The Interactions Between Online Public Opinion and Chinese Diplomacy: Online Nationalism in East Asia

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Abstract

As citizen sovereignty is becoming more salient on the new technological information platform, public opinion is playing a more influential role with regards to the formation and effects of diplomatic policies. This study analyses the mode as well as the pros and cons of the interactions between online public opinion and Chinese diplomacy through analyzing cases of online nationalism in East Asia, and exploring online public opinion's impact on Chinese diplomacy.

Introduction

It is now a ubiquitous phenomenon to express nationalistic sentiments through the Internet. The definition of "online nationalism" has been extended from the notion of "nationalism," to refer to the transmission of a nation's nationalistic or patriotic speeches, emotions, and trends of thought through cyberspace (Breslin and Shen, 2010); consequently, online public opinion can be formed and drive real actions that disrupt the stability of Chinese society. According to the 31st Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (CNNIC, 2013), by the end of 2012, the number of Chinese netizens reached 564 million. An enormous number of these netizens pay attention to news and current affairs and expresses their opinions online, forming a "new opinion class." They "make gaffes, bursting with passion and cohering with consensus, ferment emotions, induce actions and then affect the

society" (YNET, 2009).

This article uses representative cases of online nationalism from East Asia to discuss the mode and effects of the interactions between online public opinion and Chinese diplomacy, in order to critically understand the dynamic role of the public and online tools in terms of diplomatic strategies. In this article, China is the research objective and a site which reflects a place with diverse ideas. On the one hand, from a subjective perspective, the "new opinion class" is patriotic to some extent. Members of this class strongly believe that "the motherland should not be upset by unkindness" (YNET, 2009) and are willing to improve Chinese diplomacy through their own speeches and actions. On the other hand, speaking objectively, the mode, process, and effects of the interactions between the public and Chinese diplomacy are complex, changing alongside the gradual evolution of the shapes of social media.

For the purpose of increasing study credibility, a blended qualitative and quantitative approach was used. This triangulation method combines two or more methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives, data sources, investigators, and analysis methods. Typically, Thoughts of international relations on the interplay of public opinion and diplomacy were used to understand this particular subject of online nationalism. Certain cases have been included, such as Chinese netizens' opposition to Japan's aim to become a standing member of the United Nations Security Council, and Chinese and Korean netizens verbally attacking each other due to nationalist sentiment. To obtain more comprehensive information, the research period takes place between 2003 and 2009; a number of recent events, such as disputes over the Diaoyu Islands (known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan) have been omitted.

The Positive Effects of Online Public Opinion on Diplomacy

Support from Online Public Opinion Can Increase Diplomatic Leeway

When a government wishes to make a stand, they ought to avoid rigid responses in order to increase diplomatic leeway. However, sophisticated and well-worded responses or declarations can carry less weight and strength than is required in such circumstances (Roper, 2002).

Online public opinion can sometimes have a different effect. It can help to support the government's stand through expressing opinions in a tactful and passionate manner. The advantage of online public opinion is that it can effectively and powerfully transmit the demands and emotions of the Chinese people without taking formal diplomatic responsibilities (Li, 2007). As such, the government and the public opinion can supplement each other to convey a united voice for the nation. In addition, although there is only one stand that the government takes, netizens are able to freely offer their various opinions and portray themselves as "eagles" or "pigeons" (Simon, 2013); their attitudes, to some extent, convey to the world that Chinese citizens have different ideas and make different choices, and that the current policies are not fixed. Therefore, the various voices may further catalyze the success of the nation's foreign policies.

While online public opinion is increasingly influential in terms of changing China's politics and diplomacy, any country, which ignores the voices of the country's civil society, would incur "political costs" (Roper, 2002). As one of China's neighbors and an old "rival," Japan has long learnt about the power which Chinese citizens possess through the Internet. It is well established that China's tough stand towards Japan is not entirely an active choice made by the government, but has a firm emotive base among the people. On December 30, 2003, a report

authored by Sankei Shimbun titled "A New Phenomenon Emerged on Japan-China Relationships" argued, In China, we have witnessed that an increasing number of anti-Japanese websites have emerged. More than 70 similar web-links, including the homepage, are extended from the major anti-Japanese site: 'Patriots Alliance.' People make comments on the official website in order to have a significant impact on government-owned media and the country's diplomatic strategy for Japan. Most of the anti-Japanese websites in China have been built over the past two years. Speculating from the open number of members, there are around 100,000 regular members on all of these sites. Even China's State Council and Ministry of Foreign Affairs have begun to react to this online public opinion sensitively…"There has been an online movement to fight against using Japanese Shinkansen technology on the Beijing-Shanghai high-speed railways; this movement gathered almost 80,000 signatures during a one-week period. As a result, the Chinese government cannot make a final decision about this issue. Despite President Hu Jintao attaching high importance on relations between China and Japan, the exchange of high profile visits have never bore fruit due to the concern of the disapproval voices of the online public opinion… A Chinese official stated, "I think I can understand why Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi did visit Yasukuni Shrine; it was Japanese public opinion which forced him to make this decision. But the Chinese public could not be persuaded to accept Junichiro Koizumi's choice. He implied that online public opinion cannot be ignored. In 2005, the effect of online nationalism was evident in relation to the anti-Japanese protests among Chinese citizens. A campaign initiated and organized through the Internet, gathered nearly a hundred million signatures which opposed Japan becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a proposal which received considerable sympathy and backing from citizens and governments around the world (Sina, 2005). These campaigns have to some extent

assisted in weakening Japan's chances of joining the Security Council; it also assisted the Chinese government, as it was not forced to use the Librum veto in order to block Japan's proposal (ibid.).

Online Public Opinion Pressures Foreign Governments to Adopt New Solutions

On occasions when online public opinion is absent, the voices of civil society is not always effective in influencing the diplomatic decisions of foreign governments (Lagerkvist, 2005). Foreign governments tend to regard the voices of the Chinese media and civil society as being identical to that of the national government; consequently, they only need to deal with Chinese authorities without considering the opinions of Chinese citizens. As such, when the Chinese government develops some diplomatic policy which consists with Chinese civil society, it will again be treated by foreign governments as a pure governmental behavior lacking civil support (ibid.). The differences lie in the fact that a bureaucratic decision can be adjusted or altered due to a change of strategy or by negotiating with other parties; yet if foreign governments want to change diplomatic policy which is genuinely approved and promoted by most citizens, then they have to pay more "political costs" and adopt more sophisticated public or risk relations methods (Trager and Vavreck, 2011).

The Korean peninsula has provided us with many good cases to examine this phenomenon. During the North Korean nuclear crisis, foreign countries witnessed a number of events where thousands of North Korean people gathered together to support their government; this was transmitted through the official media and propaganda system (Hecker, 2010). However, what appears at the surface may not be the truth. As citizens face restrictions on freely using the media, interactions between the government and civil society can sometimes be problematic (ibid.). The nuclear

policy was initially developed by the country's high profile policy makers. Policies like this can be altered due to financial aid, military pressure, or the leaders' own considerations. When the original policy was changed, those who were supportive of the policy stayed silent. On the contrary, in the case of the Japan and South Korea island dispute, people did not remain silent. The public transmitted their opinions through the media and the Internet, placing great pressure on Japan (Quintana, 2012). The Korean public wanted to convey to Japan and the world that there was strong public support on the issue and the government would not easily compromise or negotiate on the matter. As a result, the two countries not only agreed to negotiate at the governmental level but also at the public level. In addition, the public opinions of both countries influenced each other. At the same time, Japanese people noticed Korean people's strong attitude towards the issue; this made the public as well as the media rethink South Korea-Japan relations and the potential solutions for the situation. These reflections had an impact on the Japanese government's attitude.

In 2005, there was significant opposition, both online and off-line, to Japan becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The then Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, argued that blaming each other was not a solution. He expected to meet the then President, Hu Jintao, at the Asia and Africa Summit at the end of April 2005; he was not expecting an apology for the Chinese attack on the Japanese Embassy. As reported by Agence France Presse (AFP), the position that Junichiro took was to "actively hand in the olive branch" (Sohu, 2005). On April 22nd, Junichiro apologized to the world for the historical crime of invasion of China.

It is evident that using online tools during the process when elite diplomacy is being transformed into public diplomacy, a kind of idiopathic thinking emerges within civil society. In addition, the actions which form public opinion promote, to a

large extent, diplomatic efforts and increase the effectiveness of diplomatic activities.

Online Public Opinion "Causes Trouble" for Diplomacy

Every rising power is deeply concerned at heart of its last failure due to pathos consciousness, to some extent. Pathos consciousness is a kind of consciousness that emerges when a self-recognized superior culture meets setbacks or obstacles (Li, 2011). When a culture is stimulated by outside factors, out of the need to oppose or neutralize others, people from that culture will form either or both of the following emotions: a stronger sense of national pride, or a rejection of the competitors (ibid.). Chinese people learn and embrace their historical moments with honor or shame. Thus, this kind of pathos consciousness has always existed in their hearts.

The Pathos Consciousness under the Online "Group Polarization"

Currently, there are still no social contracts or complete legislation pertaining to cyberspace. Consequently, it is easy for someone to avoid laws and individual responsibility. For instance, people who lack moral consciousness can irresponsibly attack or even slander others online. Thus, it is possible to see the positive aspects of online public opinion as well as its negative impact brought about by unregulated anonymity. After all, the Internet is like a square where thousands of people gather, and while some individual users use it responsibly, together the users form a crowd where individual responsibility decreases or even disappears (Le Bon, 1994). Some people surf the net and participate in these events only because they want to express their offensive feelings using a fake identity, so they can avoid personal responsibility. Moreover, based on the sub-consciousness of a person who seeks more attention than others, some even would take extreme actions and speak

inappropriately (Goffman, 1973). As such, expressions and actions, which stem from safeguarding the interests of the state, may become extreme and violent and move beyond the edge of rationality; also, the pathos consciousness can potentially lead to violence. In many cases when there are disputes between China and Japan, irrespective of whether it is about land issues, business cooperation, commercial trade, movies or actors, much opposition can be seen in China, some of which can be violent. These examples of irrational behavior reflect the state of extreme nervousness of a restless crowd.

Moreover, the inherent "group polarization" among humans is deepened within the context of an online platform and may help fuel the negative aspect of public opinion. Cass R. Sunstein has argued that "group polarization" refers to "something very simple: after deliberation, people are likely to move toward a more extreme point in the direction to which the group's members were originally inclined" (Sunstein, 2009: 60). He further elaborated, "With respect to the Internet and new communications technologies, the implication is that groups of like-minded people, engaged in discussion with one another, will end up thinking the same thing that they thought before – but in more extreme form" (ibid.: 60-61).

Therefore, as the Internet has an impact on the formation of public opinion, the phenomenon of group polarization would assist to enhance extreme emotions and actions. Furthermore, this phenomenon is not uncommon; rather it is pervasive and has the potential to develop into another complex called "cyber-balkanization" (Ingenito, 2010). The notion uses the fragile and dissociated status on the Balkan Peninsula after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia to describe the coexistence of separated and hostile groupuscules and small cycles constituted by people with similar interests (ibid.). On this matter, the political scientist, Robert D. Putnam (2000: 178), has illuminated, "Real-world interactions often force us to deal with

diversity, whereas the virtual world may be more homogeneous, not in demographic terms, but in terms of interest and outlook."

Under the influence of the formation mechanism of group polarization, it is easy for sentimental, hateful, and even anti-social crowds/groups to connect with and impress each other. Members of these groups are always over-confident about themselves and despise others; they may resort to violence and fill parts of cyberspace with bias opinions and stubbornness. As a result, the cyber emotions may, in some cases, overflow to the real world and threaten the harmony of the society. This issue needs to be given serious attention in China since the country comprises 56 different nationalities and is constantly meeting secession crises (such as Tibet, Sinkiang, and Taiwan who all want independence from China). While nationalism is indeed important to ensure unification, the various ethnic features of the country makes this challenging.

By examining the impact of Chinese public opinion on diplomacy, we can see that the Internet has been used to promote extreme emotions and online violence. Citizens who advocate peace and negotiations can sometimes be threatened and abused online. And some posts calling for violence may be top – allocated and intensify the national stereotype and bias. In addition, political portals and websites involving foreign affairs tend to link similar-opinioned networks/news and avoid contact with opposite-opinioned networks/news. Thus, netizens who obtain their information from certain websites will not have access to diverse perspectives; this could lead to people developing extreme and uninformed views.

The Obstructive Effects of Online Public Opinion on Diplomacy

National sentiments based on pathos consciousness, which tend to foster extreme views, can be expressed directly through radical language and actions.

This process has the potential to promote the development of rival sentiments.

This is generally inconsistent with peaceful diplomatic principles. Sophisticated diplomatic principles are based on reasonable analysis (Greenwood, 1991). In some situations, governments choose to keep silent or temporarily retreat to wait for an appropriate moment to act. When citizens engage in extreme behaviors, the country's international relations and/or national image may be interrupted or harmed. This kind of pathos consciousness will be enhanced in the online environment.

The following are four obstructive effects of online public opinion on public diplomacy in the context of East Asia.

Over-sensitivity

In July 2006, NetEase Inc., one of the most important Internet content providers, developed a network game called "Fantasy Westward Journey."[i] Several patriotic netizens condemned the game, as they discovered the background image in Jianye City's yamen (a government office in feudal China) is similar to Japan's national flag. This discovery was transmitted speedily through online networks and many gamers thought themselves "humiliated" (QQ Games, 2006). During the height of the online demonstration, the game could not be smoothly operated. The Central China Television Station anchor, Zhang Yue, once was accused of being a "traitor" as she wore a white scarf with brown polka dots (People.com.cn, 2004). These incidents had a negative impact on the anchor and Chinese people's perceptions; they also affected the international community's views of China's grassroots. There were more cases like this. On September 16th, 2003, several Japanese requested sexual service at Zhuhai International Grand Hotel (in Guangdong province) (Sina, 2003); this became a public safety affair. However,

several netizens concerned about this issue voiced their views via online platforms; as a result, the issue was transformed into a colossal foreign relations issue.

The Internet is borderless and limitless. Chinese netizens' irrational behavior may, to some extent, lead China and other countries to make inappropriate decisions. This is especially likely when the country in demonized by the Western media who are motivated by commercial and political profits; unfair public opinion may influence the public's image, the overall national image, and soft power around the globe.

Extreme Words and Deeds

In the context of issues affecting China-Japan relations, we have to firstly keep in mind the miseries that both countries have suffered in the past. Given that China was once the invaded party, extreme reactions out of pathos consciousness can easily emerge among Chinese citizens in the real world as well as cyber space. Aided by a system of anonymity, individuals can use the Internet to express offensive views and attack others; such extreme views lack rationality or theoretical basis. During the recent Diaoyu Islands disputes, a number of extreme Internet users in China unbelievably called for the country to exert force in order to capture the islands; their posts and articles expressing anti-Japanese sentiment have given rise to new hatred.

In the real world, such extreme speeches are not as common. Moreover, such harmful words rarely lead to action (Goffman, 1973). However, this behavior still transmits somewhat false information, resulting in intensifying or worsening the disputes and confrontations. As previously mentioned, calls for violence and war to solve foreign issues or avenge insults were particularly irresponsible and not tolerated by the international community. Such speculation and biased criticism, could lead one to question the character of Chinese people.

Through online tools and social networks, citizens around the globe have initiated purposeful unofficial demonstrations, petitions, and civil movements in order to influence national politics and international affairs. While globalization has increased problems at the international level, traditional nation-states are meeting more and more challenges that are hard to resolve (Brinkman and Brinkman, 2008). Therefore, traditional diplomatic solutions and strategies based on short-sighted, selfish, and exclusive national/patriotic interests are being abandoned as a result of pressure from rational intellectuals and public opinion. A cross-national and cross-class unified world has been imagined and accepted by an increasing number of people; as a result, people have begun to take action and find groups based on the transnational interests or general humanitarianism. In this context, it is difficult for a nation's extreme views and stubbornness to be justified by "national interests"; such views will be condemned by the international society. The declining image of a nation negatively influences its diplomatic relations.

Hacking

According to Fang Binxing, an academic from the Chinese Academy of Engineering, Chinese and foreign hackers are not of the same character. (Sina, 2009) Foreign hackers tend to be more "brave" as they are less concerned about the authorities; their objective is to fool authorities. However, Chinese hackers are different, on the one hand, they are willing to do as their foreign counterparts, on the other hand, they are afraid of Chinese government (ibid.). Therefore, with regards to public diplomacy, they are motivated by patriotism and try hard to find connections between politics and diplomacy with regards to hacking so as to disguise their illegal activities. In instances such as when the situation across the Taiwan Straits worsens, when Japanese leaders insist on visiting the Yasukuni war shrine or when the

Western media portray China in a negative light, hackers work together on joint hacking activities (ibid.)

From an external perspective, organized hacking activities have illustrated the strength of Chinese hackers; it seems they have been acquiesced by the government. However, research suggests that China is a victim of hacking and spying among developed countries (China.com, 2013). Among the puppet computers that are remotely controlled, the number is highest in China. Also, hacking from Chinese IP addresses may not be undertaken by Chinese people, but rather from the international community (ibid.).

While network safety is a worldwide problem, which has received substantial attention by researchers, it is still difficult to identify the offending country. Notions of so-called "Chinese hacker theory" or "Chinese network spying" has entered the public domain as the country's international image and interests have been negatively affected. For example, some American associations protest against Chinese hackers who invade in their everyday lives. The United States Congress once obstructed the White House and other American governments from purchasing Lenovo computers, as they were hacked by default. Also, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in the UK has warned its government and police that they should avoid updating networking facilities of Chinese brands (The Telegraph, 2009). Evidently, hacking is not only a technical problem; rather, it has the potential to influence public diplomacy. A single hacking activity, regardless of its aim, may damage relationships between countries.

Vicious Interactions

As has been discussed, pathos consciousness can lead to nationalism and the exclusion of others. In some extreme situations, this kind of pathos consciousness

can result in one's persistent complacency and insufficiently balanced on their own problems. If this continued, or even enlarged, there will be a vicious spiral between Chinese and foreign netizens.

On November 2008, the Korea Joongang Daily[ii] published research, which showed that relations between China and South Korea were worsening. It was reported that 59.8% of South Korean people held negative opinions with regards to China - South Korea relations, compared with 34.5% from the previous year. Further, it was reported that 16.4% of Chinese people held negative opinions with regards to China - South Korea relations; compared with 6.6% from the previous year. Baik Youngseo argued that the fast deterioration of China and South Korea relations was potentially influenced by online public opinion. He said, "Among Chinese and South Korean young adults, there is an increase in the number who hold negative attitudes towards each other… According to the analysis, one important reason lies in the proliferation of nationalism spread through the Internet" (Stnn.cc, 2008).

For example, some South Korea websites used the term "pleasant" to refer to the WenChuan earthquake; this triggered Chinese netizens' anger and resulted in attacks. Furthermore, the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), a South Korea TV station, negatively affected the public's expectations of the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony by broadcasting the detailed rehearsal the day before the event; this action was considered as lacking professional ethics and moral integrity. Also, on July 27th, 2004, the South Korean School of Traditions and Classics and the Civil Association for National Classics Movements called for an online campaign to attack several important Chinese portals. This movement, named as the "e-click movement," asked people to take action on July 29th, 2004. The movement's clear aim was to "inform the world that China is brutally pillaging our history"

(ChosunIlbo, 2004). After several rounds of unfriendly interactions, on February 10th, 2008, Chinese netizens applaud the burning of Sungnyemun/Namdaemun, South Korea's number one national treasure; this also resulted in increasing the indignation of South Korean people.

As the Internet is capable of transmitting information globally, inappropriate comments can be quickly disseminated around the world. The vicious interactions between Chinese and foreign netizens negatively affected China's international image and international relations.

The Effects of Online Public Opinion in the case of repeated games

On most occasions, the interactions between online public opinion and foreign relationships are not single games. Rather, they are dynamic and repeated games. After each diplomatic battle, governments analyze their competitors, including their citizen personality and public opinion, so as to estimate the real power and impact of the public on diplomacy (Coyne, 2010). This enables governments to alter their strategies during subsequent rounds of diplomatic contest; it also enables them to alter their approach, if necessary, with regards to addressing both existing and new problems. This is a commonly-used and continuous cycle.

Online public opinion derived from portals and social networks has become powerful given the increasing number of people engaging in such activities; it is influential enough to attract the worlds' attention. However, it has to be noted that online public opinion possess several characteristics, which prohibits its development. In order to explain this further, we will use China as a case study.

The Discrepancy Between Speech and Actions

Based on the language used in online forums, Chinese netizens are considered

as a radical group. During most confrontations between China and other countries, the Chinese public partakes in the fight against the foreign countries, including boycotting their commodities (Wang, 2006). It is important to critically analyze this phenomenon. On the one hand, many of their slogans or ideas are puerile and cannot be turned into actual actions. These "eye-to-eye" antagonistic attitudes and online activities are unrealistic. Furthermore, some netizens call for alliances with terrorists groups targeting Westerners, which makes their stand untenable given terrorism is both morally and legally unacceptable. On the other hand, there is always a discrepancy between their words and actions. After expressing their patriotism by resisting their diplomatic "rivals," the majority of this group, which comprises young adults aged between twenty and thirty, chooses to continue buying Japanese brand appliances, eating American food, watching Hollywood movies and Korean dramas, and traveling to the relevant countries. In other words, these people do not wish to take responsibility for their words and are not willing to take actions which correspondent to their statements. They simply wish to air their grievances without considering if their opinions can actually influence the public or even their own actions.

From a positive perspective, "saying without doing" illustrates the moderate temper of the Chinese people; this has originated from China's long history of absorbing different cultural elements from other nationalities (Xueli, 2009). This creates space for negotiation. From a negative perspective, "saying without doing" sometimes has an almost zero effect on the country's decision-making processes; furthermore,   foreign governments do not take public opinion into account even in cases when public opinion is contrary to their strategy. In addition, the contrast between speech and action leads more people to question the possibility of building a real public sphere, forming a public agenda, and leading public discourse through

online platforms.

The Rapid Pace of Attitude Change of Public Opinion

The attitude of Chinese netizens usually changes according to events or media publicity. The rapid change in public opinion gives the international community the impression that strong public opinions are not real or are controlled by the Communist Party of China (CPC). Thus, it is difficult for international decision makers to pay much attention to public opinion given its insubstantial ability to influence the development of foreign policy.

Different from the usual anti-Japanese sentiments, in 2007 and 2008, Chinese public opinion regarding Japan began to change. The fourth Sino-Japanese Joint Public Opinion Survey (China Daily, 2008), which was co-organized by the China Daily and Japan's Genron NPO and published by Tokyo, Japan in 2008, included the following question: "Has your impression of China-Japan relations become better or worse over the last year? (optional)"[iii] Among 1557 Chinese responders, 54.3% reported that they had "become better." In 2007, 47.5% of respondents believed that relations between China and Japan had "become better"; in 2006, only 28.0% of responders believed the relationship had "become better." Correspondingly, the number of Chinese people who thought the Sino-Japan relationship had "become better" increased. The proportion of ordinary citizens who believed that the relationship had "become better" increased from 23.2% to 51.2%; and the percentage of students, who were the main users of the Internet, and who held the same opinion, increased from 7.7% to 41.8%. In fact, we have acknowledged that there are still many historical, economic, cultural, and social obstacles, which have not been fundamentally resolved between the two countries. Therefore, how did this situation transpire? From the authors' point of view, one reason lies in the conciliatory

political environment; the other reason lies in the national media's propaganda. After Junichiro Koizumi's term came to an end in 2006, the countries' leaders arranged to meet each other; the media reported on the friendly meetings held between the two leaders. Subsequently, the Chinese people were satisfied that Shinzo Abe chose not to visit Yasukuni Shrine. Japan was very active in helping China recover from the Wenchuan earthquake. Online public opinion changes alongside, or sometimes even faster, than diplomatic strategies.

Interestingly, Japanese respondents gave quite different answers to the following question: "Has your impression of China-Japan relations become better or worse in the last year? (optional)" (ibid.). Over the last three years, Japanese people have consistently answered "become worse" (on average, 60% of respondents). Public opinion has not significantly altered during this period, as Japan's diplomatic activities towards China have been strategic. One possible reason for Japan leaders' choosing to improve Japan-China relations is based on its willingness to reduce diplomatic frictions when peace and harmony is needed. In addition, the friendly position adopted by Japan has helped to enhance its image in the international arena; consequently, it has won support from other countries. Some mass media organizations like to use "ironic" titles to refer to friendships between countries, such as a "diplomatic show" (Chinanews, 2013). Yet when "peace" transpires, some media outlets and/or individuals may attack the government for its weakness and ask the prime mister to be braver by doing something "real and not let the people down" (ibid.); sometimes, the Tibetan issue is emphasized. The actions of Japanese citizens through online networks, to some extent, assist the Japanese government to maintain its tough stance and express their true demands.

By contrasting public opinion in the two countries, we can see the rapid pace in which public opinion can change. In China, this change can sometimes be viewed

as being controlled by the national government. We can also see that independent public opinion, especially that which differs from the government, may help to convey the nation's real voice to the world. Government controlled opinions are would not be taken seriously.

To conclude, the opinion and participation of the public can help to legitimatize or/and motivate Chinese diplomacy to gain support and ultimately be successful; however, it can also obstruct the nation's ability to engage in negotiations or worsen its image. As online public opinion is often very emotive, involves the grassroots, and can be expressed anonymously, it does not always function appropriately or effectively. When online public opinion becomes very strong, it has the potential to become extreme (e.g., individuals may resort to hacking and launching vicious attacks); this may reduce diplomatic leeway and limit negotiating opportunities. When it becomes weak, it may be seen as being controlled and therefore uninfluential. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that online public opinion as an "obstructive assistant" is far more constructive to diplomacy and foreign affairs. The topic of this research requires further research. With the popularity of we media and social networks, there is ample information for scholars to continue exploring the impact of public opinion on diplomacy.

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i   http://xyq.163.com/

ii http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/

iii According to Sun Shangwu, Director, Chief Editor Office of the China Daily, and Kudo Taichi, Representative of Genron NPO of Japan, this public opinion survey was conducted simultaneously in China and Japan from late June to early July, 2008. In the survey, 1,557 urban residents from Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Chengdu, and Shenyang, and 1,037 college students in China were surveyed from Peking University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University and other two universities. The survey in China is by the Horizon Research Consultancy Group and the Institute of Social Science Survey, Peking University. In addition, 1,000 residents, and 400 academics in Japan were surveyed. Since the online demographic composition is quite similar, it is evident that survey results reflect online public opinion.