images.
In response, from officials and the public, China has issued a variety of views to rebut the arguments, so as to maintain the national image of China and of its athletes. This is in line with the publicity orientation, especially the external one of President Xi Jinping since he took office. Throughout the entire process, the efficient operation of the state apparatus and the cooperation of the public generated momentum, and the feedback from big data showed China had formed an effective mechanism to deal with such events. Although there are still many problems, such as the emergence of extreme remarks that damage China’s national image, the ability to mobilise public opinion cannot be overlooked. Once this type of capability is further refined, China’s ability to cope with public opinion and control the direction of public debate can be further improved. The demonstration of E-diplomatic abilities means the role played by E-diplomacy can better serve the will of Chinese officials—whether it is to offset the negative influence internally of foreign public opinion and maintain national security and social stability, or to better disseminate Chinese values, Chinese stories and Chinese voices to the outside world; these goals can all be better realised. For this event, the continuous reinforcement by the Chinese media and Chinese netizens means that many onlookers who had no position, will have a more comprehensive understanding of Sun Yang’s doping violation, which has played a positive role in maintaining the image of China’s sporting teams. However, harsh rhetoric by the *Global Times* has been widely reported in the international media and has had a negative impact on Sino-Australian relations and China’s national image. This is an issue that China must pay attention to when it promotes its image, including through E-diplomacy.

Apart from focusing on this event, there are some other points that should be noted. The negative sentiments of the Chinese public against Australia, and even the forces supporting Australia, took shape against the backdrop of setbacks in Sino-Australian and Sino-Western
relations due to the South China Sea issue. This will help to reduce the resistance that the Chinese Government has encountered in the gradual toughening of its policies. This is one reason why the Chinese Government allows and even promotes the spread of this type of negative sentiment. Therefore, the public opinion onslaught caused by this event and the follow-up public opinion guidance has the attributes of E-diplomacy led by the Chinese Government. Measured by the results, from the data and feedback from interviews and surveys, this event does have a significant negative impact on the image of Australia in China.

If winning over public opinion is viewed as an E-diplomacy battle, then the Australian side did not adequately take up the challenge. According to feedback from the previous interviews, the Australian Government did not intend to get directly involved in this event, and the Australian embassy in China did not make any effort to reduce the negative impact on public opinion. Perhaps there are two reasons: first, the relationship between government and media in Australia is quite different from that in China; second, according to Australia’s understanding of diplomacy, this event is not diplomatic. On the contrary, Australian swimming institutions and the domestic and international media played important roles in E-diplomacy by conveying Australia’s views and counterattacking China’s opinions. They are striving for more influence for Australia. Compared with China’s clear aim to influence public opinion, Australian officials did have any desire to use this powerful method to serve their nation’s aims. If Australian officials wanted to ease tense relations with China, deepen the friendship between the two countries, and win over voters who are friendly to Australia, then official Australian channels and platforms in China, such as the microblogs of the Australian embassy including its economic and education sections, could have helped to ease such emotions and reduce the negative influences. However, if Australian officials hope to expand this negative influence, aggravate tensions with China, lower the friendly values
between the two peoples, and motivate anti-China forces in Australia, then utilising these online channels to increase these factors is also a possibility. Nevertheless, the results of the observations and interviews show that Australian officials were unaware of the opportunities in this event to serve the will and political interests of Australia, as the Chinese Government did.
Chapter VII

Case study of ‘the South China Sea disputes’ and the questioning of Sino-Australia’s political stance

i. Introduction

Two ‘non-political’ cases were selected in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 to assess whether Australian powers including official institutions and other individuals and organisations positively utilise E-diplomacy to defend the national image and interests of Australia when facing internet campaigns that have a considerable negative impact. According to the analysis, unofficial powers undertake more roles in E-diplomacy to dominate debate in certain areas and topics, to reduce the negative impact of public opinion and defend the national interest. This conforms to the perception and definition of E-diplomacy in Chapter 1. On the contrary, official power is absent in E-diplomacy, according to the data, interviews and questionnaire surveys. It does not take much reasoning to realise the problem and then contend with it. Is the absence of official power caused by the selection of two non-traditional cases?

In Chapter 7, a traditional case within the diplomatic scope—territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which is considerably different from the former two cases in three aspects—will be examined. First, there is a clear subject. In this case, the official organisations of China and Australia are the subjects of authoritative information. Second, there are abundant resources. Officials at all levels including national leaders, ministers and parliamentarians have clearly expressed opinions on these issues, so access to information is
available. Third, it is high profile. China and Australia have both made high-profile official statements and looked for more support in public opinion. Moreover, it should be noted that the attitudes of China and Australia in regard to the South China Sea disputes drew wide attention through traditional media and social networks. However, this wide attention means that as the information spreads in social networks, its orientation and influence are not managed, organised or driven by Australian-related powers, nor is it effective in achieving Australia’s diplomatic goals and defending Australia’s national interests.

What should be emphasised here is that in comparison to the first two cases, the case of the South China Sea disputes between China and Australia is longstanding, comprised of numerous events and complicated processes. Research in one chapter alone is not enough to comprehensively cover all the information; therefore, this chapter will focus on three particular events:

1) the Australian leadership claims regarding the validity of South China Sea arbitration after its release on 12 July 2016

2) Australia requiring China to ‘abide by law’ when the Philippines wanted bilateral dialogue with China at the time of the arbitration at the end of August 2016

3) the Australian Government’s release of its first Foreign Policy White Paper in 14 years to express concern with possible regional conflicts resulting from China’s military expansion in the South China Sea.

Based on these three events and their influence, Chapter 7 will analyse whether Australia actively utilises E-diplomacy in support of its diplomatic strategy, and whether it efficiently defends its national image and interests. This chapter will continue to use the professional big data of public opinion provided by Lvdao Public Opinions Institute and Baidu Index, materials collected in interviews and questionnaires, the online opinion votes
initiated by Sina Weibo, and reports of international media, Australian and Chinese media and various We-media.

**ii. Background**

The controversy over the South China Sea has a long history. It focuses on three main issues: territorial disputes among coastal countries about islands, rocks and reefs; disputes among coastal countries on the South China Sea; and disputes among coastal countries on the exploitation of natural resources in the South China Sea. In recent years, especially after the US Obama administration declared its return to the Asia-Pacific region in 2009, this dispute quickly regained international public debate. From a Chinese standpoint, this dispute is between China and the claimant countries in the South China Sea and does not involve countries outside the region. However, some countries represented by the United States consider the dispute to be of a different nature:

> [B]ecause as a Pacific nation and resident power we have a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia’s maritime domain, the maintenance of peace and stability, and respect for international law in the South China Sea. We oppose the threat or use of force by any claimant in the South China Sea to advance its claims or interfere with legitimate economic activity. We share these interests not only with ASEAN members and ASEAN Regional Forum participants, but with other maritime nations and the broader international community.  

This is the reason that some countries outside the region, including Australia, have also expressed their concern about the South China Sea issues and launched a series of actions. On the relationship between Australia and the South China Sea, the Lowy Institute, a well-known Australian research institute, stated that:

‘Australia has significant interests in the South China Sea, both economically, in terms of freedom of trade and navigation, and geopolitically, as the United States is invested in upholding the rules-based order in the region. Australia has been conducting its own airborne surveillance operations in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, called Operation Gateway, since 1980. These patrols are conducted by P-3 Orion maritime aircraft and some of them have been verbally challenged by China. While Australia has not conducted a surface FONOP operation similar to those of the US Navy, it regularly conducts naval presence patrols, exercises and port calls throughout the region. As Washington’s closest ally in the region, Australia may come under growing pressure from the United States to make its presence felt in the South China Sea beyond statements of diplomatic support for freedom of navigation.’

For these reasons, Australia launched a series of actions in recent years to demonstrate its stance. The actions over the past three years include: on 14 October 2015, Australia’s Foreign Minister Julie Bishop’s comment that, ‘Australia had committed to increasing its already close naval cooperation with the US and that Australia was ‘on the same page’ as the US when it came to freedom of navigation on the South China Sea.’\(^{333}\) At the end of 2015, ‘the Australian military is carrying out ‘freedom of navigation’ flights over disputed islands in the South China Sea.’\(^{334}\) On 26 January 2016, the formal freedom of navigation exercises was reported to have been initiated by the Turnbull government to dispute Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.\(^{335}\) The Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said Australia

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'recognize(s) the Philippines' right to seek to resolve the matter through arbitration, but we urge all claimants to settle their disputes peacefully without coercion, without intimidation.\textsuperscript{336}'

On 23 March 2016, in his Lowy Lecture, the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said of China’s actions in the South China Sea: ‘\textit{China’s actions in the South China Sea are creating anxieties and raising tensions among its neighbours. They are therefore counterproductive—regardless of the legal merits on which, of course, we do not express a view nor make a claim. Disputes of the ownership of the various reefs of the South China Sea should be settled by international law, not by creating facts on the ground or in this case land in the water.}’\textsuperscript{337} After an international tribunal in the Hague ruling that China had violated the sovereign rights of the Philippines, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop ‘called on China for some time to halt reclamation work and not to militarize the structures’. She stated that if China ignored the law of the sea it would be ‘a serious international transgression’ with ‘strong reputational costs’.\textsuperscript{338} On 8 September 2016, the Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop ‘appealed for European Union backing in pushing back at China’s land grab in the South China Sea,’ and Ms Bishop ‘cited Australia’s support for sanctions against Russia after its annexation of Crimea as a reason for the EU to support the


Philippines against Chinese expansion. On 22 November 2017, the Australian Government issued its first Foreign Policy White Paper since 2003, that emphasised Australia ‘urged all claimants to refrain from actions that could increase tension and have called for a halt to land reclamation and construction activities. Australia is particularly concerned by the unprecedented pace and scale of China’s activities. Australia opposes the use of disputed features and artificial structures in the South China Sea for military purposes.’

The series of diplomatic actions triggered a shift in the public opinion of the Chinese online society against Australia on several occasions on the Chinese Internet. Given the long duration of the South China Sea issue and the frequency of incidents, the two most representative ones will be selected in the following sections. The incidents—the announcement of the Australian official position after the July 12 South China Sea arbitration, and the publication of Australia’s diplomatic white paper in 2017—were analysed to observe the public opinion triggered by Australia’s official position in the online society of China, whether Australian officials used E-diplomacy effectively to realise diplomatic strategies and goals, and the achievements of Australia’s official and civil E-diplomacy. In addition to these two cases, the public opinion data released after the ruling of the international arbitration of the territorial dispute between Australia and East Timor at the end of August 2016 will be cited as reference data.

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7.21 After the announcement of the result of the South China Sea arbitration, the public opinion data triggered by Australia’s official position in the Chinese online society are as follows:

Data Chart 7.1 The tracking data of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’
(Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

The data show that from 00:00 of 12 July 2016 to 24:00 of 16 July 2016, the system collected 244 related reports, including 168 Weibo reports and 76 WeChat reports. Compared to Li Bingbing’s and Sun Yang’s cases, the data gap is significant. The reasons for this can be explained in Data Chart 7.3.

Online Opinions Distribution Chart 7.1 The distribution of the opinions of Chinese netizens after the announcement of Australian officials (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)
From this group of data from 12 July 2016 to 16 July 2016, the distribution of the views of Weibo netizens is as follows: 16.7% of the respondents were in favour, 81.5% of them were neutral, and 1.8% opposed. The data shows that at this stage, netizens did not care much about Australian views; hence, the neutral group accounted for the most significant part.

Data Chart 7.2 The Baidu index of the key word ‘Australia’ (Source: Baidu Index)

The chart shows that the data concerning Australia reached two high points on July 12 and July 15 respectively, including a breakthrough of the coordinate value of 11,100 on July
12. This is consistent with the trend of Data Chart 7.1 in the overall trend, which can verify the accuracy of the data trend of Data Chart 7.1 from the side.

Data Chart 7.3 The Baidu indexes of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’
(Source: Baidu Index)

The chart shows that the data concerning Australia reached 11,344 on July 12, and data concerning the South China Sea reached 2,324,525 on July 12. This reflects that, after the announcement of the result of the July 12 South China Sea arbitration, the major concern of the Chinese online society was the issue of the South China Sea. Although the views of Australian officials received some attention and the search volume of the keyword ‘Australia’ grew, compared with the focus on the topics about the South China Sea, the views of Australian officials have not received the attention of news reports and netizens. However, the accumulated emotions resulted in the subsequent outbreak of Chinese public sentiment against Australia, which can be seen in the second case.

7.22 The public opinion data triggered by the publication of the first Foreign Policy White Paper in the Chinese online society:
Data Chart 7.4 The tracking data of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’

(Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

The data shows that from 00:00 of 23 November 2017 to 24:00 of 23 November 2017, the report data related to ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’ reached 67,918. Among them, Weibo and WeChat reports accounted for the highest numbers, 38,611 and 14,770 respectively, accounting for more than 78% in total; news site, App, paper media (electronic edition) and forum reports amounted to 14,537.

Data Chart 7.5 The Baidu indexes of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘White Paper’

(Source: Baidu Index)
The data shows that after the publication of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, the Baidu indexes of ‘Australia’ and ‘White Paper’ had a slight increase. The index of ‘White Paper’ reached its peak on 24 November 2017, with a coordinate value of 1,746; at the same time, the coordinate value of ‘Australia’ rose from less than 6,200 to 7,086. This reflects the fact that the publication of the White Paper still attracted the attention of Chinese netizens. On the other hand, Australia has continuously released information related to the South China Sea issue, which has raised public attention in the past few years, and hence the momentum of netizens to actively search for such information is weakening (Baidu Index is mainly reflected in search data; after getting familiar with the information related to Australia’s attitude towards the South China Sea, the demand for search will be significantly reduced). In the face of such kinds of incidents, Chinese netizens will tend to choose to express their opinions and views on social platforms like Weibo and WeChat, as presented in Data Chart 7.4.

Popular keywords Chart 7.1 The tracking hot words of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’ after the publication of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)
The data shows that the top five tracking hot words are: China, Australia, White Paper, South China Sea and the US. This confirms that the major rise of the data in Data Chart 7.4 comes from the publication of Australia’s White Paper. In addition, the appearance of some offensive hot words such as ‘shut up,’ ‘white-eyed wolf (ungrateful person)’ and ‘kangaroo head’ also reflect Chinese netizens’ attitude towards Australia.

Online Opinions Distribution Chart 7.2 The distribution of the opinions of Chinese netizens after the publication of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

The data shows the views of netizens on Weibo with regard to Chinese officials’ concern about the remarks related to the South China Sea issue in Australia’s White Paper: 96.1% of the respondents were in favour, 2.5% of them were neutral, and only 1.4% opposed.

In addition to the two cases mentioned above, a case not concerning the South China Sea issue should be mentioned, that is, the direct territorial dispute between Australia and East
Timor in the Hague’s Permanent Court of Arbitration. On 29 August 2016, after media reported the news that “Australia has rejected the jurisdiction of an international tribunal’, this issue quickly became a hot topic on the Internet in China, initiating active discussions among Chinese netizens.

Data Chart 7.5 The tracking data of the key words ‘Australia’ and ‘East Timor’ (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

The data shows that the total number of the tracking data triggered by Australia’s rejection of the jurisdiction of the international tribunal was 4,362, which was significantly higher than that of the July 12 event—composed of WeChat articles, 3,475; news reports, 671; Weibo articles, 115; and APP articles, 98. This reflects the fact that although Australia’s attitude before and after the July 12 South China Sea arbitration ruling did not spark significant public opinion and concern, it resulted in some Chinese netizens gaining negative sentiments towards Australia beforehand. Therefore, after the release of the news that ‘Australia has rejected the jurisdiction of an international tribunal’, which had no direct relationship with China, a popular discussion issue was generated on the platform of WeChat. Among Chinese netizens, the platform contained within WeChat is popularly called Moments.
It is a platform divided by similar circles, which is different from Weibo’s cross-interest and cross-domain features. The headline ‘Australia has rejected the jurisdiction of an international tribunal’ was highlighted in WeChat, indicating that Chinese netizens have become a group of people who are keen to spread negative information about Australia.

Popular keywords Chart 7.2 The tracking hot words of the key word ‘Australia’ after Australia’s rejection of the jurisdiction of the international tribunal (Source: Lvdao Public Opinions Institute)

According to the data, after the release of the news, the tracking of hot key words related to ‘Australia’ include ‘China,’ ‘arbitration,’ ‘South China Sea,’ ‘East Timor,’ ‘marine boundary,’ and ‘United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,’ which are related to Australia’s rejection of the jurisdiction of the international tribunal. Among these popular words, there was even one with an obvious emotional element—‘retribution.’

Based on this data and information, in the following sections public opinion corresponding to these cases will be reviewed and analysed, and the actions taken by the two countries and their impact will be evaluated and analysed.
iii. Review and analysis of public opinion and Sino-Australian actions and responses in the incident respectively

In the cases of Li Bingbing and Sun Yang, there was limited official or authoritative information and therefore netizens could access only information about Australia from media and social media. The differences here lie in the fact that after the decision of the July 12 South China Sea arbitration case was released, Australian authorities fully and clearly publicly stated their attitude. As a result, the focus of Chinese public opinion was on Australia’s official information. After the arbitration result was announced, the Foreign Ministry of Australia published an article titled, ‘Australia supports peaceful dispute resolution in the South China Sea’ written by its Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, on its official website:

_The Arbitral Tribunal decision made by the Hague's international arbitration court is a final and binding decision on the Philippines’ South China Sea arbitration case, and ‘Australia supports the right of all countries to seek to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law’. Meanwhile, Australia ‘urges all South China Sea claimants to resolve their disputes through peaceful means’ and ‘to refrain from coercive behaviour and unilateral actions designed to change the status quo in disputed areas’;_

_The Arbitral Tribunal’s decision ‘was not about sovereignty, but about maritime rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)’;_

_UNCLOS ‘facilitates free and open trade, includes well-established rights to freedom of navigation and overflight, and supports the peaceful resolution of disputes in the maritime space’;_
The decision ‘is an important test case for how the region can manage disputes peacefully’, and ‘it is an opportunity for the region to come together’ and ‘to re-engage in dialogue with each other based on greater clarity around maritime rights’.

Australia will continue to exercise the freedom of navigation and overflight, and support the right of others to do so.

To be fair, Julie Bishop’s article is deeply imbedded with classical diplomatic features. It states Australia’s position, reasons for this position, as well as the actions that Australia plans to take next, in a lucid fashion. It is convincing in terms of logic and the jurisprudential evidence it relies on. If such information spread into China, Australia would not get only 16.7% support in the Internet poll. It would have a chance to obtain more support from the large group—81.5% of the surveyed who held a neutral attitude—to counterbalance the influence of Chinese authorities’ propaganda on public opinion on South China Sea arbitration case, and increase Australia’s influence and traction in China’s network. However, it should be pointed out that such a way of spreading information is more like the pre-Internet era, that is, the era of print media. The only difference is the change in publishing platform, from paper media to official websites. Such a method has inherent pros and cons, which can be suggested by comparison with the method adopted by Chinese authorities.

Compared with the Australian authorities’ method of expressing attitudes and disseminating views, the Chinese authorities—apart from the traditional method of releasing information to interpret its own position through the Foreign Ministry and official media—also made news which was suitable for online propagation, attracting netizens’ attention and arousing their motivation on the Internet, especially on social networking sites. In the following example, the official Weibo account of People’s Daily on the same day of June 12,
posted nine pictures whose background colour was black, with white characters on it. There was just one character on each picture, with the nine characters constituting three phrases, which in English meant ‘won’t accept’, ‘won’t participate’ and ‘won’t recognise’. For these nine characters, the comment that People’s Daily posted was, ‘On the South China Sea arbitration case with Philippines, the arbitration court has made a so-called final decision on 12th which is illegal and invalid. In this regard, China has stated on numerous occasions that the government of Aquino III of the Republic of the Philippines has unilaterally applied for arbitration which violated the international law and that the arbitration tribunal has no jurisdiction. China does not accept it and does not recognize it.’ Undoubtedly, such a method gained enormous amounts of propaganda on most of the world media and news agencies, including BBC, CNN, NY Times and AFR, with all reporting this piece of news. The BBC’s comment was, ‘this picture, shared more than 400,000 times on Weibo, reportedly originated from state media outlet People's Daily. Repeating the government's official line on the tribunal, it says: ‘Won't accept, won't participate, won't recognize'. The 50,000 comments on the picture were largely positive, with users voicing their support for the Chinese Government actions, leaving critical comments about the Philippines and its people.’

Screenshot of People’s Daily’s post on Weibo
Apart from the nine-character pictures posted by People’s Daily on Weibo, many official accounts, including the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, posted a short video called ‘Who Cares’. In this video, young Chinese from all over the world say the same slogan in English: ‘South China Sea arbitration who cares?’ in a dismissive fashion. Thus the video displays some of China’s most sophisticated means of persuasion. Using young people’s entertainment on the Internet to spread the country’s diplomatic attitude has also been a highlight of the June 12 event. As this video spread around the world and was reported on by some news agencies including AFP, NY Times and BBC, it caused pressure in the Philippines and pushed the Defense Ministry of Philippines to post news to comfort the
public: ‘We would like to inform the GENERAL PUBLIC that there is no truth in the text that is circulating about AFP being on red alert, and a military activity in Clark in relation to China’s possible reaction to the recent ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The said text is a hoax and I would like to assure everyone that there is no cause for alarm. - Usec Ricardo A. David, Jr., Undersecretary for Defence Policy, DND.\(^{342}\)

On this, the Financial Review commented that the Communist Party declared its thoughts on the decision ‘via a catchy 1 minute 40 second music video. If repetition is your sole criteria this is a masterpiece. Viewers are told 23 times ‘South China Sea arbitration who cares?’ For no apparent reason some of those mouthing the slogan have cat whiskers painted on their faces and two girls even stab the air with knives. And just in case anyone missed the message that Beijing does not care about the ruling, there are shots of missiles being launched, PLA Navy ships and submarines cruising the high seas and fighter jets taking off. Apart from this comedic number the response was pretty standard’. Such way of spreading information appeared for some time during the June 12 event, which gained attention not only in China and international Chinese societies, but among the international public. No matter whether China’s attitude was accepted or not, it accomplished the goal of making more people see and hear China’s diplomatic stance.

Screenshot 7.2 Screenshot of post of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League on Weibo:

\(^{342}\) https://www.facebook.com/DNDPHL/posts/1135203399870008
After the decision on the June 12 South China Sea arbitration case was released, Australia’s response, namely the official announcement on its official website, can probably be seen as a way of spreading its diplomatic stance. Shortly after, Australia rejected the jurisdiction of the international arbitral court, facing a wave of taunts on China’s official media and social network; Australia’s official response can be seen as a method it will adopt when facing negative public opinion. Compared with the former one, the latter method did not change substantially. Australia still published a statement on its official website.

Indeed, after Australia refused the jurisdiction of international arbitral court, China’s main official media, led by Global Times, People’s Daily and Chinese Internet Information Centre, created a tide of comment taunting Australia. The core point was ‘Being charged by East Timor in the permanent arbitration tribunal, the Australian Foreign Minister

343 In Sep 2016, East Timor applied the international court of arbitration in the Netherlands to take up a decade-long maritime boundary dispute case between it and Australia. East Timor applied for the court to decide who can own a large undersea oil and gas field between a disputed zone between two countries. East Timor insisted on a 2006 treaty for revenue sharing was unfairly forced upon the newly independent nation and the Australia said the international court has no jurisdiction over the dispute.
Bishop and the Attorney-General Brandis issued a joint statement on 29th August, saying that the mediation committee, proposed by East Timor on its maritime delimitation dispute with Australia, does not have the legal right to hold a maritime delimitation hearing and Australia won’t recognize its legal effect. However, last month, after Hague provisional arbitration tribunal made an illegal arbitration on the South China Sea issue, Bishop, the Australian foreign minister, asked China to “respect the legally-binding decision”.

Facing the pressure of public opinion from China, the Australian authorities published the article, ‘Conciliation between Australia and Timor-Leste on the website of Foreign Ministry’, in which were four key points:

1. To announce Australia’s position advancing the key principles of adherence to international law – including the UNCLOS

2. To introduce the history and context of the disputes between Australia and Timor-Leste, especially the Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea (CMATS) and two reasons why Australia’s determination is to preserve existing treaties with Timor-Leste

3. To respond to China’s query of double standards, and emphasise that ‘Australia is participating in two arbitrations initiated by Timor-Leste and will abide by the decisions of the arbitrators – just as we have called on the Philippines and China to do the same in the South China Sea. We are also participating in the current non-binding conciliation process in good faith, and in full accordance with our legal obligations’

4. To share Australian views about the future and encourage ‘both countries to overcome their differences in the Timor Sea in a manner that is fair to the interests of both countries and in accordance with our obligations under international law’.
To be fair, this article in a friendly and gentle tone stated Australia’s systematic thinking and views. If well propagated, Australia could garner support from people who had not taken sides and had limited understanding about this case. Unfortunately, the Australian authorities at all levels did not mention this problem on any social network represented by Sina Weibo, nor did they design well the dissemination of information. It was consistent with the situation of the cases of Li Bingbing’s medical incident, Horton accusing Sun Yang, June 12 South China Sea arbitration and Australia rejecting international jurisdiction. The method of dissemination changed when Australia published the Foreign Policy White Paper.

After the release of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, the Australian embassy in China began to try to take advantage of Weibo to disseminate the concept and core values of the White Paper. On 28 November 2017, the Weibo topic #Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper# was created and the embassy posted the first microblog, saying: ‘Australia is doing extraordinary things every day all over the world: opening doors for economic opportunities, ensuring our safety, allowing Australians to make their voices, helping others, promoting Australia’s expertise. This is a foreign policy in action—everyday Australia is helping to shape Australians’ status in the world, let’s meet these people.’ At the end of the post, a link to the English homepage of the White Paper was attached, as well as a short video, of 6 minutes and 20 seconds, titled ‘Foreign Policy in Action’, and showing the abilities of common Australians with different jobs. According to the data, before 31 March 2018, the people reading this topic was 227,000, the short video was played 5151 times and the first post got six comments and eight likes. In addition, under this topic, the Australian embassy in China posted 12 Chinese microblogs. Apart from the first one—with the short video, ‘Foreign Policy in Action’—another six posts contained videos telling stories from the main video. Moreover, the Australian embassy also posted a short video to give reasons why the
Australian Government published the White Paper; they were: ‘Australia is closely connected with the world and what happens in the world is closely related to us. This is why the Australian Government published the Foreign Policy White Paper.’ Compared with Australia’s non-reaction in the previous cases, the embassy’s series of actions to spread the Foreign Policy White Paper including using topics, short videos, telling stories and sentimentalism, were clear progress. Although its power of communication has not yet achieved the desired effects, it is a good start. What has been achieved globally by the Australian authorities’ efforts mentioned above? The following section will, from three given perspectives—direct reflection of big data, feedback of comparison between data and feedback from the professional and professional operation—assess whether this series of events has influenced the national image of Australia and whether Australian authorities have achieved their goal to spread its diplomatic strategy.

iv. Evaluation of its influences on Chinese impression of Australian political stance

(1) The direct reflection of big data

According to the statistics in Data Chart 7.1 and Online Opinions Distribution Chart 7.1, it is not difficult to find that the attitude of the Australian authorities did not become a major hotspot during the July 12 event, although hot topics frequently occurred. The most central reference data value from Weibo and WeChat was only 244. As for netizens, they remain ‘neutral’ about Australia’s attitude, which means netizens don’t care about it. In this event, unfortunately, Australia’s viewpoints, attitude and concepts have not effectively entered into China’s online public opinion and have failed to show Australia’s attitude to more Chinese citizens, even though they have been displayed on the official website. On the contrary, in the E-diplomacy game between China and Australia, Chinese authorities have
absolute power over public debate in mainland China, which is quite different from the game
between China and America. Although this event has not aroused much controversy or
attention, Australia’s attitude—which ‘called on the Philippines and China to abide by the
final, binding ruling’ and had been ‘calling on China for some time to halt reclamation work
and not to militarise the structures’—has been widely regarded as a behaviour which
challenged China’s sovereignty and sea power and caused anti-Australia groups to emerge on
the Internet. All of these helped to trigger the subsequent outburst of anti-Australian
sentiments in China. Only a month later, this sentiment exploded when Australia rejected the
jurisdiction of an international tribunal. According to the statistics from Data Chart 7.5 and
‘hot’ words in Chart 7.2, this event, which has no direct relation to China, drew more Chinese
attention than the July 12 event. The total trace data reached 4,263, which shows China’s
attention to Australia is higher than its concerns during the July 12 event. This data consists of
3,475 WeChat posts, 671 news items and 115 Weibo posts. Within the hot words,
‘retribution’ has become a hot word, which indicates negative emotions have been created
because of the attitude of Australia’s authorities after the release of the June 12 South China
Sea arbitration. Most importantly, WeChat, as a major source of information for most people,
reflects that this news is spread among particular groups; in addition, the messages among
these groups focus mainly on the negative information about Australia. It means that the
Australian Government’s aim to spread its values, viewpoints and concepts has not been
successfully completed. On the contrary, this promotes the wide spread of negative
information, which further weakens Australia’s influence in China.

After the release of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, the number of reports
related to ‘Australia’ and ‘South China Sea’ reached 67,918 within one week (from 23
November 2017 to 29 November 2017) according the date from Data Chart 7.4 and Popular
keywords Chart 7.1. Among these hot words, ‘shut up’, ‘white-eyed wolf’, ‘kangaroo head’ and other obviously offensive words have appeared. After the Chinese authorities showed their concern about debate on the South China Sea issue in Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, Weibo users’ opinions divided into three categories: 96.1% of users supported China’s standpoint, 2.5% took a neutral stand and only 1.4% were against Chinese authorities. It means that the negative emotion towards Australia is continuously expanding. At the same time, the viewpoints, values and concepts which Australia wanted to spread through its white paper did not gain support from China’s netizens. As a result, it shows that Australia hardly has any influence in China’s internet public opinion field. This point can be well demonstrated in the following feedback information from the second data comparison.

(2) The feedback from the data comparison

Compared to the non-action of Australian authorities in previous incidents, after the release of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, the Australian Embassy in China used its accounts on social networking platforms to spread Australia’s viewpoints, values and concepts. This is also the only case that can directly and quantitatively present the E-diplomatic ability of Australian officials following Australia’s establishment of social media accounts in China in 2011. In this case, the Australian embassy utilised some propaganda techniques on Weibo, including creating hot topics on Weibo such as #Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper# and short videos to spread their viewpoints, values and concepts in Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper. By 31 December 2018, the Australian embassy had sent 12 Chinese microblogs on this topic. These posts have been viewed 22,700 times, with the main video, called ‘Foreign Policy in Action’, having been viewed 5,151 times. China is one of the main target countries of Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper. This is also the reason why the Australian embassy has changed its indifferent attitude from previous cases
and begun to actively promote. However, in this case, it is obvious the promotional abilities of the Australian embassy’s operation teams are limited when they really need propaganda, although they have operated on Sina Weibo for seven years. There many reasons for this problem, involving channel, platform and team, and will be analysed in the last chapter. By contrast, China’s official institutions represented by the Weibo accounts of the *People’s Daily* and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League have formed strong dissemination abilities after years of cultivation of channel, matrix and team and an improvement in the ability to create content ability. The previously mentioned nine character pictures on Weibo, which are concise, resolute and distinctive, have achieved good propagation results. According to Screenshot 7.1, this post has been shared more than 360,000 times and been liked more than 300,000 times. By contrast, Li Bingbing’s medical incident mentioned in Chapter 5 has been shared only 15,000 times. However, the Weibo articles related to this incident have been viewed about 10,000,000 times. This shows the great influence of *People’s Daily*’s Weibo post. Similarly, according to Screenshot 7.2, the Weibo post of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League has been shared 9,061 times and liked more than 22,000 times. The single link of the video titled ‘who cares’ has been viewed more than 5,000,000 times¹. On YouTube, this video shared by Hong Kong Free Press also has been viewed more than 200,000 times². Considering the aspect of reachability, the gap between China and Hong Kong is clear. Chinese authorities are allowing more audiences to become aware of their attitude. However, Australia can’t effectively implement its propaganda aims, at least in China, which is one of the target counties.

*(3) The feedback from professionals*

However, in the interviews conducted with professionals, no single interviewee said they have noticed the E-diplomacy activities of Australia’s official Weibo account on the
matter of the South China Sea. The senior executive director of Sina Weibo, Mr Kong, mentioned that Sina, as a commercial platform, did not receive any business cooperation application from Australia. An anonymous official from the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, who is in charge of public opinion management, frankly acknowledged that they did not observe any initiative from Australia to promote the information to be hot topics on China’s social media platforms including Weibo. Mr Wu Dezu, who is in charge of the new media operation of the Central Committee of the Communist Young League said, compared to America’s long-term arrangement in China, such as promotion of channel dredging, cultivation of influential agents and active creation of high-quality products to propagandise American values, Australia has not made enough effort in this regard. In the past few years, he did not notice any hot issues being promoted by the Australian authorities on Weibo or any other social media.

(4) From the perspective of professional operation

If the conclusions drawn from the big data and professionals can be regarded as an indirect reference to evaluate the Australian authorities’ operational capability on China’s social media platforms, represented by Weibo, in the propaganda activities of #Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper#, every detail can be direct evidence to reflect Australia’s influence of public opinion in its E-diplomacy works. In reality, there is still much capacity for the Australian authorities to improve their operational capability. Apart from some classified work which cannot be disclosed in public, based on analysis of the daily operations of the Weibo account, Australian authorities still have some problems in the establishment of account matrix, transmission channel dredging, content planning optimisation and so on.
First, the account matrix hasn’t been completely formed. The so-called account matrix refers to the simultaneous operation of various accounts which are closely related and actively interact with the Australian authorities. It can actively cooperate with them to spread viewpoints, values and concepts about important events. This mode is very common in the Chinese Government affair accounts, corporate accounts and other community accounts including medical treatment and public welfare. However, the Australian authorities have not established this matrix alliance in the Weibo topic #Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper# and their daily operation. There is a huge gap between America’s operation and Australia’s in China.

Second, the transmission channel is obstructed. Building a strong relationship with propagation platforms and acquiring main promotion resources are very important in propaganda activities when propagandising significant events. However, the feedback from many senior operators of Weibo indicates that they have not received any cooperation application and negotiation from Australian officials at routine times or even during important events.

Third, content planning ability and creativity are limited. Australian authorities attempt to use Weibo topics, short videos, storytelling and other methods to obtain better spread effects. However, in actual operation, the Weibo topic is too long and lacks distinctive features. The first central short video is too long and has not corresponded with the trend in Chinese network society, which requires short videos to be limited to three minutes or less. None of these videos have Chinese subtitles, which directly limits the spread on China’s social media. Furthermore, the content of these videos has less interest for Chinese netizens and lacks resonance, so it is doomed to fail to draw great public attention. There are also some
problems with the professional details. However, if the above superficial problems have not been solved, it is obvious that the E-diplomacy of the Australian authorities, at least in the field of public opinion, still needs improvement.

v. Conclusion

In this chapter, this study chose the case of the South China Sea disputes to analyse as this case is within the understanding of traditional diplomacy. Contrasted to the cases examined in the previous two chapters, in this case, the diplomatic subjects are very clear: the Chinese and Australian authorities; the content is sufficient: government officials at all levels both in China and Australia have participated in network propaganda activities in their own way to spread their countries’ voice; the standpoint is explicit: government officials and departments express their view through network-based method. However, the statistics and survey results from these three cases show that the Australian embassy not only is unable to acquire a good public opinion effect but also causes an unprecedented negative impact on its national image in China, including the anti-Australia public opinion trend which is characterised by anti-Australia WeChat groups, and a plethora of aggressive hot words. This occurred even though the Australian embassy in China adjusted its attitude of indifference in two previous cases and attempted to actively apply E-diplomatic tools to help promote its diplomatic strategy and propagandise the viewpoints, values and concepts in Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper. This event is a warning for the relationship between China and Australia. The reason for this result must include the conflict between Australian authorities’ attitude and social emotions which are guided by Chinese authorities. However, compared to the western countries represented by the US, which often popularise viewpoints, values and concepts opposed to Chinese authorities but can always gain the upper hand in China,
Australian authorities should reflect and consider more focus on the nurturing of E-diplomacy competency.

However, the previous content analysis shows that Australian authorities created and ran a Weibo account since January of 2011, then started continuous operation and made Australia’s official Weibo account a positive way to let more Chinese netizens to know and understand Australia. Australian authorities also have even established direct communication with the Australian embassy. These are all effects that the Australian authorities have achieved. However, besides routine work, the Australian authorities still have some problems in their ability to master public debate to cultivate influence. These facts all limit the Australian authorities’ improvement of its E-diplomacy ability in China. Based on the case analysis in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, this study will give in the final chapter some relevant suggestions to improve Australia’s overall E-diplomacy ability in China, through the successful E-diplomacy experience of other countries in China’s social network.
Chapter VIII

Conclusion

i. Findings

This thesis has set out to contribute to a canon of literature and an ongoing discourse on E-diplomacy, primarily, to achieve the following:

- review the history of E-diplomacy, highlighting its significance and meaning
- contribute to a working definition for E-diplomacy 3.0
- compare and contrast different understandings of E-diplomacy and their use by various states
- examine the effectiveness of Australian E-diplomatic activities in China in achieving diplomatic aims
- provide suggestions for Australia, and other actors, based on the findings.

In the first, the second and the third chapter, the basic background of E-diplomacy was introduced, and the aforementioned aims were outlined. Having established that E-diplomacy is a loosely-defined concept, the precise meaning of which remains a topic of academic debate, the thesis identifies it as an evolving practice with a history that spans from far prior to the conception of the Internet, and, importantly to this study, as a microcosm through which individual countries’ approaches to statecraft and the role of public diplomacy can be derived. The results of the study, on the basis of which conclusions and suggestions will be made in this chapter, clearly testify to the existence of different mindsets in regard to public
diplomacy, utilisation of novel technologies in implementing diplomacy and the role of government agencies in mediating affairs of public discourse.

It is also important to note here that for the author, as an individual ‘practitioner’ of E-diplomacy within the Chinese understanding of E-diplomacy, and a long-term resident of Australia, conducting this study has provided insight to the author personally as to the vast differences of understanding between the two countries. The aim of this study was never, and should not be interpreted as, an attempt to compare modes of government or ‘best practice’ in regard to any of the data examined. The results do nonetheless provide insight into the very different understandings of E-diplomacy, and this, in and of itself, is valuable to practitioners and interested parties from either of the examined nations (or observers, for that matter), both for better understanding of the mindset of other nations in dealing with similar issues, and for reflection on which policies and attitudes could be improved, based on the experiences to date.

In the fourth chapter, the background to the specific research project with which this thesis has been concerned was introduced. Australia’s activities on Sina Weibo were identified as an under-researched topic, relevant to the study of E-diplomacy, primarily because:

- China’s large user base and highly developed, modern online environment provide ample data for measuring the types of topics that gain traction, and public responsiveness to diplomatic intervention.

- The Australian understanding of E-diplomacy, its role in official diplomacy, and the role of individuals in diplomatic activities are starkly different to those of China, providing a useful comparison.
- Disputes that would be classified in China as worthy of an E-diplomatic response have occurred frequently in the Sino-Australian relationship over the past two years, providing ample material for analysis.

The author endeavored in the following three chapters to examine three cases—framed in terms of dominant dimensions that are variously ‘political’ and ‘non-political’—that, in the Chinese understanding, constituted bilateral disputes. In each case, the methodology employed was threefold, involving discussion of:

- ‘big data’ from the LvDao Public Opinion Institute, providing statistical evidence of the significance of topics on social media through viewership numbers, and ‘hot words’ highlighting popular reactions and responses
- multiple-choice survey data collected online, providing personal and more specific context, testifying to the accuracy of the ‘big data’
- individual interviews with key figures, stakeholders and notable observers, providing anecdotal enrichment to the statistical data presented.

The first case, ‘Li Bingbing’s medical issue in Australia’, was a popular topic initiated by a celebrity whose reported failure to obtain adequate and timely medical advice sparked an array of negative comments about the nature of the Australian medical system, accompanied by appraisal of the effectiveness of the Chinese medical system. In this case, it was established that no official channels were employed in an attempt to negate the effects of this wave of public debate. By contrast, individuals and private media did intervene in an attempt to provide context and lessen the overwhelming emotional nature of the discourse. This serves as evidence that:
For the Australian authorities, the case did not warrant an official response, either in private to those concerned or publicly in response to the unfavourable coverage; The coverage was primarily conducted in the Chinese language, for a Chinese audience, mainly residing in mainland China; Some Australian-Chinese individuals did feel strongly enough to intervene, indicating a sense of duty to public diplomacy at the individual level, mediating, or at the very least, providing a more balanced point of reference.

The second case, ‘Mack Horton’s drug cheat allegations’, refers to the discourse surrounding a ‘dispute’ between Australian swimmer Mack Horton and Chinese swimmer Sun Yang, regarding Sun Yang’s alleged use of controlled substances. As is pointed out in an interview, the spat coincided with The Hague’s ruling on the South China Sea, which to some degree may have multiplied its relevance on Chinese social media as an outlet for overall discontent with Australia’s official stance on the ruling. In an interview with the author, Sun Yang highlighted the most important factor in this dispute, that being the role of the media in exaggerating the severity of the conflict, and indirectly encouraging nationalistic bombarding of Horton’s personal social media accounts. Although it would be a stretch to deem this a direct intervention of the state apparatus, media outlets such as the Global Times that do fall under the purview of the state media department, do often play such a role in inciting nationalistic sentiment, as a means of making clear China’s discontent with (often unrelated) diplomatic issues. In this case, the South China Sea arbitration and Australia’s vocal support of the ruling were undeniably an important part of the impetus for this dispute to gain such wide coverage in China. Arguably, the aftermath of the coverage in China resulted in a snowball effect, whereby online ‘trolling’ was portrayed in the Australian media as petty cyber bullying by the Chinese public. This case testifies that:
- To some extent, some (state) media outlets perform a role of intentionally inciting nationalistic sentiment, to encourage citizens to perform ‘diplomatic duties’ that diplomacy could not officially be seen to endorse; this could also be seen domestically as a means of at once deflecting attention from issues the state would prefer not to address, and solidifies a ‘Chinese’ national identity;

- The aforementioned is either misinterpreted or convenient to the narrative of the Australian media, which in turn exacerbated the issue through inflammatory coverage of the dispute;

- While hateful comments abound online, Sun Yang’s interview response tells a different story and, although Mack Horton could not be reached for comment, it can be concluded that the media played an important role in portraying the spat between these two as a bilateral dispute, against the backdrop of the aforementioned arbitration;

- Notably, the case attracted comment from the International Olympic Committee and other stakeholders, though Australian diplomacy was absent. This further testifies to the assertion noted in the chapter that the Australian authorities do not perceive personal disputes, or public opinion surrounding an issue, to warrant an official response.

The third case, ‘China’s territorial disputes and an inquiry into the Australian political stance’ focused on the case study of public discourse surrounding The Hague ruling, and Australia’s response to it. Although Australian channels did not make an official statement or attempt to promote the Australian stance on the arbitration—most likely because Australia did not perceive its statement as a message to be received by netizens, but by the Chinese authorities; and probably because such a statement would be met with hot opposition,
possibly even censorship, on Weibo—the topic did indeed attract a mass of online attention and discussion, arguably fueling the build-up of resentment that manifested in the Mack Horton dispute. Like in the Horton case, state media played an important role in ‘setting the tone’ for individual participation in E-diplomatic activities, those being, making one’s stance on the ruling known. The popular stance promoted was ‘who cares’, indicative of a widespread approval (or lack of interest altogether) of China’s hardline opposition to the legality of the arbitration. Australia was evidently caught up in the overall online discontent following Julie Bishop’s plea for China to comply with what she stated was a legally binding ruling. The online community was quick to claim that Australia was a ‘hypocrite’, citing its past with Timor-Leste in similar circumstances, and swiftly linked Australia’s willingness to ‘lecture’ China, to US cronyism. Australia did not respond to any of this criticism through official channels, although as the author pointed out in this chapter, Australia does have a history of promoting what it perceives to be important and positive imagery of the country when it sees fit. The white paper, for example, was promoted through Weibo, but reached a pitifully small audience when compared to the aforementioned calls for nationalistic support launched by the Chinese state media. From this case, it is clear that:

- Australia does not engage in domestic politics via Weibo;
- Australia does not respond to criticism of its international (or for that matter, domestic) policies through Weibo;
- Australia discretionally promotes policies and programs it deems either important or relevant to the Weibo audience;
- Australia does not currently possess means for propagation comparable to those of the Chinese state media apparatus, or even some individual commentators. This failure to build an influential presence could be a reflection of a lack of desire to
engage in E-diplomacy, or could be a symptom of the difficulties of effectively engaging the Chinese audience.

As the research question predicted, these three case studies provide ample evidence to suggest a disparity in understanding of E-diplomacy, and vastly different discretion in its application. In the following sections, the author will draw conclusions based on the above findings, and make suggestions for Australia and China into the future, as well as possibilities for future research in this field.

**ii. Significance and conclusions**

The findings of the thesis, while insufficient to draw firm conclusions about all aspects of E-diplomacy, do provide insight into:

- differences of understandings of diplomacy between nations
- the ability of new-age media to manipulate and guide public discourse instantaneously
- the potential for E-diplomacy, whether practiced by government agencies or individuals, positively or negatively to influence national image.

With respect to the understanding of diplomacy, it is evident throughout each case mentioned in the thesis that Australia and China have very different approaches to E-diplomacy, and indeed, different understandings of what sort of issues demand diplomatic responses, and how those responses should be conducted. This is not just indicative of a difference of opinion in regard to diplomacy, however—this highlights a fundamental difference in the way these two societies are governed. Put perhaps most clearly by Xi
Jinping, it is clear that China identifies outward-facing diplomacy as a form of propaganda duty, aimed at ‘eliminating bias and misunderstandings of China in the international community, improving worldwide influence, and creating a positive image of [the] country’.

Within this broad definition, negative media coverage or even individual comments that, based on the understanding of Australian diplomacy developed in this thesis, would not warrant an official response, could indeed demand official comment in order to counter negative or incorrect information.

However, the thesis also testifies to the effectiveness of employing a combination of new and old media to exert pressure, and indeed what might be considered by onlookers as ‘negative energy’ when it is diplomatically convenient to do so. In turn, this is interpreted as offensive by overseas media, adding to the victim mentality of those involved in online displays of nationalism. This could be seen as a form of identity building, or as a diplomatic force, allowing citizens to act as ‘special force’ that can conveniently oppose or support issues that China (or more precisely, state media) deems worthy. Regardless of the intention, this group mentality and the huge influence of state media statements are features of E-diplomacy in China that cannot be overlooked if nations like Australia are to engage in effective diplomatic efforts online. It should first be recognised that these groups are being actively manipulated, and engaged with accordingly. The Horton case evidences a lack of mutual understanding (or intentionally playing up of drama) between the Australian and Chinese media, which in turn led to real and avoidable civilian verbal conflict. While this might not seem like a case worthy of a diplomatic response, the author believes it is demonstrable that interventions, even of individuals, can have a positive impact upon irrational discourse, and that parts of the state apparatus such as the Australian Embassy may very well consider it part of their purview to combat negative and untrue perceptions of their country and citizens.
effectively, and thereby promote a positive image of Australia. To achieve this, however, it would be prudent first to understand the effectiveness and mechanics of E-diplomacy with respect to the Chinese context.

As a final conclusion, it is evident from the LvDao viewership statistics that E-diplomacy 3.0 and the Internet have captured the primary attention of the younger population, and are increasingly replacing traditional media—conceptualised as E-diplomacy 2.0—as the source of information for this demographic. This trend will only continue into the future, and it is evident that Australia is not well-equipped at the time of writing to deal with this change. The following section will provide some suggestions for improving E-diplomatic work, with respect to the Australian context and the findings of this thesis.

iii. Recommendations

As has been mentioned in the text, and informed by the ‘offensive neorealist’ view of John Mearsheimer, the classification of E-diplomatic activities should be categorised into three typical directions: positive, negative and rational E-diplomatic activities. Positive ones are those actively promoting diplomatic working efficiency, improving communication and interaction, and strengthening consensus. Rational E-diplomatic activities are uses of E-tools for routine diplomatic works, but lack emotional involvement, and do not bring about positive or negative effects. In contrast to positive and rational ones, negative E-diplomatic activities always tend to lead to negative impacts on international relations. The targets of negative E-diplomacy usually involve activities such as spying, smearing, regime overthrow, and manipulating elections. Different kinds of E-diplomacy are happening on Sina Weibo every day. Their experiences are instructive for further E-diplomatic development.
Typical cases of positive E-diplomacy on Sina Weibo

On Sina Weibo, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau is a very representative figure. In 2013, when Trudeau was a Member of Parliament, he signed up for Sina Weibo and made a Weibo post on the occasion of China’s traditional festival. As of 25 April 2018, he had more than 219,000 followers and had issued 1,925 Weibo posts. He has the largest number of Weibo posts among current foreign dignitaries who have signed up for Weibo accounts. A typical post was posted on April 24: ‘A terrorist incident had taken place that afternoon near Yonge and Finch in Toronto. ‘Our hearts are with everyone who was affected. Thanks to the emergency rescue personnel at the scene. We are keeping a close eye on the situation’. This Weibo post has received over 900 reposts, nearly 2,000 comments, and over 14,000 likes. Although the number of followers of Trudeau’s Weibo is basically the same as that of the Weibo of the Australian Embassy, its liveliness is far greater. This does not mean that Trudeau’s every post is designed to be subtle. In fact, most of his posts are only the publication of his personal diplomatic missions, content and results. However, some of Trudeau’s skills and advantages helped him gain a lot of attention:

First, his handsome appearance is the foundation. Like most instant online celebrities, Trudeau can get wide attention largely because of his handsome appearance under the aesthetic standards in China. As a young and handsome prime minister, Trudeau is in line with the Chinese netizen imagination of a ‘tall good-looking rich guy’. This has helped him gain a lot of fans who like beautiful individuals.

344 https://weibo.com/3185896742/ziClq7Jnr?from=page_1005053185896742_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotimetime&type=comment
345 https://weibo.com/3185896742/GdxRf311U?from=page_1005053185896742_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotim
Second, Trudeau is good at interacting with the platform. When Trudeau visited China in 2017, he specifically visited Sina Weibo’s headquarters on December 4 and had an in-depth exchange with Sina’s Chairman and CEO, Cao Guowei. In his brief speech, he also mentioned in a humorous way his hope to have more fans. With the platform’s support, he gained nearly 30,000 fans during his speech within four minutes.

Third, Trudeau actively interacts with Chinese stars. Interacting with stars is a very effective way to receive attention on the Internet. During Trudeau’s visit to Sina Weibo, the platform set up an interactive activity—fans could ask questions and Trudeau answered them. Sina Weibo specially arranged for China’s popular movie star Liu Ye to ask the question: ‘Hello, Mr Prime Minister. What is the best season for travel in Canada? Do you enjoy skiing? There are many ski resorts in the northeast of China, my hometown. Welcome. #Come on!’’. Trudeau also took the opportunity to popularise Canada’s tourism: ‘Hello, Mr Liu Ye. Canada is very suitable for travel all year round! Thank you for inviting me to visit Northeast China. I also like skiing. #Come on!’346. This Weibo has received nearly 1,000 reposts and more than 3,000 likes, which have helped Trudeau gain a lot of attention from Liu Ye’s fans who are interested in traveling to Canada.

Fourth, Trudeau makes good use of Weibo rules. In the third point, the interaction between Liu Ye and Trudeau reflects a detail. In their question and answer, Sina Weibo designed and added Weibo Topic #Come on!#. This is actually utilising a rule of Sina to increase the exposure of published information.

346https://m.weibo.cn/3185896742/4181195275473624
Fifth, accurate positioning. As mentioned in the previous analysis, Weibo and WeChat are both comprehensive platforms that have different characteristics. WeChat is relatively closed, while Weibo is more like an open plaza. It can quickly spread outside the limits of small groups and include people with different interests. Coupled with the gathering of online celebrities in the tourism industry, Chairman Cao Guowei said that more than 3,500 online celebrities in the tourism industry on Sina Weibo have accumulated over 100 million fans. This is highly in line with Canada’s goal to promote tourism. In addition, according to the data provided by Weibo, 84% of Weibo users would like to search for travel information via Weibo before travelling. Seventy-eight per cent of users will share photos on Weibo after traveling, and up to 90% of users share photos during travel. In the past year, more than 53 million Weibo users travelled abroad, accounting for nearly 50% of China’s outbound tourists. This precise positioning not only promoted Canada’s tourism effectively, but also helped Trudeau gain the attention of many active fans.

The positive results obtaining by Trudeau on Weibo are a reflection of Canada’s emphasis on online media campaigns. Pang Zhongying, Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication of Renmin University of China, highly praised Canada’s public diplomacy in his book To Win the Chinese Heart: A Case Study of Foreign Public Diplomacy to China. In his opinion, Canada is a model of middle power countries, and using online media campaigns adequately has always been a highlight of Canada:

Canada has paid great attention to the publicity power of network media for a long time, which is related to the Canadian government’s strong awareness of using new technologies and its comparatively insufficient public diplomacy funding. However, with the help of the platforms of network media, Canada has made outstanding achievements in public
diplomacy. The official website of the Canadian Embassy in China is well-designed and full of humanistic concern. All kinds of useful information can be found easily and is accompanied by photos and icons. It is lively and easy to understand. The update is very timely, and almost all the contents were in three languages, namely, Chinese, English and French. At the same time, the official Weibo of the Canadian Embassy also performs prominently among the embassies of various countries in China. Unlike other countries’ simple information release, the official Weibo of the Canadian Embassy has formed various regular sections to publish information about Canada such as culture, events, and news announcements. There are 4 to 5 posts per day on average, and each one is accompanied by photos. Through the Weibo platform, the Canadian Embassy has successfully introduced a variety of interesting festivals and distinctive cultures in Canada. Especially, the pictures about food tend to attract thousands of reposts. Since the opening of the Canadian Embassy’s Weibo, it has already had more than 120,000 fans, coming out in front among the embassies in China.347

Typical cases of rational E-diplomacy on Sina Weibo

If Canada is representative of positive E-diplomacy on Sina Weibo, then the Weibo account @WaijiaoXiaolingtong operated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China can be regarded as an excellent account of rational E-diplomacy. In April 2011, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong was officially created. In just six days, it attracted the attention of more than 20,000 netizens. After the release of the first post at 10.45 am on 13 April 2018, by April 28 it had had more than 7.4 million fans. Its content is mainly based on diplomatic news and knowledge. It also intersperses this with topics such as foreign customs, diplomatic

347 Pang Zhongying, To Win the Chinese Heart: A Case Study of Foreign Public Diplomacy to China, Xinhua Press, March 2013, P. 97
English, consular reminders, ambassadors’ speeches and diplomatic interviews. When asked
the reason for setting up @WaijiaoXiaolingtong, Gong Yufeng, the person in charge of this
Weibo account, who is the Deputy Director of the Public Diplomacy Office of the
Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in an interview with a
reporter from China Daily, ‘We open this Weibo account to increase interaction with the
public. We publish diplomatic information in accordance with the laws of social network
communication and transmit foreign policies in a relaxed and lively manner’ 348. In the face of
routine work, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong has made many innovations. For example,
@WaijiaoXiaolingtong changes the sense of seriousness and stability of the diplomatic
system and uses a more fashionable, cordial and humane approach to publishing diplomatic
work-related information. A representative case is recruitment information.
@WaijiaoXiaolingtong boldly adopted the Taobao style 349 of promotion: ‘Dear, have you
graduated from college? Are you skilled in using office software? Can you communicate with
others in English smoothly? Do you have a driving license? Come on, the Trilateral
Cooperation Secretariat wants you! We need six staff to deal with research, planning, public
relations and publicity. If you are interested in this job, please contact 65962175. No
postage’ 350. This message was reposted nearly 5,000 times within three hours. As for the
questions raised by netizens about passports, visas, and exit and entry, even on weekends or
holidays, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong will give replies in a timely fashion. Gong Yufeng said, ‘We
attach great importance to the interaction with fans. We read every comment and every

348Chinadaily, the establishment of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ weibo account improve China’s
diplomacy, and new media promotes two-way interaction, 7 March
349The Taobao style is a way of speaking and was first seen on the website of Alibaba’s Taobao. It is a kind
of jargon used by sellers to make vivid product descriptions to buyers. The Taobao style has gradually
become popular among Chinese netizens for its gracious and lovely manner.
350Chinadaily, the establishment of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ weibo account improve China’s
diplomacy, and new media promotes two-way interaction, 7 March
private message of netizens. We often hold activities such as prize-giving quizzes and ‘See the World’ photography competition. This Weibo account is operated by a team of 5 people and all of them were born in the 1980s. They also work on weekends and holidays.

Concerning overseas consular protection, many Chinese students and tourists overseas will search for help through this Weibo account. As soon as this Weibo was opened, a Chinese student studying in The Philippines contacted @WaijiaoXiaolingtong after being detained at Manila International Airport for more than 15 hours. After learning about this situation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs quickly coordinated with the Chinese Embassy in The Philippines and finally solved this problem. In April 2013, more than 300 Chinese tourists were deceived by an illegal travel agency and were stranded in a port of a foreign country. Some visitors turned to @WaijiaoXiaolingtong for help. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately launched a response, contacting the Chinese embassy in this country. The embassy staff rushed to the scene and finally resolved the matter properly. According to statistics, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong handled more than 500 similar requests in the first year after its creation.

In addition, the daily work of @WaijiaoXiaolingtong includes two other aspects: first, to keep abreast of all kinds of rumours in the diplomatic field, and to refute them promptly and actively protect China’s national image in the online society. On 31 May 2012, a Sina Weibo user posted a piece of information, ‘Recently, former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxiong pointed out in a speech at the National Defence University of People’s Liberation Army that

\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{351,352,353}}\]

351 Ibid.
Chinese fishermen should not go to Huangyan Island for fishing. Li Zhaoxing said that such actions of Chinese fishermen were very stupid. The Chinese Government would fall into an awkward position. This kind of behaviour would make trouble for foreign affairs departments, which have a bad influence on the relations between the two countries. The government should strictly monitor some Chinese fishermen...’ This post triggered widespread attention once it was published. The anger and discontent of some netizens who didn’t know the truth caused a negative impact on the image of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the country. To spike the rumour, on 1 June 2012, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong released a message, ‘A Weibo user ‘exposed’ former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing’s recent statement in a speech at the National Defence University of People’s Liberation Army that Chinese fishermen should not go to Huangyan Island for fishing and this kind of behaviour was very stupid. Nevertheless, look at the truth! A reporter of Global Times has interviewed people familiar with the matter. The truth is Li Zhaoxing has never said this, and has not been to the National Defence University recently.’\(^{354}\). The original text of this interview was attached and @WaijiaoXiaolingtong called on netizens not to make rumours, not to trust rumours and not to spread them. After this message was issued, it received nearly 600 reposts and the rumour was soon contained.

Second, daily work also involves actively interacting with online public opinion and guiding netizens to support the country’s diplomatic work. Taking the Huangyan Island incident as an example: if we enter the keyword ‘Huangyan Island’ in the search column of @WaijiaoXiaolingtong, we can find that from April 8 to June 5 in 2012, there were 24 related messages. On April 10, the second day after the outbreak of the Huangyan Island incident, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong released the first message and used a brief text to indicate the attitude of the Chinese side, and immediately received hundreds of comments and reposts. In order to

\(^{354}\)https://weibo.com/1938330147/y1M9d6Spj?from=page_1001061938330147_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment
win more public support for the Chinese Government’s attitude toward the Huangyan Island incident, @WaijiaoXiaolingtong changed the habit of publishing messages through the spokespersons or the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; instead, it used Weibo as the first publishing platform. The latest developments of the incident were updated in a clear and resolute manner and underpinned a good interaction with netizens. It not only ensured the efficiency of information dissemination, but also won the support of these patriotic netizens and formed a patriotic atmosphere on the Internet in a short period of time, cooperating well with China’s diplomatic actions at that time.

Typical cases of negative E-diplomacy on Sina Weibo

While positive E-diplomacy and rational E-diplomacy still bear some resemblance to each other, negative E-diplomacy is completely different. Negative E-diplomacy is one of the main forms of non-military conflict between countries, and usually involves spying, smearing, regime overthrow and manipulating elections. Some have argued that the ‘Arab Spring’ is a classic case of negative E-diplomacy. As well, Russia’s interference with the American presidential election in 2016 mentioned in the previous chapter is also a representative case.

On Sino Weibo, according to an anonymous staff member of the Chinese Internet Supervision Department, network hype based on pro-American agents and technical means is the driving force of major public opinion in today’s China, and is the primary driving force of negative E-diplomacy. However, such allegations have always been rejected by the US Government. After the burst of the Ukraine crisis, facing the accusation of ‘colour’
revolutions, John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, directly refuted it and said: ‘America has no relation to the colour revolutions’.355.

In the preceding chapters, there is discussion about a particular event. On April 25 2018, the American Embassy in China put a post on Sino Weibo with the topic, ‘The US criticizes China for repressing the Uygurs’, trying to highlight the human rights issue in China and incite the anger of Chinese Uygurs. But in fact, this was a relatively ordinary case of negative E-diplomacy. From the view of the Chinese Government, the truly representative cases are the Wangfujing Incident in February 2011 and the Under the Dome Incident just before Two Sessions in 2015.

**Jasmine Revolution of China: the Wangfujing Incident.**

The BBC Chinese Website has systematically investigated and analysed the Wangfujing incident.356. From the end of 2010, the so-called Jasmine Revolution or (‘Arab Spring’) swept the Middle East, causing turmoil in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa including Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Syria and Libya, and regimes were overthrown. Under the direct impact of these events, in early 2011 there was an attempt to launch street movements in China. Based on popular blogs and forums at that time, participants appealed for a national movement, calling on followers to start a ‘Jasmine Revolution’ in 13 cities in China on 20 February 2010. The western media, represented by Associated Press, held that, ‘the revolution was started purely because of the failure of domestic affairs, not because of overseas forces’, and ‘behind some of the anonymous online appeals for pro-democracy protests in China that

355 US refuses color revolutions, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtRsvXNRBYk
356 The BBC Chinese website, it was a coincidence that Jon huntsman was in the area of the jasmine demonstration, 23 Feb 2011, http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2011/02/110223_us_ambassador_beijing accessed on 28 April 2018
have roiled the authoritarian government is a group of 20 mostly highly educated, Internet-savvy Chinese scattered inside and outside the country.\(^{357}\)

However, Chinese authorities believed that the best proof of America inciting the Wangfujing Incident was that the US ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman, was present at Wangfujing Street, one of the demonstration sites, on February 20. In an online video, wearing sunglasses and a jacket with an American flag on the left arm, Jon Huntsman was in the crowd, and was finally recognised and filmed by the onlookers (who, according to the BBC Chinese Website, were Chinese national security staff).\(^{358}\) Nevertheless, the US embassy in China explained the reason why Jon Hunsman appeared on Wangfujing Street, where the Jasmine demonstration was ongoing, was that the ambassador ‘was on his way to Tian’anmen Square with his family. They were walking through Wangfujing Street, so it was a sheer coincidence.’ It was also what Mary Kaye Huntsman, wife of Jon Huntsman, said in an interview: ‘We were having dinner on a Sunday evening with the kids. We walked all the time, and we were going to go a museum. We had no idea. We saw all these cameras and said, ah, they must be filming a movie.’\(^{359}\) She added that the Chinese media somehow branded her eldest son and son-in-law as the ambassador’s bodyguards.

According to the BBC Chinese Website, just a few days before Wangfujing rally, on February 16, Jon Huntsman put a new post on Weibo, quoting a speech on internet freedom made by Hilary Clinton. He asked in Chinese, ‘Do you agree with Mrs Clinton that the freedom of assembly and association can also be applied to cyberspace?’ But the post was


\(^{358}\)Jon Huntsman walked around Wangfujing street, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_dNNeaw1s

quickly deleted by Chinese Internet supervision administrators. In a subsequent declaration by Jon Huntsman quoted by the Wall Street Journal, the US embassy said it was disappointed by the decision of some Chinese websites to delete discussions about Hilary Clinton’s speech\textsuperscript{360}.

This study cannot explore every detail behind the Wangfujing Incident, but what is known for certain is that in China, the Wangfujing Incident was the first street movement aiming to challenge the regime since the Tiananmen demonstration on 4 June 1989. Its mobilisation relied totally on the Internet. It caused enormous pressure on the Chinese Government. From the perspective of negative E-diplomacy, at least the Wangfujing Incident made certain achievements. However, the presence of the US ambassador to China Jon Huntsman on the scene of demonstration, captured in a video which spread widely on the internet, was a turning point which contributed to the US government’s being a passive state instead of an active one. Soon after the event, Jon Huntsman stepped down as ambassador to China and returned to America. In a speech for presidential candidates in 2011, Jon Huntsman was critical of human rights abuses in China and predicted that China’s Internet generation would soon be ‘bringing about change, the likes of which is gonna take China down’\textsuperscript{361}.

‘\textit{Under the Dome}’ and the shadow of the US negative E-diplomacy

A self-financed documentary \textit{Under the Dome} was filmed by former China Central Television journalist Chai Jing in 2015. This film was concerned with air pollution in China went viral. It was reported by an anonymous senior staff member from the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and, within 24 hours after its launch according to the monitoring data, it had been viewed more than 200 million times. Although this documentary

\textsuperscript{360}Loretta Chao, U.S. Boosts Web Freedom Efforts in China, Iran, 17 Feb 2011, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703961104576148174253905418 accessed on 28 April 2018

film was extremely successful, and the Minister for Environmental Protection Chen Jining even praised it as China’s *Silent Spring*[^362], just four days later all information about this film was deleted, including on the platform where it was first issued, *the People’s Daily Online*.

This official act immediately generated tremendous discontent with the CCP and government. It was uncommon that a film that was at first supported officially and launched by the *People’s Daily* website would be suddenly banned without notice. The traditional logic to explain the abrupt ban was that the film had put enormous pressure on the central government, and the government feared the public gained a perception that the polluted haze was an urgent and serious issue. Although this was possibly causing the collective reaction online[^363]. However, this was not enough to explain this situation. In fact, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and Xi Jinping took office in 2012, environmental issues have been repeatedly stressed[^364]. That means that environmental issues were not sensitive issues in those years. With these questions, the author sought answers from staff from the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission. The response was unexpected.

In the staffer’s words, this anti-pollution campaign was backed and pushed by the US. He said: ‘This film was not the beginning, it should be traced back to 2009. During that year, the US embassy in China set up the air detection station and the PM 2.5 data was detected and published on Twitter. This was a foundation for the explosion of the air pollution dispute in 2011. At the end of October 2011, the US embassy posted a Chinese Weibo that mentioned:

[^362]: Silent Spring is a milestone book written by US environmentalist Rachel Carson in 1962, which brought huge awakening of environmental protection.


[^364]: Xinhua agency, 5 June 2017, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping repeatedly stressed environmental issue and required green hills and blue waters -- beautiful country scene, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-06/05/c_129624876.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-06/05/c_129624876.htm) (新华社：十八大以来, 习近平反复强调‘绿水青山’)
Beijing’s air quality index is 439, PM2.5 fine particulate density 408.0, air is toxic...\(^{365}\) Around this period, Pan Shiyi, a Chinese property tycoon with more than tens of millions of fans in Weibo, started to focus on air issues as well, and interacted with the US embassy’s Weibo account frequently. As originally launched by the US embassy and promoted by Pan Shiyi, the PM 2.5 index and air pollution issue quickly became one of the hottest issues in the whole country. Since then, the air pollution issue has become a sensitive one for foreign governments to utilize for influencing Chinese society and pressing government. The author then posed the question: ‘If that’s what you said, why did Mrs Chai release this video at that time?’ He referred to the 2015 climate conference that would be convened in Paris at the end of 2015, and that the US and China both had their own interests to pursue.

Later, the author double checked Mr Pan Shiyi’s Weibo, and it was verified that he usually interacted with the US embassy with the respect to the air pollution issue. A typical contribution was posted by him on 24 October 2011 and it urged that ‘the new American ambassador to China, do everything. One of the best things is publishing hourly air pollution in Beijing. Let everyone be conscious of protecting the environment and reducing pollution\(^{366}\). After Mrs Chai launched Under the Dome, the US embassy echoed her sentiments quickly, and on 3 March 2015, it posted an invitation for applicants to join a forum, the theme of which was Air pollution and Climate change: Global view and Chinese time\(^{367}\). In addition, Pan mentioned in an internal message that the reason why this video

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\(^{365}\) 微博原文(the original weibo): 北京空气质量指数 439，PM2.5 细颗粒浓度 408.0，空气有毒害……（原微博目前已 被删除）

\(^{366}\) 微博原文(the original weibo): 新来的美国驻华大使，什么事都做。最好的一件事：每小时公布北京空气污染状 况。让人人有意识保护环境，降低污染。https://weibo.com/1182391231/xucS2EmVN?from=page_1035051182391231_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime

\(^{367}\) 微博原文(the original weibo): 美国大使馆热诚邀请您参加 3 月 4 日（周三）晚在北京交差点中心举办的讲座和讨 论会：‘空气污染：美国经验与中国进行时’。环境污染问题沸沸扬扬之际，从速报名，来了解一些专家级的国际
could be launched through the People’s Daily platform was because Mrs Chai and her film were introduced to the People’s Daily by Mr Lu Wei, former Director of the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission. In a possibly related case, Mr Liao Hong and Mrs Chen Zhixia, the president and vice president of People’s Daily online were both arrested for corruption several months later. This incident was the turning point for Mr Lu Wei as well, and finally led to his downfall in 2017 after a long-term investigation. In addition, Pan told me that ‘if you double check the supporters of the film, you will find many the US departments and institutes were involving with this film, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Bureau etc.’

The author opposes the Chinese Government’s censorship and removal of the milestone documentary film. But, after listening to Pan’s words, my initial reaction was astonishment at his description of the US E-diplomatic manipulation strategies and skills. If what he said was true, the US E-diplomatic awareness and capacity had been researched with great care.

Based on the review and analysis of the preceding sections and chapters, the next section will analyse the challenges and opportunities for Australia in the following decades.

*Analysis of the challenges and opportunities for Australia in the following decades*

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368 Under the Dome, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6X2uw1QGQM
As mentioned previously, E-diplomatic activities can be divided into at least three categories: positive, negative and rational. As an ally of major Western countries, Australia will not need constantly to cope with E-diplomatic conflicts caused by a difference in values, such as with Russia and China. This means that Australia faces a relatively low risk of negative E-diplomacy. Australia can focus its E-diplomacy efforts on positive and rational E-diplomacy, which is what Australia actually does. Former DFAT Secretary Dennis Richardson remarked, ‘We are not at the forefront of it’, which captures this situation well. Furthermore, as a member of the Five Eyes, Australia has been protected with intelligence and it would not be easy for any country to invade Australia silently.

As a convenient in distant Oceania, Australia is far away from the main ‘power kegs’ and the requirements for direct military intervention are not demanding. Therefore, Australia will have lower requirements for negative E-diplomacy. Looking at the neighbouring countries of Australia, except for New Zealand, which has a unique relationship with Australia, other neighbouring countries’ developmental levels are not comparable to Australia. Thus, it has no great need propaganda.

These are natural advantages for Australia. However, with the change of global configuration and the rapid development of technology, Australia cannot afford to ignore the promotion of a comprehensive E-diplomatic capacity. Assuming that the international order which is led by America will have changed in the future, and that Australia has become used to a different situation, it will likely not have a strong ability to defend itself. Australia’s values of democracy, freedom, diversification and internationalisation will be at risk of being manipulated by external forces and these values will become tools to exert more negative diplomacy. With the increased emphasis on E-diplomacy among middle powers, such as
Canada, including the increasingly fierce competition for tourism and foreign students, the country which possesses stronger mastery and control will have the chance to acquire more resources, stabilise its position in the middle powers and maintain benefits for its domestic population.

Moreover, in consideration of the measures against China taken by Australia and the conflict between the rising world power, China, and the present world power, America, then Australia as America’s ally will likely encounter tensions with China in more areas, especially in the non-military area. That is, the relatively safe domestic environment will be changed with China’s counter-offensive, if the current trend of conflict continues. One of the most effective ways to fight back is negative E-diplomacy. On the basis of these advantages and challenges, this research will recommend the result as the standard definition for E-diplomacy, will utilise the experiences from Sina Weibo and on this basis offer thoughts about Australia’s further E-diplomatic development.

**Expectations and advice for the future of Australian E-diplomacy**

It is quite likely that Australia will break from traditional thinking about diplomacy and set a solid focus on the further development of E-diplomacy. The experiences of US, Russia and China that are referenced in this research demonstrate offer examples of states moving away from traditional thinking of diplomacy. E-diplomacy is one irreversible trend now developing in diplomacy. If Australian diplomats persist with outdated understandings and routines, there will be little room for effective Australian diplomacy in respect of some key future issues. Considering the current situation of Australia, the first step in this change is to absorb more youthful and energetic people into the E-diplomatic process. Without this
qualitative change in the age composition, any reforms will revert to DFAT’s website period—virtual will be greater than the tangible and E-diplomatic forms will become the new norm.

The range of subjects of E-diplomacy is far beyond DFAT and its staff. As shown in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, this study showed the non-DFAT and non-official forces—and even an individual without knowledge of E-diplomacy—in fact played a bigger role than the traditional diplomatic authorities. Whether the subjects are states or non-state actors or even individuals, all of them can utilize the influence of the internet to help realise national interests or foreign policy priorities. Australia can seek and cultivate various subjects for its further expansion of E-diplomacy.

In the traditional sense, the objects of diplomacy were state actors, mainly political leaders and diplomats. But in the E-diplomatic age, theoretically any object can be useful for E-diplomatic purposes; realising a nation’s aims is the object of E-diplomacy. This, however, requires imagination and innovation to identify relevant objects.

Closely connected with the development of E-technology, the change of medium is almost simultaneous with the change in technology. In the current age, information technologies advance rapidly and new media emerge at the same pace. The ability to be good at finding, learning and using new mediums, and becoming a master of E-diplomatic mediums, are the basic requirements for professional practitioners of E-diplomacy. Again, imagination and innovation need to be applied to achieve E-diplomatic purposes.
Practice is the only way to grow. E-diplomatic practice is still in its infancy. Even with limited practical cases and experience, it may be easier for underachievers to make progress and close the gap; on the other hand, it leaves ample room for imagination and innovation for other positive and active practitioners.

iv. Future research

The thesis has provided some background and context for E-diplomacy generally, with particular respect to the case of Sino-Australian relations. On the basis of existing discussions, as a practice-oriented research, E-diplomacy research should be more integrated with ongoing real-life practical cases. The understanding of E-diplomacy needs to be enhanced in practice, and guidance and suggestions provided for the future work of E-diplomacy should be based on hands-on experience and conclusions.

As this thesis was being finalised, several E-diplomacy events, involving the most important countries in the world, have clearly demonstrated that the global network has intensified signalling the need for countries like Australia to raise comprehensively their capabilities and awareness of E-diplomacy. As the thesis has demonstrated, E-diplomacy is an ongoing process of evolution, that has been lent impetus by the universalisation of the Internet. As such, the methods in place for responding, and understandings of how to respond, are yet to catch up with these developments. Each of these cases gives an important lesson for all countries moving forward in the E-diplomatic era. In the following section, the thesis suggests several cases for further study, with respect to the common themes discovered in the thesis.
In the first case, some Western countries have strengthened their controls against Russia’s online propaganda. Since the latter part of 2017, the US and the UK have strengthened their controls on Russia’s online propaganda apparatus, *Russia Today* (RT). In spite of the questioning of the freedom of expression, as stated by *The Hill*,

‘the Russian state-owned outlet originally known as Russia Today, must register with the Justice Department as a foreign agent, signalling that all of their content would be labelled as propaganda from Moscow...It would be a felony if RT is found to have wilfully failed to register as a foreign agent’\(^{369}\).

This is based on *The Foreign Agents Registration Act*, which is a World War II-era law that was enacted to ‘thwart Nazi propaganda from coming into the United States to sway American public sentiment and US policy’. Although this registration will not stop RT from operating, ‘paperwork listing its sources of foreign government-tied revenue and the contacts it makes in the United States’ must be submitted regularly, and a label ‘as being influenced or financed by the Russian government’\(^{370}\) would be required of any reporting. Moreover, worse news for the RT came on 31 March 2018: ‘RT television network is off the air in the Washington, D.C., area...The Kremlin-backed English language news channel remain on satellite, but two Washington-area stations that carry it are suspending operations at midnight Saturday, prompting local cable operators to drop the channel’\(^{371}\). Successively, a war of words escalated between the UK and Russia after a chemical attack case happened in Britain. As warned by Britain’s media regulator, RT ‘could lose its UK license if Prime Minister


\(^{370}\) Ibid.

\(^{371}\) Masood Farivar, Russia’s RT Set to Go Off the Air in Washington Area, 31 March 2018, https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-rt-off-air-washington-area/4323030.html, accessed on 28 April 2018
Theresa May’s government determines Moscow was behind the poisoning. In response, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned: ‘Not a single British media outlet will work in our country if they shut down Russia Today’.

In another incident, reports of a chemical bomb revealed the difficulty of distinguishing real and ‘fake’ news in the E-diplomatic era. On 7 April 2018, a Twitter post containing shocking pictures was published by the White Helmets, a well-known NGO group, saying, ‘Entire families in shelters gassed to death in #Douma #EastGhouta hiding in their cellars, suffocated from the poisonous gas bringing the initial death toll to more than 40. @SyriaCivilDefe is still in the process of rescue and recovery’. This message caused worldwide concern when it was repeated by the global mainstream media. Then the US, UK and France launched strikes against Syria in retaliation for this alleged chemical weapons attack on civilians, on 14 April 2018. In order to disprove this accusation, a Russia-backed online media Sputniknews published a series of reports—which in fact were ignored by the global mainstream media—to prove ‘the White Helmets, which claim to be an impartial NGO, saving civilians in war-torn Syria, have repeatedly been busted using false videos of their daily rescue operations’ and ‘self-proclaimed humanitarian workers have filmed their

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374 https://twitter.com/SyriaCivilDef/status/982727239132418050
propaganda videos depicting the Syrian Arab Army as bloodthirsty savages\textsuperscript{377}. The truth is not the concern here, but the competition for influence and dominance in explaining this incident is undeniable.

In a third incident, the silent contest of cyber espionage is shown as a recurring theme for the future. On 27 November 2017, three Chinese nationals working for a purported China-based Internet security firm were charged by the Justice Department of the United States for hacking sensitive information from three US corporations—Moody’s Analytics, Siemens and GPS maker Trimbl—between 2011 and May 2017\textsuperscript{378}. Although at the time, media like the Financial Times recognised ‘the charges… are unusual, as it can be hard and sometimes undiplomatic to attribute cyber-attacks’\textsuperscript{379}, a little later President Donald Trump announced he was considering taking retaliatory trade action against China for alleged theft of intellectual property\textsuperscript{380}. In fact, as traditional tradecraft or intelligence gathering has been gradually replaced by cyber espionage, both cyber espionage and referring to it in diplomatic rhetoric for other purposes are increasingly common in manifestations of the complex dimensions of modern E-diplomacy.

\textit{A final word}

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\textsuperscript{377}Sputniknews, Syrian Army Discovers White Helmets’ Filming Site in Eastern Ghouta, 11 April 2018, https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201804111063422215-white-helmets-fake-video-site/, accessed on 28 April 2018
\textsuperscript{379}Hannah Kuchler, US charges three Chinese nationals over hacking, 28 Nov 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/d23cc752-d3b0-11e7-8e9a-d9e0a5c8d5e9, accessed on 28 April 2018
\end{flushleft}
These incidents clearly show developing trends in E-diplomacy, building upon the themes outlined in the thesis. Regardless of where the contest takes place, Internet platforms that provide the means for generating hot issues supporting specific diplomatic purposes, or further the silent contest of cyber espionage, are significant tools for protecting modern countries’ national interests. The thesis has not been able to cover all of these trends, and inevitably, due to the fast-paced change implicated with the nature of E-diplomatic technologies and evolving knowledge of the term, new challenges will have been presented by the time this thesis is completed. As a growing and evolving field, E-diplomacy demands the due diligence of academia, and the active, willing participation of state actors in cultivating a positive E-diplomatic environment, as it will only continue to play an increasingly important role in state relations. It has been speculated that earlier forms of E-diplomacy might very well have resulted in the avoidance of conflict, and after all, diplomacy is, at the core, a process of negotiation and mediation. In this age, the tools are becoming increasingly available for individuals to seek to engage in diplomatic conversations and have their voice heard by an audience that was once unimaginable. With this comes the potential for closer relations, but also the potential for abuse. It is important that states adapt to these changes with respect to the opportunities and challenges presented, and do so in a way that leads to the most positive outcomes possible.

The author believes that this thesis, in examining three cases involving Australia and China, has provided some insight into the positive and negative aspects of the E-diplomatic policies of both of these countries, and the potential for E-diplomatic work to have profoundly positive and negative impacts. Henceforth, it is the responsibility of both of these countries, their media and their citizens to understand the amount of influence that their online diplomatic activities have, and utilise that to improve international relations. To be sure, this
demands change from all actors, but hopefully this thesis has provided a starting point for that
correspondence to continue into the future, to achieve a more positive E-diplomacy 3.0 for
humankind.
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