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Article

Research on Western media coverage of 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

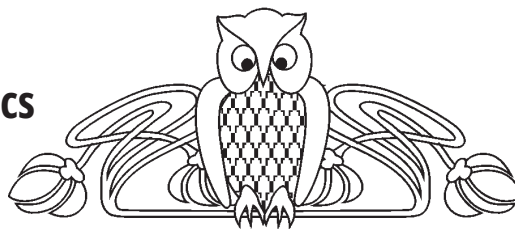
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Abstract. As the Western world's policy towards China has been changing in recent years, the international public opinion, that China comes into contact with, is also deteriorating, which has a serious negative impact on forming the international image of China and on shaping soft power. In the context of the rapid development of modern information technology, sports events like the Winter Olympics are often accompanied by large-scale media coverage and propaganda, and it is important to deal with the negative coverage of the Olympics involving China in the Western media and to build a good national image through the Winter Olympics. This study focuses on the specific content of Western media reports on China during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics cycle, and summarizes and analyzes the characteristics of "distorted facts", "far-fetched" and "prominent political demands" in the negative reports on China in the Western media during the Winter Olympics. Based on the importance of guiding international public opinion and covering by media of such large sporting events as the Olympic Games, it is urgent and necessary to improve China's international public opinion crisis response mechanism and enhance national and international media capacity. In this regard, this paper proposes four specific response strategies: strengthening the international communication capacity of mainstream media, enhancing the role of the government in guiding and making decisions, strengthening cooperation with international media; and making full use of our own media platforms.

Keywords: Beijing Winter Olympics, soft power, media reports, national image, international media, politicization of sports, Russian-Chinese media cooperation

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Научная статья

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Исследование освещения западными СМИ зимних Олимпийских игр 2022 года в Пекине

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Аннотация: Поскольку в последние годы политика западного мира в отношении Китая меняется, ситуация с международным общественным мнением, с которой сталкивается Китай, также ухудшается, что оказывает серьезное негативное влияние на формирование международного имиджа Китая и построение «мягкой силы». В контексте стремительного развития современных информационных технологий спортивные мероприятия, такие как зимние Олимпийские игры, часто сопровождаются масштабным освещением в средствах массовой информации и пропагандой, и важно бороться с негативным освещением зимних Олимпийских игр с участием Китая в западных СМИ и создавать хороший национальный имидж через окно о зимних Олимпийских играх. В этой статье акцентируется специфическое содержание сообщений западных СМИ о Китае во время цикла зимних Олимпийских игр 2022 года в Пекине, а также обобщаются и анализируются характеристики «искаженных фактов», «надуманных» и «выдающихся политических требований» в негативных сообщениях о Китае в западных СМИ во время зимних Олимпийских игр. Исходя из важности руководства международным общественным мнением и освещения в средствах массовой информации во время крупных спортивных мероприятий, таких как Олим-



пийские игры, срочно и необходимо усовершенствовать механизм реагирования Китая на кризис международного общественного мнения и усилить наращивание потенциала национальных международных средств массовой информации. В этой связи в настоящем документе предлагаются четыре конкретные стратегии реагирования: укрепление международного коммуникационного потенциала основных средств массовой информации; выполнение роли правительства в руководстве и принятии решений; укрепление сотрудничества с международными средствами массовой информации; в полной мере использовать собственные медиа-платформы.

Ключевые слова: зимние Олимпийские игры в Пекине, мягкая сила, сообщения СМИ, национальный имидж, международные СМИ, политизация спорта, российско-китайское сотрудничество в области СМИ

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The Olympic Games are a major global sporting celebration with Olympicism as the core guide, with a four-year cycle and the Olympic Games as the main event. The Olympic Games have undergone a long and tortuous development, gradually becoming one of the world's major and most important sporting events. The Winter Olympic Games and the Winter Paralympic Games are both important parts of the Olympic Games, and on July 31, 2015 at the 128th IOC plenary session in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, Beijing won the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympics with 44 votes, making it the only city in the world to have hosted both the Summer Olympics and the Winter Olympics [1]. With the countdown to the opening of the Winter Olympics, the world is looking forward to this grand and magnificent sporting event and to the wonderful performances of athletes from all over the world. But it is also difficult to avoid the emergence of some “unfriendly” voice. It should be noted that the popularity of traditional media such as TV and radio has gradually increased and reached a high level in the continuous development of science and technology, and new media such as cell phones, computers and tablets have made it possible for people around the world to get all kinds of information anytime, anywhere and in a timely manner through the Internet. In such an era, the audience of the Olympic Games can receive media reports about the Olympic Games from multiple angles without the limitation of time and space, so the media reports of the Olympic Games can greatly affect the audience's understanding of the host country's national image, and to a certain extent, map out the national “soft power” of the country. Thus, the impact of international media coverage of the Olympic Games cannot be underestimated. In fact, the media coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games is still largely negative, and these reports will, to a certain extent, directly affect the foreign

public's perception of the host country hosting the Games, and from the perspective of national “soft power”, also affect the host country's national soft power construction in addition to politics, economy and military. From the perspective of national “soft power”, it also affects the host country's national soft power construction in addition to political, economic and military aspects. In the information age where “everything is connected” and “everything is media”, the influence of public opinion guidance through international media information dissemination is also increasing, and there is an urgent need for China to improve its ability to respond to international public opinion crises and promote the reform and upgrade of international media communication. Therefore, it is important to investigate the characteristics of Western media coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics during the Olympic cycle, and to help improve China's international media capacity.

All along, some Western media reports, through the guidance of public opinion, have been smearing China's image by buckling hats, pouring dirty water, and fabricating lies against public conscience, and in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics cycle, such untrue media reports still exist, which is very unfavorable to the shaping of China's international image and the construction of national soft power. We need to prepare for a rainy day. From the perspective of national “soft power”, the study of Western media reports related to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics will help China formulate more effective strategies for international public opinion guidance and media response, better respond to international public opinion emergencies, establish a good international image, and promote “public opinion” to win “national advantage”. It is also conducive to the improvement of the mechanism of winning “national edge” with “public opinion” and further demonstrating China's national soft power beyond politics, economy and



military. On the other hand, in the future, taking the hosting of or participation in large sports events as an opportunity to conduct real and positive media coverage and propaganda is conducive to transforming the traditional paradigm of sports diplomacy, promoting exchanges between countries around the world through sports competitions, promoting global friendship and cooperation, and showing the international community China's image as a great power with a pure love for sports and a friendly welcome to people around the world.

The research method used in this paper is the case study method. It analyzes the characteristics of Western media's public opinion guidance and the impact of such media reports on the national image and "soft power", and proposes strategies to deal with public opinion crises and to enhance China's international media communication capacity during the period of hosting or participating in large sports events. It also puts forward the suggestions to enhance China's international media communication capacity.

Media coverage of the special status during the 2022 Winter Olympics

On the one hand, the media is the bridge between the audience and the Winter Olympic Games. With the charm of sports competition, mass media attracts viewers and readers all over the world, shortens the social distance between sports and people, speeds up the spread of sports, expands the social coverage of sports, raises people's awareness of sports and promotes the development of sports technology, sports cannot be separated from mass media, and mass media cannot be separated from sports [2]. With the breakthrough of modern information technology and the development of media communication technology, information dissemination has broken through the limits of time and space, and its audience is growing, whether they are accustomed to the paper version of newspapers, magazines, journals or accustomed to fragmented access to information, e-journals, news websites, information push, can meet the audience's access to the information they need, especially TV, computers, cell phones, tablets and other In particular, TV, computers, mobile phones, tablets and other electronic communication devices have lowered the threshold of access and increased popularity, making it easier for people to obtain information related to the Winter Olympics. In the background of such information fever, more and more audiences are using media reports to obtain information about the Olympic Games and even to participate and interact with the Winter Olympics.

First of all, the new crown epidemic is a major health issue that has faced the world in recent years. Because of the highly contagious nature of the new crown, it has become less achievable for many sports fans to be there to witness the games directly. The spectator stand set up for the Beijing Winter Olympics will only accommodate about 20,000 spectators, including 18,000 fixed seats and 2,000 temporary seats. Therefore, the best choice for many spectators is to learn about the Beijing Winter Olympics and watch the games through media reports. So in fact, the audience of the Olympic Games is much more than that. According to statistics, roughly 500 million viewers around the world watched the opening ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, far exceeding the 388 million who watched the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. And, after the opening ceremony, the global audience's attention to this Winter Olympics event was also very high [3]. Even in the United States, which boycotted the Winter Olympics on the eve of the Beijing Games, more than 100 million viewers watched the Winter Olympics-related events through media broadcasts. In Europe, only four days after the start of the Beijing Winter Olympics, the number of viewers watching the Beijing Winter Olympics through the media already exceeds the total number of viewers at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Even Australia, which is not good at snow and ice sports, has a high level of interest and attention in the Winter Olympics, with 11.7 million viewers four days after the games began [4].

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that in the communication of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, foreign social media platforms have become a new variable in the international public opinion pattern, and the international version of Chinese Internet enterprise "TikTok" is favored by foreign netizens. Before the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, international public opinion was more focused on negative information, especially the traditional media set negative issues about the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, but social media always had a higher emotional recognition of the Winter Olympic Games than traditional media. Athletes' social media accounts became an important driver of topics involving the Winter Olympics, and the athletes themselves played an important role in the communication of China's national image. Athletes interact with fans and netizens through social media, providing a platform for the "physically absent" public, helping to increase the sense of participation in the Winter Olympics among the world's netizens, promoting a relatively objective public perception of the Winter Olympics, and helping to increase the buzz around the Beijing Winter Olympics. Beijing



Winter Olympics regular press conference, “the IOC’s social media accounts reached 2.7 billion views during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and 1 billion comments on the social media accounts of star athletes” [5]. Reuters posted that “the natural image of athletes streaming through social media attracted traffic to mainstream media outlets that broadcast the Olympic events” [6].

On the other hand, the hosts’ reasonable use of media coverage contributes to a good national image. Considering the country’s participation in the Winter Olympics and the specific links between the Games and the hosts, the coverage of the Games affects the national image of the participating and host countries, especially the hosts, which, if properly organized, may become an effective conductor of “soft power” and contribute to the desired national image. The media are often used as a tool for the implementation of governmental will and diplomatic strategies, and they strongly influence the development of international relations in the context of globalization. In the era of globalization, mass media can cause “soft blows” to international politics, as opposed to hard military blows, which can cause a total cultural, political and positive blow to a country. Mass media are less restricted by time, have a wide range of communication, are time-sensitive, rich in content and have a wide audience, and often act as a means of political struggle and have a strong impact on the traditional concept of national security [7].

International media coverage is important for shaping the country’s image in the international community. Public opinion guidance (opinion direction) is a means of communication through the media to guide social opinion in a certain direction set in advance. The method adopted is to provide social audiences with relevant discussion topics and predetermined mainstream ideas through the mass media, and in this process, the audiences can be induced to follow the guidelines, routes and regulations planned by the government to engage in social behavior, thus playing a guiding role [8]. From the process of realizing public opinion guidance, media reports play a key role in it, from the predetermination of the government’s ideas and routes to the final acceptance and compliance by the public, it is inseparable from the information dissemination by the media in the middle. China has been facing the problem of Western media spreading inaccurate information to the public, smearing, stigmatizing and demonizing China’s image with the help of public opinion guidance. In recent years, China has purposefully strengthened its national media construction and its ability to respond to public opinion crises, but the

overall trend is not much better, and the international public opinion environment facing China is still very severe and negative in character.

Finally, the Olympics can attract a wide range of actors to engage in political resistance. The Olympics can bring influential potential allies and supporters to protest claimants, and when channels of interaction between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, protest claimants bypass the state and directly seek international allies in an attempt to pressure the country from the outside. In addition, the Olympics provide a powerful source of external symbolic capital for protest claimants and help form horizontal ties among activists with similar claims, thus increasing the political opportunities for protest claimants [9].

Analysis of the content of Western media reports on the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

Positive coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in Western media. Prior to the Winter Olympics, the 2008 Summer Olympics held in Beijing were already well received by the international community, both for the epic and stunning opening ceremony, and for the epidemic prevention measures, competition venues, and athlete accommodations, which left a deep impression on the people of the world and were widely praised. On the eve of the Winter Olympics, China made full preparations to meet such a special period of the Winter Olympics, based on the almost complete completion of the Winter Olympics hardware facilities, carefully designed the cultural connotations and promotional elements derived from the Winter Olympics, China’s purpose of shaping the national image and enhance the impact of soft power has been somewhat successful, once again creating an unprecedented and unparalleled sports event. This has led many Western media to praise it, and the Western media have also reported positively on the information related to the Winter Olympics.

In addition to the positive response to the announcement of the Winter Olympics theme slogan “Together for a Shared Future”, the Winter Olympics mascot “Bing Dondun”, in the form of a naive panda, received a positive media image and unexpected popularity, and was snapped up both inside and outside the Olympic Village, leaving a deep impression of China in the form of a national treasure.

The new crown epidemic is the primary challenge for China to host the Beijing Winter Olympics. The Winter Olympics are being held in the midst of a major outbreak of the new crown virus mutant strain Omicron, and proper prevention and control of the epidemic during the Winter Olympics is the



foundation and key to the success of the Games. In this regard, China's "dynamic zero" policy on the new crown outbreak and the Beijing Winter Olympics' strict "closed-loop management" measures on epidemic prevention and management have provided a safe environment for Olympic personnel, and the epidemic prevention effect is also very significant. Bloomberg reported that China's epidemic prevention policy during the Winter Olympics was highly rated: "China's closed-loop management policy to isolate the new coronavirus has successfully contained it". The Wall Street Journal also reported on China's "dynamic zero" policy: "China's 'dynamic zero' policy provides educational value for other countries" [10].

"Sustainable development" has always been the national strategy that China insists on executing, and for this year's Olympic Games, the Chinese Winter Olympic Organizing Committee has also put the concept of "sustainable development" into the construction of the venues and surrounding areas of the Winter Olympic Games, which has been highly recognized by the International Olympic Committee. This was highly recognized by the International Olympic Committee. The British magazine Nature praised the efforts of the Beijing Winter Olympics to achieve carbon neutrality in this article: "The Beijing Winter Olympics have taken much more measures to reduce emissions than previous Winter Olympics, with measures to achieve carbon neutrality in the use of original venues, renewable energy and green equipment procurement" [11].

In addition to the sports competitions, the opening and closing ceremonies have always been the highlight of the Olympic Games, and successful opening and closing ceremonies not only provide a joyful celebration for the sports competitions, but also showcase the national culture of the host country and express the host country's warm welcome to the guests. The opening and closing ceremonies of the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games were not only innovative, adding technological elements, but also expressing a symbolic wish for world unity and friendship, based on the romance and poetry of China, which was amazing. For the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, NPR reported, "It was a dazzling and exciting opening ceremony that showcased the energy and hipness of China's youth". The Guardian, one of the UK's top three newspapers, also compiled a report of 11 high points from the stunning opening ceremony [12]. For the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, the Washington Post praised in its report, "In the opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China sought common ground with the Western world. For the 2022 Winter Olympics, China's common ground with the Western world has certainly deepened, and

the closing ceremony was" a futuristic performance. CNBA also used the word "stunning" to describe the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics. At the end of the closing ceremony, the British newspaper The Guardian quoted IOC President Bach as saying, "The Olympic spirit can only shine so brightly if the Chinese people can set the stage in such a brilliant and safe way" [13]. On the one hand, it praised China's efforts in this Olympic Games, and on the other hand, it congratulated the perfect ending of this Winter Olympic Games.

Negative coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in the Western media. The positive coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics by the international media listed in the previous section of this chapter confirms this, but some Western media have not given up on the opportunity offered by this globally-anticipated sporting event, and are still making ulterior motives for their lack of negative coverage of China during this Olympic cycle.

On the eve of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, the overall color of the Western media coverage has been quite negative. On July 31, 2015, Beijing's bid for the Winter Olympics was successful, and the Daily Mail's Sports News reported the news that Beijing had beaten Kazakhstan to host the Games despite the fact that artificial snow would be used [14]. As a twist, "artificial snow" seems to be the main focus of this story. Regarding artificial snow, the Daily Mail says: "Winter sports experts warn that fake snow creates a harder surface that is more dangerous for jumping and landing. ... It's dangerous for athletes – and people have died. – Some people have already died", such seemingly scientific reports are ridiculous. At the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, which preceded the Beijing Winter Games, the Western media not only did not reject manmade snow, but praised it, such as what USA Today reported: "...manmade snow is wetter and denser, creating an ideal surface for skiers and ensuring that the snow system is uniform throughout the venue" [15]. In fact, the artificial snow used in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics is not only high quality, green, non-toxic and non-hazardous, but also more stable than the natural snow with its variable physical properties, which can be applied to various events and tracks. During the competition, the snow was also well received by many athletes. Bernhard Roussi, chairman of the FIS Alpine Ski Committee, told reporters after receiving feedback from athletes that "skiing on this artificial snow is easy": "I think it's as good as heaven for skiers to ski on this artificial snow" [16].

With the official start of the Winter Olympics, negative coverage in the Western media has centered on the "opening ceremony". Vanessa Friedman,



editor-in-chief of the fashion section of the New York Times, even took the lead in the coverage of the Winter Olympics, smearing China from a tricky angle of “costume design”. Vanessa used the theme of “Reviewing the Costumes of the Winter Olympics Delegations” to comment on the costumes of the delegations at the opening ceremony, but when it came to the Chinese team, she did not talk about the style and color scheme of the costumes, but instead sarcastically and in a very oriented manner: “China is the only country that uses costumes to distinguish between male and female athletes”. Instead, he sarcastically said, “China is the only country that uses clothing to differentiate between male and female athletes”, trying to discredit China from the gender issue of “gender equality”. But viewers soon noticed that the U.S. delegation’s men’s and women’s uniforms also had different styles and color schemes, while Vanessa praised her country’s uniforms. This ridiculous report by the New York Times caused a lot of debate among netizens around the world, who expressed their support for China and criticized the Times for its biased and inaccurate reporting.

The “Xinjiang issue” has also been a common political topic in Western media speculation about the Beijing Winter Olympics. While cross-country skier Dinigel Yilamjiang from Xinjiang and Nordic biathlete Zhao Jiawen from Heilongjiang were the main torchbearers for the Games, Dinigel’s Xinjiang Uyghur identity was questioned and maligned by the Western media. The New York Times described the main torchbearer as follows: China provocatively chose to have an athlete with a Uyghur name help light the flame. The implication is that Dinigel is just an “actor” with a Uighur name. The Wall Street Journal also made an absurdly ridiculous report about Dinigel as the main torchbearer: “A Uighur skier became the face of the Winter Olympics in China, but the next day she disappeared from the spotlight”. A similar report in Britain’s Daily Mail stated, “The face of China’s Winter Olympics, a 20-year-old Uyghur ski farrier ‘disappears’ after finishing 43rd in her debut”. In fact it was not a “provocative” choice for Dinigel to be the torchbearer in the first place. In terms of the identity of the athlete, Dinigel won the silver medal in the women’s individual short distance at the FIS Beijing Cross-Country Skiing Points Race in 2019, which is the first time a Chinese athlete has stood on the podium in an international cross-country skiing competition and is fully qualified to be the main torchbearer; in terms of the historical and cultural background related to the Winter Olympics, Dinigel’s hometown in the Altai region in northern Xinjiang is the place where human skiing originated. In terms of the historical and cultural background

of the Winter Olympics, Dinigel’s hometown in the northern Xinjiang region is the origin of human skiing. Secondly, apart from the identity of the main torchbearer, Dinigel, like other athletes, is an ordinary participant in the Winter Olympics, and she does not need the aura implied by the Western media. The Mail’s reporter turned off the TV and found that all the athletes had ‘disappeared’ [16].

The epidemic prevention and control policy regarding the Winter Olympics has also been much criticized. In preparation, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Winter Olympics has planned an unprecedented set of epidemic prevention policies, requiring strict enforcement of quarantine, vaccination and other standards, and has announced that tickets will not be sold to foreign visitors, an important part of ensuring the smooth running of the Winter Olympics, but also a serious challenge. This is a far cry from the perception and practice of the US and Western countries, and has been used as a “talking point” by the British and US media to attack China, emphasizing the strong control of the Chinese government and the risks under this policy, as well as the discontent and inconvenience it may cause. CNN also commented on the Chinese government’s vaccination policy, expressing alarm at the severe restrictions on the movement of athletes in the early stages, while accusing China’s official media of being eager to spread positive comments and completely failing to report criticism from athletes. The German newspaper Die Zeit was even harsher in its assessment of Beijing’s virus policy, using the story of one athlete – Eric Frenzel – to voice complaints and accusations about the policy, portraying the isolation suffered by the positive athlete as unfortunate and painful and painful, and that “11 days of isolation must have had a significant impact on the 2014 and 2018 Olympic champion” to the extent that he was unable to win.

In addition, Western media have expressed distrust of the Chinese government, fearing cybersecurity and espionage by suspecting possible security flaws in China’s Olympic apps. On the one hand, foreign countries restrict their athletes from using the digital yuan. Among other things, CNN also mentioned its negative attitude towards the effectiveness of digital currency propaganda, arguing that the Chinese government’s efforts to showcase the digital yuan internationally will fall flat due to the limited number of participants in the Olympics. On the other hand, foreign media questioned the content of videos released by people involved in the Olympic Games outside of China about the face recognition system at the entrance to the Winter Olympic Village and venues: the threat of collecting face information to personal information security.



Analysis of the characteristics of negative reports in Western media related to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

The current international public opinion environment is very complicated, and according to the contents listed in the previous article, although some western media have made true reports and affirmed China's performance in the face of the impeccable fact that China successfully held the Winter Olympics, and the negative situation of China in international public opinion has improved through the successful holding of the Winter Olympics, negative reports in western media still exist and are not a minority. Accordingly, this paper summarizes the characteristics of some Western media's negative reports on the Winter Olympics.

First of all, the content of the Western media reports on the Winter Olympic Games is characterized by distortion of facts. As shown in the previous article, the artificial snow used in the Winter Olympics was approved by international experts, whether from the perspective of quality, safety, environmental protection and green, or the attitude of the International Olympic Committee and the actual feelings of the athletes, the artificial snow used in China has provided stable and high quality snow service for the Winter Olympics, but the western media still use words such as "fake snow" and "dangerous". Fake snow", "dangerous" and other words, negative reports without factual support. For the perfect ending of the Winter Olympics, the Western media even reported that it was "an unhappy victory" and "the most controversial Olympic Games" with blinders on. However, the Western media distorted the facts and turned black and white to create rumors, and in order to discredit China's image, the Western media has abandoned the basic principles of media reporting.

Secondly, far-fetched is another major feature of the Western media's negative reports on the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. It has always been common for male and female athletes to have different costume designs, and more often than not, the different color schemes echo each other's symbolism, but in the Western media, they have forced a connection with "gender inequality". Likewise, while the main torchbearer is no longer covered by the media after he finishes the race, the ongoing and pending races are the focus of media coverage, and the Western media uses this to suggest that the Uyghur main torchbearer, Dinigel, is just an "actor" brought in by China. One can only say that it is difficult to connect the factual information with the message conveyed by the Western media in their reports, if not with ulterior motives.

In addition, the Western media are characterized by "double standards" in their reporting. Double standard means that two different or even opposite attitudes and evaluations are held for two different subjects under the same objective facts. In the same case of artificial snow, the Western media praised the previous PyeongChang Winter Olympics, but criticized and disapproved of the Beijing Winter Olympics; when introducing the costumes of the participating delegations, they did not mention the different color-coordinated costumes of the male and female athletes of the U.S. team, but far-fetchedly satirized the Chinese representatives for using different costumes to distinguish male and female athletes. From the point of view of objectivity and truthfulness, media reports should follow the principle of objectivity of dividing the two sides and not being biased, but the Western media smear China regardless of the principle of objectivity, but the eyes of the public are discerning, and such double standard behavior of the Western media is absurd and ridiculous in front of the facts.

Moreover, the content selection of Western media reports on the Winter Olympics is characterized by prominent politicization appeals. During the Beijing Winter Olympics cycle, the negative entry points of Western media coverage were often linked to the recent China-related policy pronouncements of their governments' long-standing negative China-related statements [17]. For example, on the eve of the Olympic Games, some Western countries boycotted the Beijing Winter Olympics on the basis of the "epidemic" and the so-called "human rights issues in Xinjiang". In recent years, the United States has accused China of "forced labor in Xinjiang" under the guise of "human rights" to suppress China. Therefore, before the Winter Olympics, the Western media's negative coverage of China's epidemic prevention policy was largely influenced by political bias. During the Winter Olympics, the Western media focused on the Uyghur athlete Dinigel as the main torchbearer, leading and implying that the "athlete with a Uyghur name" and "disappeared from the spotlight after the competition" were the main issues. "The Xinjiang issue". These reports fully demonstrate the characteristic of Western countries to convey their political interests through the choice of content in media reports.

Overall, the Western media's negative China-related coverage intends to put a crisis on China's national image, but the actual effectiveness of such coverage should be put into question, with the impact of the Western diplomatic boycott gradually fading from the public eye.



Strategies for dealing with negative Western media coverage

Strengthen the international communication capacity of Chinese mainstream media. Strengthening the international propaganda of China's mainstream media and making the world understand and know China through the international propaganda of mainstream media is the most direct and effective as well as the most important way. The international public opinion situation facing China is very serious, and we have no way to stop the Western media from disinformation and smear reports on China, but we can take the initiative to disseminate true information and positive propaganda by playing the central role of China's official mainstream media. Previously, the Chinese government has implemented the "Go Global Project" in the construction of official mainstream media, and built a strategic layout of international communication with traditional media as the strategic fulcrum and new media as the strategic support. However, the lack of international communication power and the lack of agenda-setting ability of the national mainstream media still limit the voice of Chinese international media, and they cannot grasp the right to define and use the news discourse in the communication process, and fail to effectively improve the Western society's understanding of China [18]. Therefore, the lack of international communication capacity of mainstream media is still an important reason that restricts Chinese media propaganda from "going global".

This paper argues that in order to enhance the propaganda of international media, grasp the news discourse in the process of international communication, and enhance the international communication ability of Chinese national mainstream media, it is necessary to: first, should build a team of international communication talents based on high level of professional quality and driven by innovation ability. Second, should increase the research on the law of international media communication, grasp the law of international media communication is conducive to Chinese media to take the initiative in international communication, grasp the right to speak, and promote the promotion of Chinese mainstream media propaganda efforts. Third, break through the circle of discourse expression, take the initiative to set issues. Our communication vision cannot be limited to spreading China itself, and we need to provide the international community with a communication option to understand the world. Taking the Beijing Winter Olympics as an example, we need to think about how

to use the Beijing Winter Olympics to express our own demands well, break the filter of Western media and the incomplete perception of China by foreign audiences, and create a value standard of our own for the Beijing Winter Olympics. Fourth, the media should also introduce new attempts in the form of foreign communication, increase interesting expressions, and promote people from different countries and ethnic backgrounds to enhance mutual trust and understanding and create emotional resonance. Fifth, the media should adhere to the orientation of humanistic concepts, prevent public opinion from being out of order, and infect the world audience with humanistic concerns. Since the deep-rooted prejudice and distortion of China in the Western mainstream media remains unchanged, we should realize that major events or activities organized by China in the future may again become a tool for the Western media to stigmatize China, and we should reduce the political color of foreign communication and direct the perspective of communication to the creative transformation of traditional Chinese culture and the promotion of common human values [19].

Play the role of government in guiding and making decisions in media coverage. Press release is an effective way to guide domestic and foreign public opinion [20]. First of all, the government should establish a sound information release mechanism, actively and proactively disclose information, coordinate the planning of release time, release content, release topic setting, etc., strengthen the interaction with foreign users, and use algorithms and other core intelligent push technology to accurately deliver information to the target audience [21]. Especially for such an important international sports event as the Winter Olympics, the government should play a leading role in setting the agenda, grasp the home advantage of the Winter Olympics, and actively deliver positive information. Secondly, the government should streamline the process of international public opinion crisis response mechanism, select and train high-level professionals for large sporting events such as the Winter Olympics, establish a special public opinion crisis response team, eliminate unnecessary processes in the public opinion crisis response mechanism, implement information sharing in the whole process, avoid affecting the response efficiency and effectiveness of response in the process of uploading and transmitting, save time and cost by streamlining the process, and provide timely response to public opinion crisis. By streamlining the process, we can save time and cost and respond to and deal with public opinion crises in a timely manner.



Strengthen cooperation with international media to enhance soft power. Strengthening international cooperation is also one of the effective ways to deal with the negative coverage of China in Western media. First of all, to innovate the theory and practice of international communication, it is not enough to rely on Chinese media's own efforts, but needs the joint participation of the world's media, through the harmony and resonance of different levels, to form a pluralistic pattern of polyphonic communication [22], so as to achieve the overall optimization of the international communication system, and then through the whole to drive the improvement of each country's international communication capacity and the optimization of the communication structure. Strengthening cooperation with international media is conducive to the Chinese media's awareness of cultural differences at home and abroad, which can not only avoid the adverse effects caused by misunderstanding due to cultural differences, but also enable the media to fully understand the interests and adaptation styles of foreign audiences when setting the agenda, so as to create a Chinese image that people around the world can aspire to and appreciate in the process of international communication, and let people around the world actively understand and listen to Chinese stories, instead of passive acceptance of the negative guidance of the Western mainstream media.

In the face of the ever-renewing "China threat theory" and "Russia threat theory", China and Russia should strengthen media cooperation, jointly face the hegemony of Western media, and jointly counter the distorted interpretation of China and Russia by Western media. The two countries should strengthen media cooperation to confront the hegemony of the Western media, to counter the distorted interpretation of China and Russia by the Western media, and to make efforts to spread an objective image of the country. As the collision between China and the West is intensifying, the competition and conflict between the two countries in the field of "soft power" will also intensify, and breaking the hegemony of the Western public opinion will be an important problem for the media of China and Russia. At present, the media cooperation between the two countries has a good basis in reality, and they should cooperate together to improve their soft power. On the one hand, China-Russia media cooperation has the basis of exchange platforms. Chinese mainstream media, represented by China Central Radio and Television, Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, etc., and Russian media, such as All-Russia State Television and Radio Corporation (ВГТРК), Rossiya Segodnya (Россия

Сегодня), etc., have carried out various forms of cooperation, such as joint interviews, information products exchange, joint publications and APPs. On the other hand, Russian-Chinese media cooperation is based on material activities. For example, based on the comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and China, the two sides have carried out a series of international cooperation projects on "One Belt, One Road" and the Russian-Chinese Winter Youth Games.

Firstly, Chinese and Russian media should set diverse news topics, comprehensively reflect the multipolarity and cultural pluralism of the world, and present a relatively objective and realistic world to the audience. Second, Chinese and Russian media should improve the quality of communication products, enhance international communication capacity and international competition, and realize the complementary advantages of resources. In addition, China and Russia should use the media as a mediator to comprehensively promote exchanges and mutual trust, solidify the foundation of Sino-Russian friendship and public opinion, explore cultural resonance points between China and Russia, and actively innovate media cooperation models. Fourth, we should improve the cooperation mechanism, promote the construction of new media platforms, establish a fair and reasonable new order of international information dissemination, and lay a solid foundation for the media and do of both countries. Finally, we should firmly grasp the realistic basis of media propaganda. During the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, President Xi Jinping and President Putin jointly announced the launch of the 2022–2023 "China-Russia Sports Exchange Year", which is the first time for the two countries to hold a national annual event with the theme of sports, and the two countries should seize this opportunity of the times to jointly improve the level of competitive sports in winter sports in China and Russia, promote sports and cultural exchanges and interaction between the two sides, and write a new era. The two countries should seize this opportunity to improve the level of Russian-Chinese winter sports, promote cultural exchange and interaction, write a new chapter of Sino-Russian friendship and cooperation in the new era, and respond to the stigmatizing reports of Western media with strength. In addition, due to the war between Russia and Ukraine, Russian athletes have been unable to participate in major sporting events in the world and Russia has been excluded from major sporting events. In order to change the negative image of Russia and China in the Western media, Russia and China should respond to Putin's initiative to follow the BRICS Games model



created by the BRICS countries by organizing the SCO Games and establishing a sports federation of SCO countries to break the international blockade.

Make full use of the self-publishing platform.

In recent years, with the popularization of network communication devices and breakthroughs in network technology, China's self-media has entered a period of rapid development. Compared with traditional media, self-media spreads faster and has a richer and more diverse form of communication. Take Weibo as an example, many foreign athletes have registered their personal accounts on Weibo, and we can see the interaction between these athletes and domestic and foreign netizens on Weibo. Chinese media can also develop international communication channels and make full use of some domestic self-media platforms to establish official certified accounts for international communication. On the one hand, self-media has the characteristics of fast college communication, in the face of Western media's disinformation and smear reports on China, China can respond in time through self-media platforms, correct the untrue content and explain the ambiguous parts, so as to improve China's international media's public opinion crisis response mechanism. Secondly, self-media has a wide audience, rich and diverse communication methods, and vivid images.

Based on the above, we will draw conclusions. First, despite the boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics by some Western countries before the opening of the Winter Olympics, the Western media's attention to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has also risen with the Winter Olympics. The research and analysis in this paper reveals that although China's successful hosting of the Beijing Winter Olympics has been highly evaluated and praised by the International Olympic Committee and many international media, during this Olympic cycle, the Western media still carried out many negative reports involving China, discrediting and stigmatizing China. These negative reports are characterized by distortion of facts and far-fetched arguments that violate the basic principles of news reporting, and are accompanied by political guidance and political appeal purposes of Western countries.

Secondly, the phenomenon of constant politicization of sports is getting more and more serious nowadays, and the Olympic Games, as one of the grandest global sports events, is also a stage for cultural display and exchange among countries. Its great influence also makes it gradually become the focus of international political attention. For the host country, hosting the Olympic Games is a window for national soft power construction and national image shaping, while for other countries, the

Olympic Games is an opportunity to assert national political demands. Double standards have become an important diplomatic tool for Western countries today, selective morality and political amnesia have become the hallmarks of those insidious critics, and such major international sporting events as the Olympic Games have become tricks for European and American politicians to "politicize sports" under the guise of human rights, democracy and multicultural tolerance. There is no doubt that this is a dirty political purpose to tarnish the sporting event. In the case of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, for example, the Western media, through its negative coverage of China, echoed the country's anti-China political rhetoric and advocacy, trying to lead the audience to accept and endorse its political demands. Although the Winter Olympics are over, history and the past can still be an object of political manipulation by the media. When non-Western countries like China and Russia hold other major international sporting events in the future, they need to plan ahead, both in terms of media response and national image building. China and Russia can consider how to cooperate with international media on strengthening international and domestic public opinion monitoring, analyzing public opinion dynamics, and evaluating reporting effects, and jointly establish a negative public opinion response mechanism to guide international and domestic public opinion in a positive and healthy direction.

In addition, China's own international media communication ability also has much room for improvement and the need for improvement. Being in a disadvantageous position in international public opinion, we need to clarify, refute and respond to the malicious smears by the media of Western countries, but it is not enough to deal with them passively, only to take the initiative to speak out. Only by showing the world a real, democratic and peaceful international image of a great power and telling a good Chinese story can we improve China's international public opinion environment more strongly and let the world people know China better and more truly. To do the above, China's existing international media capacity is far from enough, so we need to strengthen Sino-foreign media cooperation and strive to enhance the authority and influence in the international public opinion arena, break the "discourse hegemony" and "ideological bias" formed by Western media for a long time through international media cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation between Chinese and foreign media and strive to enhance their authority and influence in the international public opinion arena, to break the "discourse hegemony" and "ideological bias" formed by the



Western media for a long time through international media cooperation, and to promote the formation of an objective and fair, positive and healthy global public opinion ecology.

From the above three points, it is necessary to improve China's international public opinion crisis response mechanism, strengthen China's international communication capacity, and complete the transformation of China's international media communication from "passive response" to "active propaganda". In this regard, China can make concerted efforts in four areas: strengthening the international communication capacity of mainstream media; playing the role of the government in guiding and making decisions; strengthening cooperation with international media; and expanding channels and making full use of self-media platforms.

The motto "More United" was added to the Olympic motto by the International Olympic Committee in 2021, and in recent years there has been a growing call from people around the world for "sport without borders" and "a ban on the over-politicization of sport". In recent years, people around the world have become increasingly vocal about "sports without borders" and "banning the over-politicization of sport". Reasonable and positive media coverage can help the world audience to better understand sports competitions, but the use of sports competitions for malicious smears and disinformation to achieve political purposes is outrageous. A look at the 1980 Moscow Olympics, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and even the just-concluded 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar shows that media coverage of non-Western countries by Western countries is still very strongly politically biased, and the negative public opinion guided by such political bias has caused serious damage to the international image of the countries hosting major events. The negative public opinion guided by such political bias has caused serious damage to the international image of the countries hosting major events. While global sports events are an important opportunity for countries around the world to showcase themselves to the international community, they are not a reason to over-politicize sports. Appropriate political participation is conducive to strengthening communication among countries around the world through sports events, promoting world peace and common development, but excessive political participation will only make sports events lose their original value and go against the spirit of the Olympic Games. Therefore, to prevent excessive politicization of sports and reduce the negative impact of politics on sports events, the joint efforts of all countries in the world are also needed.

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