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# **Media, Masks, and Diplomacy: Xinhua's Global Communication Strategies: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

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## **Citation**

Monen, L. (2024). *Media, Masks, and Diplomacy: Xinhua's Global Communication Strategies: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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# Media, Masks, and Diplomacy: Xinhua's Global Communication Strategies

A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

MA Thesis

Asian Studies: Politics, Economy and Society of Asia

Supervisor: Professor Florian Schneider

1-7-2024

14.994 words (excluding appendices)

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## 1. Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 in late December 2019 marked a significant turning point in global health. COVID-19 rapidly spread from its origin in China's Hubei Province, evolving into a global pandemic. At the time of writing, the number of affected people had surpassed 770 million (WHO).

Amidst the global crisis, countries worldwide faced complex challenges. Coronavirus diplomacy emerged as countries used medical assistance to pursue foreign policy objectives and enhance their global image (Kobierecka and Kobierecki 2021). One notable method of coronavirus diplomacy is mask diplomacy. Mask diplomacy can be understood as an actor transferring medical supplies and immaterial resources, such as providing medical supplies and expertise to other nations (Wong 2020). China<sup>1</sup> has been at the forefront of mask diplomacy (Kobierecka and Kobierecki 2021). China's mask diplomacy intended to portray China as a trustworthy and essential global player (ibid). This strategy aligns with the broader concept of public diplomacy, a tool states use to manage and promote their image (d'Hooghe 2015).

China's state-owned news agency, Xinhua, played a significant role in promoting and shaping China's mask diplomacy narrative through its online videos. These videos served as a powerful tool for China to exert its influence internationally and showcase its efforts in combating the pandemic. Through these online videos, Xinhua highlighted the scale of China's mask diplomacy, emphasizing the provision of medical supplies, equipment, and expertise to countries in need. Furthermore, Xinhua used various narrative strategies to shape the perception of China's mask diplomacy. One of the key strategies employed was emphasizing the positive impact of China's aid on recipient countries. The videos showcased stories of gratitude from foreign leaders and citizens, highlighting how China's assistance had helped save lives and alleviate the burden on healthcare systems.

In today's digital era, social media platforms have profoundly reshaped the global communication landscape. Social media's influence is extended to areas such as political communication, economics, pop culture, and even international relations

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, "China" can be understood as the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP leads the country and makes the major decisions, and its ideology and policies dictate the nation's course.

(Crilleys et al. 2020). These platforms can enable rapid exchange of information and foster engagement via features promoting interaction, such as sharing, liking, and commenting on the media presented upon the individual. Farkas and Bene (2021: 121) illustrate that “visuals on social media have become part of political actors’ strategic toolkit.” The visual elements can resonate deeply with the audience, influencing their perceptions, emotions, and actions. Machin and van Leeuwen (2016: 243) add that “today, the power of governments is increasingly shared between government and media, and increasingly shifting from government to private capital, with complex relations of mutual dependence and complex tensions between these three.”

Given the aforementioned context, this thesis poses the following research question:

*How did Xinhua use visual discourses and strategies in its mask diplomacy videos on YouTube during the pandemic's initial phase?*

While studies have researched China’s coronavirus diplomacy and crisis communication<sup>2</sup>, very little research has analyzed Xinhua's external communication on mask diplomacy during the pandemic’s early days. To bridge this gap, this thesis will conduct a multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) on Xinhua's YouTube videos during the initial global spread of COVID-19. In doing such an analysis, I recognize that digital communication is multifaceted, encompassing not just text but visuals, sound, and other semiotic elements. The aim is to deepen the scholarly understanding of China's public diplomacy and external communication strategies by investigating this.

This thesis progresses as follows: firstly, I will provide a contextual background to situate the research question, where I will explore media communication in China, expanding the subject by discussing mask diplomacy, public diplomacy, power, and soft power. Secondly, I discuss the theory and the methodology of the analysis, followed by an analysis of Xinhua's videos. Finally, I will discuss my findings and conclude. Xinhua used various visual communication strategies, such as emphasizing aid-related activities and displaying national flags, and used four main discourses.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Verma (2020), Lee (2023), Yang and Chen (2021), Schneider (2021), and Koberiecka and Koberiecki (2021).

## 2. Understanding Media Communication in China

China's media landscape has been shaped by technological advances and the nation-state's increasing global influence. Understanding public diplomacy, communication, and global perception dynamics is important for analyzing Xinhua's mask diplomacy videos. This chapter explores China's media evolution, its role in shaping national identity<sup>3</sup>, and projecting its image. It also briefly discusses China's media modernization and Xinhua News Agency.

### 2.1 China's Propaganda Evolution

Despite expectations of decline following a potential crisis within the CCP, China's propaganda underwent significant transformations post-1989 (Brady 2009). Instead of diminishing, Chinese propaganda experienced a "rebirth," adopting Western<sup>4</sup> social control methods and communication techniques (ibid). This transformation aimed to shape public opinion and achieve key objectives, including emphasizing national unity, promoting economic growth, and upholding the existing political system. It marked a shift from a coercive ideology to a more persuasive approach (Fu, 2023; Brady, 2009).

Historically, the CCP has prioritized maintaining a positive global image, a goal dating back to the 1930s when China began publishing newspapers aimed at Western<sup>5</sup> audiences (Sun 2015). These publications aimed to communicate the CCP's revolutionary vision to the world. Xinhua also played a role in enhancing this narrative by introducing English-language broadcasts in the early 1940s (ibid). Despite these attempts, the impact on a global level remained limited. The founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 brought to light a notable challenge: despite its internal

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<sup>3</sup> Law (2013) defines national identity using Smith's (1991) concept. Smith's idea of national identity includes a collective belief in a historic homeland, shared myths and histories, a common public culture, shared legal rights and duties, and a unified economy that allows member mobility. This concept encompasses ethnic, cultural, and political identities, continuity over time and space, and the ability to adapt to changes in political, economic, and cultural activities (ibid).

<sup>4</sup> Brady (2009) refers to the 'West' or 'Western' as a construct representing capitalist democracies, particularly the United States and its allies, which are perceived as the ideological adversaries of the CCP. Brady discusses how these Western nations are seen as promoting capitalist values and democracy to undermine China's socialist path, and simultaneously, the CCP selectively adopts certain Western communication techniques to reinforce its own authority.

<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, when I mention 'Western' or the 'West', I adhere to Brady's definition (2009). See previous footnote.

accomplishments, China faced difficulties in gaining international legitimacy. Mao Zedong's directive for Xinhua to "take control of the earth (Sun 2015, 403) underscores the commitment to influencing global narratives and this goal remains relevant today.

The rise of the internet and social media platforms has enabled innovative opportunities for Chinese propaganda, strengthening state media's online presence (Fu 2023). Partnerships between local officials and media entrepreneurs highlight the government's push to promote persuasive propaganda through digital platforms (ibid). While historically defensive in its international propaganda, China's state media has become more assertive, fostering domestic nationalism and directly engaging with global audiences via social media platforms (Brady 2009). Initiatives to "tell China stories well" have led to vigorous online campaigns aimed at shaping international perceptions, especially during diplomatic disputes (Huang and Wang 2019).

In the 1990s, China's media underwent commercialization. This allowed for the emergence of media outlets with a certain level of freedom compared to state-controlled ones (Zhao 2000). Although these outlets compete in the market, their content remains heavily influenced by political directives from the CCP. As a result, self-censorship and uniformity are prevalent in news content (Yang and Chen 2021). State-run media outlets significantly influence China's media landscape. Their role becomes even more crucial in international communication as they serve as key channels for disseminating China's narrative to global audiences.

## **2.2 Shaping Perceptions: China's Media Expansion**

After joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China sought to improve its global image and influence (Hu and Ji 2012). To achieve this goal, the Chinese government implemented the "going out going global" media project, which expanded state-run media outlets like *Xinhua News Agency*, *People's Daily*, and *China Center Television* (Zhang 2011). This initiative aimed to increase their media presence and shape international perceptions of China (ibid). In addition to traditional channels, these media organizations started utilizing social media platforms.

In addition to having a strong media presence, the Chinese leadership recognized the importance of cultivating a positive global reputation (d'Hooghe 2015). A positive reputation can enhance foreign investment, tourism, and international aid for a nation-

state. It can also bolster domestic legitimacy by demonstrating that the nation-state is highly regarded internationally (Müller et al. 2021). Conversely, a negative reputation can pose significant obstacles for states aspiring to play influential roles on the global stage (Kobierecka and Kobierecki 2021). Recognizing these dynamics, Xi Jinping has emphasized the need to enhance China's soft power by delivering a compelling narrative and improving global understanding of China's message (Hartig 2016). This is done via public diplomacy, which uses news management, strategic communication, and relationship building to present a more comprehensive narrative incorporating Chinese and foreign perspectives (ibid).

### **2.3 Xinhua News Agency**

Xinhua News Agency, founded in November 1931 as the Red China News Agency, is one of China's oldest and most influential news agencies. Initially a platform for disseminating communist ideology during the Chinese Civil War (Xin 2012), it evolved into China's principal news agency following the CCP's victory in 1949. Over the years, it has evolved from a small rural news outlet into a major global news organization, maintaining a dual role as a propaganda tool and commercial entity (ibid).

Xinhua is overseen by the CCP's Central Propaganda Department and the State Council Information Office (Shambaugh 2007). Domestically, Xinhua operates under strict government control to align with CCP directives. It plays a crucial role in setting the agenda and tone for other news outlets (ibid). Despite market-oriented reforms and limited journalistic autonomy, Xinhua remains a key state propaganda tool, providing coverage of government policies and promoting the party's image, which is crucial in maintaining the CCP's legitimacy (ibid).

Xinhua serves a dual role as a propaganda tool and a commercial entity (Xin 2012). This dual function has been controversial, particularly within foreign news organizations, due to Xinhua's regulatory power over foreign media operations in China. This regulatory role was solidified in 1996 when the State Council granted it authority to manage and supervise the economic news services provided by foreign agencies within China (ibid).

Xinhua's adaptation to the digital age has been marked by significant changes in its approach to journalism (Xin 2018). Traditionally known for its top-down propaganda style, Xinhua has embraced digital and social media platforms to expand its



reach. This shift became evident in the early 2000s when Xinhua launched its online news portal, xinhuanet, and began using various social media channels. These also include platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, where Xinhua has established verified accounts with many followers. Ironically, these platforms are not available to PRC users. Xinhua's digital transformation includes producing content tailored to appeal to younger audiences, who predominantly consume news through mobile devices and social platforms (Xin 2018).

### **3. Navigating the Nexus: Public Diplomacy, Power, and Soft Power in the Era of Mask Diplomacy**

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped global diplomacy, with mask diplomacy as a new strategy in international relations. In this chapter, I explore the evolution of key concepts such as public diplomacy, power, and soft power, and how they relate to China's mask diplomacy. By delving into these concepts, I aim to comprehensively understand how Xinhua's strategies and discourses have adapted to the changing global landscape. This chapter provided the theoretical background for the analysis.

#### **3.1 Mask Diplomacy**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, mask diplomacy emerged as a significant approach in response to the global demand for medical supplies. As countries worldwide faced shortages, China stepped in by pledging donations and loans of masks, medical equipment, and scientific expertise.

Initially, mask diplomacy referred to China's medical donations to Japan to improve bilateral relations after Japan helped China at the epidemic's start (Kobierecka and Kobierecki 2021). Mask diplomacy was later popularized to describe the broader strategy of providing protective gear to achieve diplomatic goals (ibid). Wong (2020) defines mask diplomacy as China's strategic use of soft and sharp power by distributing medical supplies and aid to European countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach involves providing essential medical equipment and financial support while leveraging these actions to win the general public's and influential leaders' approval (ibid). Additionally, China aimed to establish long-term dependencies, creating ongoing reliance on Chinese aid and resources (ibid). Verma (2020) argues that mask diplomacy serves China's broader goal of changing the COVID-19 narrative and dissociating itself from the virus's origins. By positioning itself as a responsible global leader<sup>6</sup> and providing essential medical supplies, China aims to enhance its international standing and influence (ibid).

Mask diplomacy involves not just the distribution of medical supplies and

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Role Theory, global actors assume roles that are self-defined and externally attributed (Papageorgiou and Melo 2022). In mask diplomacy, China's self-ascribed role as a benevolent global leader and provider of public goods shapes its actions and strategies.

knowledge but also the complex dynamics of gift exchange, which inherently create power relations (Zahradníčková and Kašparová 2024). Their research illustrated how labeling these transactions as 'gifts' establishes mutual obligations and dependencies, reinforcing China's influence (ibid). In the Czech Republic, this framing was met with resistance, as the public discourse emphasized the transactional nature of the masks to avoid the implied obligations of a gift (ibid).

### **3.2 Public Diplomacy: Its Global Evolution and China's Distinctive Approach**

Public diplomacy, a concept coined by Edmund Gullion in 1965, emerged in response to evolving global political dynamics. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which concentrates on dialogues between governmental entities, public diplomacy seeks to engage with non-governmental audiences, bridging gaps and building understanding across borders (d'Hooghe 2015). Public diplomacy's primary focus lies in engaging with global populations, an aspect particularly resonant in the context of mask diplomacy. Despite varied perspectives within the academic community (Hartig 2016), public diplomacy has become pivotal for foreign policy practitioners and scholars alike.

Recent discourses delineate two primary modes of public diplomacy: traditional and new (d'Hooghe 2015). Traditional public diplomacy operates top-down, with governments shaping narratives and targeting global audiences through carefully constructed messages (Hartig 2016). This approach views people as foreign policy objectives, aiming to influence them more effectively (d'Hooghe 2015). In contrast, the emergence of new public diplomacy propelled by technological advances and the democratization of information emphasizes a more inclusive, dialogical approach. This mode encourages two-way engagements, facilitating dialogues and cultivating long-lasting partnerships (Hartig 2016). The aim is to talk, listen, understand, and foster trust.

China's engagement with public diplomacy shows a narrative of adaptation and innovation deeply intertwined with its political journey (Lee 2021). In the 1950s, China's public diplomacy initially embraced civic diplomacy during Mao Zedong's era to overcome global isolation (ibid). This approach evolved during Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy, seeking global understanding to support economic reforms (ibid). During Hu Jintao's presidency, China's public diplomacy became a comprehensive component of China's foreign policy, combining cultural outreach, soft power, and active global

participation to reshape its international image and influence (d'Hooghe 2015). Xi Jinping has intensified China's focus on public diplomacy, aiming to transmit the Chinese Dream<sup>7</sup> globally and align China's aspirations with global progress narratives (Lee 2021). Zhao (2019) argues that China's approach differs from Western public diplomacy practices, appearing more centralized and top-driven. Hartig (2016) adds that the state plays a dominant role in China's public diplomacy.

Unlike other countries where foreign ministers often play a prominent role, the CCP creates and disseminates China's public diplomacy narratives. While the pre-Xi Jinping era witnessed a surge in non-state actors' voices, their influence remained subordinate to the state narrative (d'Hooghe 2021). China's public diplomacy strategy veers towards a more traditional, one-way flow of communication (Hartig 2016). Yet, as global dynamics shift and China continues to evolve, its methods, strategies, and narratives will undoubtedly adapt (d'Hooghe 2021), underscoring the dynamic nature of public diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, mask diplomacy was fundamental in engaging the world, combining traditional and new public diplomacy.

### **3.3 Mask Diplomacy: An Interplay of Power, Soft Power, and Public Diplomacy**

Power is a complex and multifaceted concept. Various definitions of power today are often associated with Max Weber. Weber's (1968) perspective on power delves into its diverse dimensions, including authoritative and coercive elements. His insights highlight the complexity of power in shaping the behavior of individuals and institutions within a society (ibid). Steven Lukes introduces a three-dimensional framework of power: decision-making power, non-decision-making power, and ideological power (Lukes 1974). Michel Foucault, on the other hand, offers a nuanced understanding of power, emphasizing its diffuse and pervasive nature. His exploration extends to how power operates at various levels, permeating societal structures and influencing knowledge, discourse, and norms (Foucault 1980). Manuel Castells presents a new

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<sup>7</sup> The Chinese Dream is a concept launched by Xi Jinping in 2013. It aims for national prosperity, revitalization, and people's happiness under socialism with Chinese characteristics (d'Hooghe 2015). Furthermore, it emphasizes both collective and individual aspirations for a better life. Domestically, it focuses on development and unity amid uncertainties (ibid). Internationally, it seeks to project Chinese values and influence globally, countering historical foreign dominance (ibid).

perspective on power, focusing on its manifestation and operation with communication networks. Castells defines power as one social actor's ability to asymmetrically influence others' decisions in ways that serve the empowered actor's interests (Castells 2009). Importantly, Castells also suggests that power is not solely about dominance but also encompasses counter-power, which involves challenging and overcoming existing power structures.

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power plays an integral role in public diplomacy strategies (d'Hooghe 2015), and it is closely intertwined with the overarching concept of power. Soft power, as conceptualized by Nye, refers to a nation's ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion, leveraging its cultural, political, and foreign policy assets (Nye 2019). In contrast, hard power refers to a nation's ability to influence others through coercion or inducements, typically involving threats or payments (ibid). It can involve using forceful tactics, such as military intervention or economic sanctions, to achieve desired outcomes regardless of the target's preferences or opinions (ibid). However, the distinction between soft and hard power is often blurred, as both forms aim to influence behaviors and outcomes. Schneider (2019) posits that within a public diplomacy framework, soft power is often used to characterize a government's capacity to sway international public opinion in its favor and engender goodwill among foreign audiences for its foreign policy. Despite its popularity, Schneider criticizes soft power's analytical value, noting that Nye intended it as a strategy for influencing political behavior, not as an analytical tool. This often leads to a utilitarian view of culture, where cultural artifacts are valued mainly for their ability to aid a nation-state in cultural attraction efforts, reducing culture as a resource for manipulation in great-power politics (ibid).

Understanding various power theories lays the groundwork for understanding public diplomacy and soft power. In mask diplomacy, power dynamics refer to the competition among nation-states for influence and leverage in global affairs. China strategically employs its power resources, encompassing both soft and hard power, to portray an image of benevolence, global leadership, and crisis management. This entails leveraging cultural, symbolic, and discursive assets to foster international goodwill through attraction and persuasion. While providing aid is integral to mask diplomacy, its effectiveness depends on crafting a narrative that resonates with the international

audience (Verma 2020). Ultimately, understanding the concepts discussed in this section contributes to a deeper understanding of how mask diplomacy functions within the broader framework of international relations.

## **4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Methodology**

Multimodal<sup>8</sup> Discourse Analysis (MDA) is an analytical framework that examines communication beyond conventional linguistic elements, considering the interaction of different semiotic<sup>9</sup> modes like images, layout of pages, color, sound, design, gestures, and more (Machin 2013). Grounded in social semiotics, MDA seeks to reveal how meaning is formed and communicated by integrating various modes in diverse contexts (Machin and van Leeuwen 2016). This chapter discusses the basic principles of MDA, the relation between visuality and discourse, and its application in analyzing YouTube video content.

### **4.1 Analytical Framework for MDA and Visual Discourse**

Since the 1970s, the concept of discourse has been researched in various academic disciplines, such as linguistics, humanities, and social sciences (Wodak and Meyer 2009). In a broad sense, discourse refers to how verbal and non-verbal language is used to communicate and construct meaning within a specific context (Schneider 2013a). It extends beyond individual sentences, encapsulating the broader social practices and power dynamics embedded in communication. In this thesis, I adhere to Schneider's (2013a) definition: "Discourse refers to communication practices, which systematically construct our knowledge of reality."

In the subsequent chapter, I will conduct an MDA, which extends the scope of traditional discourse analysis by acknowledging that communication goes beyond spoken and written texts. It recognizes that various modes collectively contribute to meaning-making, including images, music, gestures, facial expressions, body language, and more (Yao and Zhuo 2018). This comprehensive approach enables an in-depth understanding of how different modes interact to shape the overall discourse. In this

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<sup>8</sup> Multimodality involves the use of various modes in communication, combining the use of different modes to convey meaning. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), multimodality goes beyond words, and acknowledges the significance of images, colors, gestures, and other non-verbal aspects in fulfilling communicative functions. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) state that a text is deemed multimodal when it combines two or more semiotic modes.

<sup>9</sup> According to Seiter (1992) as cited in Schneider 2013b, "semiotics is the study of everything that can be used for communication: words, images, traffic signs, flowers, music, medical symptoms, and much more. Semiotic studies the way such "signs" communicate and the rules that govern their use". Schneider (2013b) adds that "in essence, a sign can be anything that stands for something else."

sense, my analytical task is not to look harder or more closely but to understand what influences our perception – spaces of constructed visibility and encouragement, which establish power and knowledge (Traue et al. 2018).

In the analysis, I draw upon Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Visual Grammar*, grounded in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL). Halliday's framework, extended to study social semiotics, provides a foundational approach to understanding meaning-making across different semiotic systems in multimodal discourse. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) reframe Halliday's metafunctions—ideational into interpersonal, textual into representational, and interactive into compositional functions. These three metafunctions establish a theoretical foundation for addressing three key inquiries in image analysis.

Per Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), representational meanings are realized through narrative and conceptual structures. Narrative representations depict participants connected by vectors, indicating actions, or reactions. For example, a video clip of a person throwing a ball shows a vector connecting the thrower to the ball, illustrating the action. Conceptual representations portray participants in terms of their generalized essence or attributes. For instance, an infographic categorizing different fruits into distinct groups represents a classificational process. The representational metafunction addresses how visual elements are portrayed, focusing on processes and participants involved.

The interactive meanings are realized through factors such as gaze, social distance, attitude, and modality. Gaze establishes contact, with a direct gaze creating a connection with the viewer. Social distance is conveyed through camera shots (close-ups, medium shots, long shots), indicating degrees of intimacy or detachment. Attitude is depicted through the angle and point of view; high-angle shots suggest power, while low-angle shots imply vulnerability. Modality relates to the truth value of the visual representation; high-modality images indicate realism, while low-modality images suggest imagination. These elements define the relationships between the viewer and the depicted participants.

The compositional metafunction integrates representational and interactive elements into a coherent whole through information value, salience, and framing. The placement of elements determines information value; for instance, elements on the left



might represent given information, while those on the right suggest new information. Saliency is achieved through size, color contrast, sharpness, and foreground/background placement, drawing the viewer's attention to specific parts of the image. For example, a frame might highlight a particular element to draw focus or separate elements to indicate distinction or contrast. These strategies are essential for constructing meaningful relationships through the layout of images.

#### **4.2 Visual Discourse and Political Communication**

Recognizing the relationship between visual communication and political processes is important to comprehend mask diplomacy. In today's digital age, where screens dominate human interactions, visuals have become primary sources of information, particularly in international affairs (van Noort 2020). Visuals can wield significant influence, shaping perspectives and societal perceptions while being influenced by societal norms and values (Machin and Mayer 2012). The power of visuals lies in their ability to convey information swiftly and effectively, often leaving a lasting impact on viewers' perceptions (Lilleker et al. 2019).

In the context of China's mask diplomacy, the combination of tangible medical aid with compelling visuals and narratives disseminated through various channels exemplifies the intricate interplay between the visual and the discursive. These narratives, crafted with specific intentions, are open to interpretation by diverse audiences. The dynamics of the digital era and visual intertextuality complicate narrative construction as visuals interact continuously, influencing their meaning and interpretation (Hall 2001).

Strategic narratives in public diplomacy, such as China's mask diplomacy, underscore the nuanced relationship between visual representation and verbal discourse. These narratives aim to influence global audiences by leveraging carefully chosen textual and visual language to convey meaning and resonance. Yet, disseminating narratives in today's digital landscape presents its challenges. Platforms like YouTube serve as crucial outlets for shaping perceptions. Every aspect of visual communication, from thumbnail choice to editing pace, contributes to constructing a message, while discursive elements provide context and guide interpretation. Amidst the various narratives, making a distinctive narrative and ensuring its impact in the

digital ecosystem is challenging.

Incorporating insights from de Kloet et al. (2020) and Schneider (2021) enhances a deeper understanding of how visual discourse operates in political communication. De Kloet et al. (2020) introduce the concept of biopolitical nationalism, where the effectiveness of biopolitical measures during the COVID-19 pandemic becomes a source of national pride and competition among East Asian countries. They highlight how visual and discursive elements are used to celebrate compliance and success in managing the pandemic, hence fostering a sense of national superiority and identity (ibid). This idea is particularly relevant when examining how visuals in mask diplomacy showcase aid and portray national efficiency and benevolence.

Schneider (2021) expands on the role of visual communication by exploring how the Chinese government used visual symbols to construct a narrative of national sovereignty during the COVID-19 crisis. Schneider discusses how official propaganda and popular memes engaged in a visual battle to influence public perception and assert political legitimacy. His analysis underscores the power of visuals in shaping political narratives and the potential for counter-narratives to emerge in digital spaces. Schneider's insights into emotional governance and the strategic use of visual symbols can be applied to understand how China's mask diplomacy employs visuals to evoke emotional responses and reinforce political messages.

By integrating these perspectives, this section emphasizes that visual discourse in political communication is multifaceted, involving the strategic creation of narratives and the dynamic interplay with audience interpretations. The examples of biopolitical nationalism and visual sovereignty<sup>10</sup> demonstrate how visuals can serve as powerful tools for states to assert influence, construct identities, and navigate the complexities of international diplomacy. Therefore, understanding the visual aspects of China's mask diplomacy requires an analysis that considers the deliberate framing of visuals and the strategic dissemination methods employed to project these narratives.

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<sup>10</sup> Schneider (2021) uses this term to refer to the way visual representations are employed to construct and assert national sovereignty.

### 4.3 Methodology

This methodology outlines the MDA approach, which focuses on the visual communication strategies employed in videos produced and disseminated by Xinhua. The research design is qualitative, recognized for its ability to provide an in-depth and nuanced exploration of the visual communication strategies embedded in these clips. I draw on Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar to explore how China's mask diplomacy is visually represented and communicated in video-clips.

In this thesis, I will only research the discourses of one Chinese state media outlet about China's mask diplomacy, specifically in March 2020. This period was chosen because it was the first month that COVID-19 was controlled within Chinese borders and when the epidemic became a global pandemic. This gave the Chinese leadership more time and opportunity to engage in the new public diplomacy strategy, which was heavily reported in both Chinese- and global media-outlets. It is important to note that I will not analyze the influence or effectiveness of mask diplomacy globally. The decision to refrain from examining its effectiveness is primarily based on the fact that measuring this is nearly impossible. As d'Hooghe (2015, 334) has pointed out: "There is no easy way to measure the results of a country's overall public diplomacy. Many countries face this struggle, (...), and those who try to evaluate China's broader public diplomacy endeavors, although they provide helpful insights, are never entirely satisfactory."

Furthermore, I will only examine English language sources in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, limiting the analysis to one language saves valuable time and ensures adherence to the word count. Secondly, English is widely used as a global lingua franca, making English language sources more relevant to understanding how Xinhua communicates its message to an international audience.

I systematically reviewed all of Xinhua's YouTube videos, of which 232 were uploaded in March 2020. The primary selection criterion was their relevance to China's mask diplomacy, such as an emphasis on depicting Chinese aid provision, ceremonies, and diplomatic engagements. After an initial screening of all the March 2020 YouTube videos, 63 videos depicting mask diplomacy were selected. In March, 27.2% of Xinhua's YouTube videos depicted mask diplomacy. To make a final selection of these 63 videos, I employed a three-fold criterion: geographical representation, diplomatic engagement,

and visual diversity. The first criterion ensures that the selected videos show how mask diplomacy extends beyond specific areas, not only countries near China that received aid. The second criterion shows videos that feature interaction between officials from China and other countries. The last criterion looked at videos that exhibited various visual elements, such as different settings or scenarios. I searched for videos depicting mask donations, distribution processes, health workers, and symbolic representations of mask diplomacy. By selecting based on these criteria, I created a corpus of seven videos that offer a representative and diverse sample for their MDA.

To understand the contents of the selected corpus effectively, I first systematically organized the videos into three distinct ways.<sup>11</sup> The first table is an overview, providing essential details like title, hashtags, date, length, and a link to each selected video. Subsequently, a second table was created that gives an overview of the recurring discourses across the videos. This thematic table has been structured to facilitate the analysis process, clearly identifying common discourses and the corresponding display in each video. The table is deliberately designed to align the identified discourses and occurrences throughout the corpus, enhancing analytical coherence in the study. Thirdly, I will analyze each video-clip using a shot protocol, essentially a reverse-engineered story board, that captures how different elements interact with each other by listing every separate camera shot in chronological order (Schneider 2013c). All shot protocols will consist of a screen-print of the shot, length of the shot, camera angle and camera shot, content of the shot, sound, spoken or written text, and location. These different factors can lead to an interpretation and explanation of the strategies of the video-clips. By situating the video-clips within their relevant contexts, it becomes possible to explain and ultimately interpret each video-clip.

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<sup>11</sup> For the tables and a sample shot protocol, see the appendices.

## 5. Analysis

This chapter analyzes the selected clips via shot protocols. All these shot protocols consist of a screenshot, length of the shot, camera angle, camera shot, image content, acoustic, spoken text, written text, and, if known, location. First, I describe the clips, and subsequently, I provide my interpretation. These two aspects should be kept apart to give an unbiased viewpoint.

### 5.1 Chinese, Japanese give out masks for free

This video, first published on March 1, 2020, showcases a complex narrative within Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar. For the representational meaning, it focuses on a group of Chinese nationals in Japan who are seen distributing masks to the public of Tokyo. The visual elements and symbolic choices contribute to a rich narrative with layers of meaning and historical references. The participants are portrayed as pandas, dressed in white coats and panda-themed hats, embodying the national animal of the PRC. Due to their cute and innocent appearance, pandas can evoke feelings of warmth and protection. The deliberate portrayal of the PRC's national animal handing out masks to the people of Tokyo serves as a visual metaphor, showcasing care and protection, similar to how the giant panda needs protection. It connects with China's identity and shows care on a global scale, especially during difficult times. See Figure 1 for reference.



Figure 1.

For the interactive meaning, the video employs diverse visual grammar elements. In the first twelve seconds, the viewer sees various shots accompanied by soft, touching piano music, which sets a tone of unity and collaboration. This short video consistently uses medium shots<sup>12</sup>, emphasizing Chinese and Japanese cooperation. The choice of shots

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<sup>12</sup>. A medium shot (MS) captures a person or object from a moderate distance, typically showing them from the waist up (Thompson and Bowen 2009). A medium shot can achieve a sense of normalcy and comfort for the viewer by presenting a perspective similar to natural human vision. An MS can convey relationships, interactions, and reactions effectively, making it a versatile choice for various narrative and cinematic purposes (ibid).

establishes different social distances between the represented and the viewer (Yao and Zhuo 2018). Additionally, the video employs three close-up shots of visual, textual, and national symbolism. It focuses on messages of panda action, the collaboration and cohesiveness of communities, and symbolic messages. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, such close-up shots invite the audience to come closer, creating a sense of intimacy and engagement. Close-ups emphasize the focal point of the frame, in this case, China and Japan fighting together, accompanied by phrases such “*While the mountains and rivers separate us, we enjoy the same moonlight under the same sky*” (Chen 2020, 566). The strategic use of close-up shots leverages salience, ensuring that certain elements stand out and capture the viewer’s attention. By isolating these messages, the close-ups heighten their significance and ensure that the viewer focuses on the intended narrative.

Compositionally, this video shows the Chinese and Japanese flags. The incorporation of these reinforces the narrative of national identity (Danielson and Hedling 2021). Per Kress and van Leeuwen, these symbols can serve representational and compositional functions. Representationally, flags symbolize unity and collaboration between China and Japan. Compositionally, their repeated display uses salience to draw attention, and information value to emphasize their significance within the narrative. The strategic use of flags highlights themes of reciprocity and historical ties, transcending past conflicts and territorial disputes. Despite documented negative perceptions between China and Japan (Stokes 2016), this video aims to present a narrative of reciprocity and historical ties.

Finally, the audio features people speaking directly to the camera, accompanied by soft instrumental music. Kress and van Leeuwen’s concept of modality is evident here, as the direct address in the camera increases realism and credibility of the message, fostering a sense of direct communication and personal engagement. The soft instrumental piano music serves affective and communicative purposes, strategically evoking emotions. Its soothing and heroic melodies construct an emotional and heroic tone, aligning with the interactive metafunction by engaging viewers beyond the visual representation. The music adds depth and richness, creating a harmony of audio-visual elements that might resonate with viewers. By combining visual symbols of national

flags with emotionally engaging audio, the video communicates a message of unity and solidarity, leveraging multimodal discourse.

## 5.2 Chinese foundations donate 1 million masks to Japan to aid COVID-19 fight

Published on March 3, 2020, this 38-second video presents a vast array of cardboard boxes, each hinting at the magnitude of the mask donation. Instead of spoken narratives, this video uses a slideshow format with soft piano music, creating an evocative feeling. Some boxes feature encouraging texts in Chinese, adding a textual layer to the visual narrative.

Representationally, the video focuses on an extensive collection of cardboard boxes (see Figure 2 and 3), strategically highlighting the scale of the mask donation. The slideshow format and soft piano music set an emotional tone. Visually, the abundance of boxes emphasizes the enormity of the mask donation. Textually, the encouraging Chinese messages, rooted in classical poetry, communicate themes of unity and shared history.



Figure 2.

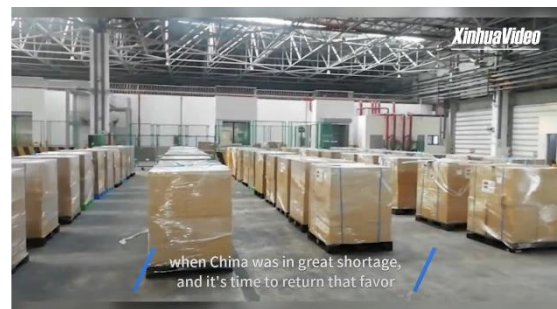


Figure 3.

Interactionally, the absence of spoken words shifts the interactive focus to visual, textual, and auditory elements. At around twenty seconds, the soft piano music is joined by a violin crescendo, which establishes a connection with the viewer and evokes emotions. The close-up shots draw viewers closer to the messages, enhancing intimacy and making the communication feel more personal. Furthermore, the use of horizontal angles, such as frontal shots of the boxes, creates a sense of direct engagement. The viewer feels as if they are face-to-face with the donation effort, which can enhance an emotional connection.

Compositionally, placing boxes and text within the frame uses information value to direct viewers' attention. Texts at the center or top of the frame highlight their significance, ensuring they are first noticed and understood as key messages. The use of close-ups and musical crescendo highlights key messages, using salience to make them stand out. This strategic focus on specific elements ensures that the viewer's attention is consistently directed toward the narrative of solidarity and mutual aid. The encouraging messages on the boxes add depth to the visual narrative and complement textual and auditory modes. For example, "*Like the mountain range stretches before you and me, let us share common trials and hardships together*" (Chen 2020, 566) – [青山一道, 同担风雨] and "*While the mountains and rivers separate us, we enjoy the same moonlight under the same sky*" (ibid) – [山川異域 · 風月同天]. The first message, adapted from a Tang dynasty poem by Wang Changling (ibid), uses mountains to symbolize permanence and longevity, reinforcing collective endurance and unity in challenging times. Associating the mountain range with sharing wind and rain underscores shared experiences and resilience. The second message, a poem by Japanese Prince Nagaya (Debra Li), introduces a compositional element that transcends geographical boundaries, emphasizing interconnectedness despite physical separation. The shared experience of enjoying the same moonlight highlights the universal challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting global solidarity.

### **5.3 Iran, China fights coronavirus in spirit of solidarity**

This video, published on March 5, 2020, employs a visual narrative that unfolds in three parts, accompanied by in-text subtitles and background music. The representational meaning is interwoven into the contrasting visuals of contemporary Iran, focusing mainly on people wearing masks. This is followed by images of a Chinese Red Cross Delegation visiting Iran and concluding with an Iranian student delivering a vlog-like format in Chinese. The video ends with a symbolic archway projection conveying messages of encouragement.

The focus on masks throughout the video is a visual marker for the representational meaning, emphasizing the global significance of mask-wearing during the pandemic. The intentional contrast between those wearing masks and those without



underscores their social and cultural meanings. Schönweitz et al. (2022) note that face masks are protective and carry broader social connotations shaped by cultural norms and individual experiences. Before COVID-19, residents of certain global regions already used face masks to prevent germs from spreading in public settings. Yet in other regions, face masks were almost solely connected to occupational health or hospitals (ibid). The visual contrast in this video aligns with the concept of mask diplomacy, visually promoting shared protective measures and international cooperation. The portrayal of individuals wearing masks strengthens the theme of collaboration in the fight against COVID-19. Figures 4 and 5 show instances of the contrast of mask-wearing in the video:



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

Another interesting representational meaning is added by the vlog segment of Iranian student “Zhang Zhiyuan.” This can be interpreted as soft power, aligning with China’s strategic promotion of its language and culture globally. The Chinese Ministry of Education aims to spread the Chinese language and culture globally, foster international friendships and mutual understanding, boost economic and cultural exchanges, and strengthen China’s global influence (MOE). Including an Iranian student with a Chinese name who speaks fluently Chinese shows the depth of cultural exchange between China and Iran. This exemplifies China’s soft power and cultural influence, even amidst a global crisis. The vlog’s personal and relatable format enhances the story’s impact on the viewer, emphasizing themes of gratitude and enduring friendship.

Interactionally, Zhang Zhiyuan’s vlog adds engagement. He directly addresses the camera and establishes a close and personal interaction with the viewer. His friendly and calm demeanor, combined with the use of the Chinese language, reinforces this

interaction. The deliberate use of horizontal frontal angles, as observed in the street scenes, vlog format, and delegation visits, enhances the interactive meaning. Frontal angles signify involvement (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), aligning with the overarching theme of collaboration and solidarity between Iran and China. Including billboards with instructions in Farsi and illustrations such as how to blow your nose aim to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, promoting a shared understanding of health practices. The realistic depiction of people, environments, and texts increases the video's modality, making the scenes more believable and emotionally compelling. High modality elements, such as clear and detailed visuals, enhance credibility and viewer engagement (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

The compositional meaning is enriched by the visual contrast, emphasizing mask-wearing. Using horizontal frontal angles contributes to a balanced and approachable composition, creating viewer engagement. Close-ups, especially in the vlog, add a personal touch. Furthermore, the video's use of instrumental music, particularly the crescendo violin part during the delegation visit sequence, underscores the compositional choice to evoke emotions and emphasize the collaboration between China and Iran. The video ends with a massive gateway-like structure, a paifang. In Chinese culture, a paifang traditionally honors significant individuals or events (Wang and Duan 2016). In the video, the paifang is illuminated with encouraging messages and the Chinese flag, and the viewer sees people capturing the paifang in pictures. On the paifang, messages are projected in Chinese and English, reinforcing the idea of strength and solidarity. See Figure 6 and 7 for the visualization of the structure in question.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

#### 5.4 A show of solidarity! International cooperation in response to COVID-19

This video, presented by the State Council Information Office (SCIO) and published on March 6, 2020, delves into the theme of international cooperation during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The video employs a slideshow format, icons, instrumental music, and text to convey a message of global collaboration.

The representational meanings are embedded in the visual- and textual elements presented. One noteworthy theme is the emphasis on international support, symbolized by seventeen illustrative icons representing unity, medical aid, and technical cooperation. The illustrative icons, including a white suitcase with a red cross or three anonymous figures standing together, convey themes without relying on textual language, ensuring accessibility to a diverse audience. The video also strategically incorporates illustrative icons like a superhero doctor fighting evil viruses (see Figure 8 and 9). This superhero doctor creates a visual narrative that positions healthcare workers as frontline heroes (Litzinger and Ni 2021). The heroization of healthcare workers reinforces themes of unity and hope, contributing to the state's narrative of positive energy and effective pandemic response (ibid).



Figure 8.



Figure 9.

The interactive meaning is enhanced by using a red font for numerical data, which stands out and appears urgent and credible. This color choice highlights the quantitative aspects of China's aid efforts, prompting viewers to actively process and interpret the information. The video also employs gaze to demand attention from the viewer. Illustrative icons such as the superhero doctor and a healthcare worker injecting a virus use gaze, creating an imaginary connection with the viewer (Kress and

van Leeuwen 2006) and emphasizing the importance of the depicted text and icons. Icons illustrating medical help, togetherness, and a text balloon were also used. See Figure 10, 11, and 12.



Figure 10.



Figure 11.



Figure 12.

The use of colors in this video, a blend of neutral and vibrant colors, plays a crucial role in creating a compositional meaning. The colors in this video blend neutral and vibrant colors to evoke specific emotions and highlight essential information. Bolder colors, notably red, are selectively used to draw attention to the numbers in this video. Red, a high-contrast and attention-grabbing color, stands out against the backdrop of more neutral colors, contributing to a clear visual hierarchy.<sup>13</sup> In this context, the video uses various design elements to enhance the viewer's understanding and engagement. The deliberate use of color ensures that the viewer's focus is directed toward the numerical information provided; in this sense, the information will be seen and hopefully have a greater impact on the viewer. Beyond the visual elements, the instrumental background music in this video influences the video's tone and mood significantly.

### **5.5 China shares experience with Europe, jointly fighting COVID-19**

This video, released on March 7th, 2020, features clips of doctors working in hospitals and street scenes, and focuses on people wearing masks. Visual intertextuality is evident in shots of the European Parliament, doctors, street scenes in Italy, and influential figures discussing COVID-19 and China's role. The intertextuality adds depth, offering viewers layers of meaning to interpret. The inclusion of influential individuals,

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<sup>13</sup> In design, visual hierarchy refers to the arrangement of elements to guide the viewer's attention and emphasize the relative importance of information (Eldesouky 2013).

such as an epidemiologist from the WHO and a Belgian virologist, lends credibility to the information presented, as viewers are more likely to trust expert opinions. This aspect enriches the video's content and enhances its potential to convey nuanced interpretations to viewers familiar with the references.

Representationally, the video opens with a shot of the Berlaymont building in Brussels, the European Commission's headquarters. The presence of EU flags grounds the narrative globally and implies a collective and political response to the pandemic. The somber instrumental piano music underscores the seriousness of the situation. There is also an extended coverage of a meeting between Chinese and Italian doctors, shown from various angles, underscoring its importance. Subtitles detailing the exchange of experiences and critical points in the fight against COVID-19 emphasize global collaboration. The deliberate choice to extend the duration of this segment signals its importance. A shift to Italy introduces an interesting juxtaposition - a lone individual is seen wearing a facemask against a background adorned with love and

positivity. See Figure 13 for reference. This visual element creates a multidimensional narrative that encourages contemplation on themes of hope and connectivity in the middle of a crisis. A final representational meaning is showing authoritative people, including a WHO representative, a Belgian federal MP, and a Belgian professor of virology, who all praise China's efforts. Close-up shots and their titles add an extra layer of authority, emphasizing the value of learning from China's experience through these positive foreign endorsements.



Figure 13.

Interactionally, various techniques are used to engage the viewer and create a sense of connection. The video employs gaze, where individuals look directly into the camera, creating an imaginary connection with the viewer. This is evident in Skype calls and direct addresses, such as those by Professor Johan Neyts (see Figure 14). Close-up shots emphasize facial expressions and emotions, creating a personal connection and enhancing the viewer's emotional involvement (Thompson and Bowen 2009). Neyts' gaze and hand gestures,



Figure 14.

set against images of solidarity, enhance the persuasive effect of the narrative. The intentional use of eye contact taps into the distance with the viewer, fostering a closer connection with the narrative. The visuals of people balling their fists in solidarity (see Figure 15) are a powerful symbol. The raised fist is historically rooted in various global movements, from socialist uprisings to struggles against apartheid, and this symbol carries tremendous weight (Stout 2020). In this way, the collective fight transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.



Figure 15.

Compositionally, the instrumental piano music serves as a consistent emotional cue, guiding the narrative's tone. Its severe and heroic tones reinforce the gravity of the situation while maintaining a sense of determination. The strategic alteration of shot length emphasizes the importance of these moments, especially during the meeting between the Italian and Chinese doctors or the authoritative people speaking. This pacing enhances the viewer's understanding and emotional connection with key segments. The in-video subtitles, which cannot be switched off, convey important information and ensure language barriers do not hinder understanding of what is being communicated. The video ends with serious yet heroic instrumental piano music and a healthcare worker waving into the camera. This leaves a lasting impression and reinforces the video's overarching themes.

## 5.6 China offers help to virus-hit countries to minimize COVID-19 impact

This video, published on March 8, 2020, reports the situation and COVID-19 aid in South Korea, Japan, Italy, and Iran. It incorporates visual intertextualities and repeats clips and images from previously published videos, such as those covering Japan, Iran, and Italy, resembling the contents from videos 5.1, 5.3, and 5.5. This report shows various Xinhua correspondents who discuss the situation in each country and how China has helped. The video employs various forms of symbolism, including metaphors, colors, and rhetoric.

This video constructs representations of international solidarity and cooperation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Through visual and textual elements, the video

portrays China's proactive engagement in assisting nations affected by the virus. The initial shots featuring individuals in protective clothing underscore the situation's seriousness and urgency. These visuals symbolize the global effort to combat the pandemic and highlight the collaborative response to a shared crisis. Moreover, Xinhua correspondents reporting from each country provide firsthand accounts of China's assistance efforts, further reinforcing the narrative of solidarity and support.

The interactional meaning within the video is conveyed through visual and auditory cues designed to engage and inform the audience. The use of instrumental piano music during sequences depicting aid distribution evokes a sense of empathy and solidarity, eliciting an emotional response from viewers. Additionally, the inclusion of in-video subtitles ensures accessibility to information, enabling all viewers to fully understand the video. The reporters and interviewees are all framed in medium shots, accompanied by direct addresses to the camera. The medium shots reduce the social distance between the viewer and the subjects, fostering a sense of engagement and relatability. Bowen and Thompson (2009) point out that medium shots allow viewers to observe significant details of the character, such as eyes, direction of gaze, and clothing, without the distraction of the environment. This makes the viewing experience natural and comfortable, similar to a typical conversational distance, helping viewers connect with the subjects' actions or emotions (ibid).

The compositional meaning of this video is conveyed through the careful arrangement of visual motifs, framing choices, and textual elements that contribute to the overall narrative structure. The placement of elements within the frame influences how viewers interpret their importance (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Typically, elements placed at the top of the frame are seen as ideal or more general information, while those at the bottom represent more specific or factual information (ibid). In this video, the titles of the interviewees are placed at the bottom left of the frame. This positioning implies that the titles are foundational, factual information supporting the visual content. The bottom-left placement makes the titles easily accessible and clear to the viewer, grounding the authority of the speakers within the broader narrative. Symbolic imagery, such as cargo planes and traditional architecture juxtaposed with modern cityscapes, creates salience by making these elements stand out. This juxtaposition helps situate the audience within the cultural context of each country.

One notable textual message on an aid package reads: stating “*great distance cannot separate us, we all live in a united world*” (Chen 2020, 567) – [道不遠人, 人無異國]. This message from Korean scholar Choe Chiwon underscores the historical and cultural ties between China and South Korea and emphasizes the continuity of their bilateral relations. Moreover, the reporter Wang Jingqiang’s attire (see Figure 16), resembling the military with a camouflage jacket, adds a layer of visual symbolism. Camouflage attire underscores the seriousness of the situation, suggesting the world is fighting a physical war.



Figure 16.

### **5.7 People from different countries put wise words of #SharedFuture on #Coronavirus**

Published on March 23, 2020, this video stands out for its unique format. It uses only foreground statements, background pictures, and instrumental music, with no direct speech. The music and imagery convey a story of humanity’s shared responsibility and interconnectedness in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. The dominant theme is a “shared future for mankind”, a Chinese concept advocating for global cooperation and solidarity (MOFA). Amidst a global health crisis, this concept underscores that no nation can tackle such challenges alone. Diseases don’t recognize borders, necessitating collective and coordinated action.

The representational meaning is created via the foreground text, which is presented in bold capital letters, see Figure 17 and 18. The text serves as the primary mode of communication, delivering uplifting and inspirational statements such as “*Fight Virus For a Shared Future*”, and “*Unity is Strength.*” These textual elements foreground the overarching theme of collective action and mutual support. Another inspirational



quote attributed to Nelson Mandela is also featured: “*When People Are Determined They Can Overcome Anything.*” Although it is unclear if Mandela actually said this, his name adds authority to the message. While Mandela, a globally respected anti-apartheid figure and the former President of South Africa (de Klerk), likely referred to the struggles against apartheid, the quote also resonates profoundly during the pandemic. In the context of COVID-10, the “anything” Mandela references can be understood as the pandemic. This message draws attention to the collective will and determination in fighting global crises.



Figure 17.



Figure 18.

The interactional meaning in this video is created through a blend of visual elements and auditory cues designed to engage and evoke an emotional response from the audience. The instrumental piano music, starting softly and gradually intensifying, sets a touching yet heroic tone, eliciting feelings of hope and resilience. Close-up shots of people, particularly those depicting emotional moments, such as comforting a crying person, establish a sense of intimacy and empathy, inviting viewers to empathize with the depicted scenarios. Moreover, diverse cultural symbols and languages, such as Chinese characters and Italian phrases, attempt to foster inclusivity and global connectivity.

The compositional meaning in the video is conveyed through careful framing, color choices, and spatial arrangements that contribute to the overall narrative structure and aesthetic appeal. The foreground text is presented in contrasting colors of red and white. In Chinese culture, white symbolizes purity, reverence, and mourning, and red symbolizes good fortune, joy, and celebration (Nations Online). The background imagery, consisting of photographs and posters with encouraging statements, reinforces the thematic content of the text, depicting scenes of solidarity, cooperation, and

resilience. Furthermore, the horizontal angles of the images and the predominance of the medium and close-up shots contribute to a sense of immediacy and engagement, drawing the viewer into the narrative. The video's composition combines textual and visual elements to convey unity and hope in challenging times.

## **6. Discussion**

Upon analyzing the individual video clips, it becomes imperative to contextualize them within a broader framework to find an answer to the research question. The findings from the analysis of Xinhua's mask diplomacy videos on YouTube during the early COVID-19 pandemic reveal a strategic approach to visual storytelling aimed at shaping public perceptions and fostering international cooperation. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar, the videos employ a range of visual discourses and strategies to convey messages of solidarity, resilience, and collective action. In this chapter, I discuss the key patterns of the analysis and contextualize what the findings mean.

### **6.1 Solidarity and Mutual Support**

One key finding from the analysis of the Xinhua mask diplomacy videos is the recurring discourse of solidarity and mutual support portrayed throughout the videos. These narratives emphasize the importance of global cooperation and collective action in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. With a focus on China's donations of masks to other countries or the messages of support and encouragement from people worldwide, the videos all highlight the idea that humanity is in this together.

In the analyzed videos, Xinhua constructed a message emphasizing collaboration, interdependence, and global solidarity. A prominent concept in this narrative is "A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" (CSFH). Proposed by Xi Jinping, the CSFH articulates a worldview that prioritizes mutual interests and collective development, emphasizing cooperative efforts while recognizing the interdependence of nations (Yu 2022). Visuals and numerical evidence of cross-border aid and messages of mutual assistance underscore the recurrence of this concept in the videos. By invoking CSFH, Xinhua shifts the discussion from singular nationalistic interests to a broader focus on global humanity and its intertwined destinies. This shift is particularly apparent in the portrayal of Sino-Japanese relations, where historical tensions and differences are set aside in favor of collaboration and mutual support.

The solidarity and mutual support discourse aligns with China's broader diplomatic efforts to position itself as a global leader. This globalist discourse can be understood as a desire to integrate with the global market, proactively contribute to

global welfare, and influence global governance corresponding to its ascending power (Yang and Chen 2021). In the context of the analyzed videos, China's commitment to globalism is evident through its assistance to other nations and its emphasis on international cooperation. Xinhua portrays China not just as an active global player but also as a responsible and committed one.

Visual communication strategies are central in conveying this discourse. For example, the frequent depiction of cargo planes unloading medical supplies, healthcare workers distributing masks, and other aid-related activities serve as concrete evidence of China's contributions to the global fight against COVID-19. These visuals highlight the tangible action being taken, enhancing the perceived reliability and seriousness of China's efforts. By showing the logistical aspects of aid deliveries, the videos build a narrative of competence and capability. This can instill confidence in China's ability to manage and support international crises, enhancing its image as a proactive and responsible global actor.

Furthermore, this discourse also intersects with building a Health Silk Road (HSR), an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The HSR "aims to enhance public health and foster international cooperation in the healthcare sector" (Yuan 2023, 333). Through the HSR, China tries to expand its influence in global health leadership by engaging in health projects, providing financial and technical assistance, participating in global health discussions, and forming strategic partnerships (ibid). According to Bing (2020), this commitment demonstrates China's growing role as a proactive and responsible global health partner. Yuan (2023) argues that through HSR initiatives, China seeks to navigate global perceptions, establish its leadership, and create lasting relations with countries worldwide, all under shared health and prosperity.

Another aspect of the visual communication strategies within this discourse is how Xinhua portrays numerous people worldwide expressing solidarity and support for China's efforts. This observation aligns with studies on the role of human interest narratives in shaping public attitudes and perceptions (Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Thiele 2015). Including personal testimonies and close-up shots of individuals, particularly those giving personal testimonies or expressing gratitude for China's aid, creates a sense of intimacy and empathy. Close-up shots draw the viewer into the emotional

experiences of the featured individuals, making the narrative more relatable and personal. In this way, Xinhua attempts to humanize the crisis and amplify the message of global cooperation and mutual assistance. The shown positive reactions from people outside China validate and strengthen Xinhua's constructed narrative, portraying China as a proactive and supportive partner.

## **6.2 Strategic Use of Cultural Symbolism and National Identity**

The second key pattern is the strategic use of cultural symbolism and national identity to reinforce messages of unity and shared purpose. The videos frequently use symbols and imagery that are culturally significant to both China and the countries receiving aid. For example, using background scenes, encouraging texts with sayings, and more profound imagery and symbolism emphasizes the cultural ties between China and the portrayed nations. By incorporating textual or visual symbols that resonate with both Chinese and international audiences, Xinhua aims to strengthen the emotional impact of its messaging and establish deeper connections with viewers. This approach reflects China's public diplomacy strategy of leveraging its heritage and soft power to enhance its influence on the global stage (d'Hooghe 2021).

This discourse has two main points. First, it highlights strong national pride, where China celebrates its successes and counters negative perceptions spread by external actors. This seems to be a way for China to bolster its domestic legitimacy and reinforce a positive national image. Secondly, the discourse shows China as a responsible global leader in fighting the pandemic. Visual cues, such as the repeated display of the Chinese flag, coupled with imagery of mask-wearing citizens, reinforce this discourse: China's adoption of masks is equated with curbing COVID-19, and the provision of masks to other countries signifies its responsible leadership. Moreover, numerical and visual evidence illustrating China's assistance to countries like Japan, Italy, and Iran further attempts to solidify its image as a caring and responsible global leader. Testimonials from international figures, such as Saedeleer from the Port of Zeebrugge or van Kerkhoven from the WHO, who praise China's pandemic response, further reinforce this portrayal. This discourse emphasizes China's position as a global actor, yet it focuses more on China's solo accomplishment rather than a collaborative global effort. This observation aligns with Yang and Chen (2021), who argue that China

balances nationalism and globalism during COVID-19.

Visual communication strategies play a crucial role in conveying this discourse. A notable strategy is using national flags and culturally significant icons to evoke pride and collective identity. For example, the depiction of traditional Chinese architecture or attire in the background of aid scenes connects modern efforts to historical and cultural heritage, reinforcing national pride. According to Billig (1995) the everyday use of national symbolism, such as flags, subtly reinforces a sense of national identity and belonging. The repeated display of national flags visually communicates unity and partnerships between nation-states. This strategy leverages national symbols to evoke pride and collective identity. By prominently featuring national flags, the videos underscore that the pandemic response is a cooperative effort transcending national boundaries. Additionally, the consistent use of flags suggests that nation-states are the most important actors in times of crisis. This strategy indicates that cultural pride and international solidarity can coexist and support each other.

Another visual communication strategy in this discourse is the use of historical and cultural references (such as paifang's or panda display) accompanied by encouraging text. This approach combines the power of historical and cultural resonance with textual overlays featuring culturally significant messages. This strategy reinforces themes of resilience, cooperation, and shared cultural values. By using sayings that resonate with both Chinese and international audiences, such as "*Fight Virus For A Shared Future*" or "*Although We Are In Different Places We Are Under The Same Sky*" – [山川异域， 风月同天], the videos evoke a sense of shared wisdom and collective effort, aligning with the broader discourse of cultural symbolism and national identity. In some of the videos, sayings from classical Chinese poems were cited. Chen (2020) argues that including classical Chinese poems emphasizes shared cultural values and mutual support. Chen adds that using poems like this also enhances the moral face of aid-giving countries. By engaging in culturally meaningful and altruistic acts, these countries enhance their national reputation and foster a positive international image (ibid).

Xinhua's portrayal of China reflects its self-perception as an emerging global leader, which is evident in its containment strategies, outreach initiatives, and collaborative international endeavors, which align with its envisioned role. These

tangible actions in the videos demonstrate China's role performance. However, the global perception of China, known as role expectation, is multifaceted, influenced by historical legacies, political dynamics, media representations, and diverse national interests (Breuning 2019). By garnering support from influential figures like van Kerkhoven or Depoorter, Xinhua aims to shape global perception in China's favor, navigating through these layers of expectation and interpretation.

### **6.3 War against COVID-19**

The third key pattern is framing the crisis as a war against an invisible enemy. This metaphorical portrayal, often used by Xinhua in its videos, serves several communicative purposes and has both positive and negative implications. The global COVID-19 crisis has been compared to an ongoing fight, with the virus often personified as the common enemy of humankind. The personification of the pandemic as an enemy makes it more relatable or understandable to the broader public. By giving it a "face," the threat emphasizes the urgency and severity of the situation.

Additionally, by using war metaphors, Xinhua fosters public acceptance of extraordinary actions, such as a state of emergency. Gui (2021) highlights how Chinese mainstream media dominated the discourse with the war metaphor. This framing evolved, initially focusing on a preventive war and later incorporating concepts of "people's war" and "total war," invoking historical military theories from Mao (ibid). Gui points out that these metaphors mobilized the public by portraying everyone as soldiers in the fight against the virus, justifying strict measures like complete lockdowns.

By employing phrases such as *"We have one common enemy and that common enemy are viruses"* or *"To Prevail Over a Disease That Threatens All Unity and Cooperation Is The Most Powerful Weapon"*, Xinhua emphasizes the pervasive nature of the COVID-19 crisis. These phrases are reinforced via icons and visuals in the videos. For example, in most of the corpus, people wear protective medical gear from head to toe in real-life scenes and cartoon representations. In one cartoon representation, one figure is completely covered in protective gear, one foot triumphant on a malicious purple virus, and injecting the virus with something. This imagery evokes a good vs. evil discourse, with medical personnel portrayed as heroes. This visual strategy not only heightens the perceived importance of healthcare workers but also rallies public

support and compliance with health measures by framing them as part of a national duty.

The virus was often personified in visuals, sometimes depicted as an evil creature that needed to be defeated. This personification made the abstract threat of an invisible virus more tangible and urgent to the public. Icons and cartoons were used to simplify and dramatize the virus. For instance, it was shown as a menacing character being attacked or subdued by healthcare workers. This approach can help maintain public awareness, as the enemy was given a recognizable face. Furthermore, in one video, a reporter wore a camouflage jacket, reinforcing a war-like atmosphere. The battlefield references emphasize the severity and immediacy of the crisis, suggesting that extraordinary measures were necessary to combat this enemy.

War metaphors are commonly employed during health crises, extending to past epidemics like cancer, AIDS, and SARS (Selxas 2021). Despite facing criticism for potentially increasing anxiety, victim-blaming, and endorsing violence, Selxas (2021) argues that these metaphors serve as effective rhetorical devices. Their repeated use suggests their efficacy in crisis political communication. In the context of COVID-19, war metaphors fulfill various functions, including preparing the public for challenges and shifting responsibility. They are crucial in conveying beliefs and comprehending complex events (ibid). In political discourse, metaphors are indispensable for connecting with the audience and serving persuasive purposes (ibid). As vital linguistic instruments, metaphors contribute to formulating, challenging, or validating socio-cultural, political, and ideological worldviews (ibid).

The discourse surrounding COVID-19 as a common enemy attempts to cultivate a sense of unity (Sontag 2001). Phrases such as "*Fear Not The Want Of Armor, For Mine Is Also Yours To Wear*" aim to show that humanity has a shared destiny and responsibility. Political leaders used similar language throughout the pandemic to promote solidarity and action among their populations (Giorgis et al. 2023). In this context, war symbolism is also tied with concepts such as CSFH, collectivism, and humanitarianism. Selxas's (2021) research has found that various political leaders used war metaphors during the COVID-19 pandemic to shift responsibility, frame narratives, or, in some cases, minimize the severity of the situation. However, the usage of war rhetoric comes with limitations. Oswick et al. (2020) and Sabucedo et al. (2020) suggest that war rhetoric



evokes fear, creates stigmas around non-compliance, and even indirectly supports authoritarian leadership.

In the current transition to the post-pandemic era, grasping the significance of the “war against COVID-19” discourse is essential. Collective and individual memories can profoundly influence prevailing narratives and language (Mlynár 2014). There are various potential outcomes if war metaphors persist as the dominant narrative surrounding COVID-19. On the one hand, it can foster collective memories of unity, resilience, and sacrifice. Such memories can strengthen international collaboration or enhance global responses to future crises. It could also lead people to more readily accept measures such as censorship, military presence on the streets, or the implementation of social control (Giorgis et al. 2023). Conversely, war rhetoric may perpetuate conflict and division, leading to blame, victimhood, and strained global relationships (ibid). Additionally, the winner-loser dynamic inherent in such discourse could overshadow critical systemic issues like healthcare infrastructure or socio-economic inequalities (ibid).

#### **6.4 Emotion and Empathy**

The final key pattern found is emotion and empathy. This discourse strategically combines elements such as music, visuals, and language to elicit emotional responses from the audience. By doing so, it tries to enhance the credibility and impact of the messages being conveyed. Coombs (2007) and Seeger (2006) note that messages laced with appropriate levels of compassion, concern, and empathy are more likely to be perceived as credible in crisis situations. It can boost the legitimacy of the messenger, making the message more impactful and acceptable (ibid).

The careful selection of music is central to the videos’ emotional impact. Each song is chosen to match the discourse of the content, guiding viewers through various emotions. The powerful build-up in “Carols of the Bells” in video 5.7 evokes a feeling of strength and determination. Interestingly, this song will be recognized internationally as it’s often played around Christmas. Seeing how this song is linked to a video showing something entirely different is intriguing. In video 5.4, the viewer hears “The Making Of It All.” This song is uplifting and corresponds with the positive message the video tries to convey. The musical choices draw viewers into the story, engaging their minds and hearts.

Alongside music, the words spoken and written in the videos are crucial for highlighting the idea of togetherness, empathy, and emotion. Messages from people worldwide show how the pandemic affects everyone, no matter where they're from. Phrases like "Good Luck China," "Good Luck World," and "Although we are in different places, we are under the same sky" remind us how we're all connected in difficult times. Combining emotional and empathetic elements can help forge a deeper connection with the audience.

Visuals also play a critical role in adding emotion and empathy in the analyzed corpus. Close-up shots of individuals, especially healthcare workers and patients, capture facial expressions and emotions. These shots create an intimate connection between the subject and the viewer, making the experiences of those depicted more relatable and impactful. The use of symbolic imagery, like people raising their fists in solidarity, adds layers of meaning and emotion. The raised fist is a powerful symbol because it taps into the universally recognized themes of hope and resilience.

## 7. Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to understand how Xinhua employed visual discourses and what strategies it used in its mask diplomacy narratives in online video-clips on YouTube during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. This thesis was motivated by several factors, including the unprecedented global health crisis, new diplomatic approaches, and the increasing prominence of digital communication platforms in shaping public discourse. Through an in-depth analysis, I aimed to gain insights into how Xinhua crafted its messaging during this critical period.

The findings suggest that Xinhua predominantly employed solidarity, cooperation, global responsibility, and unity discourses. These discourses were conveyed via representational, compositional, and interactive meanings. First, Xinhua employed visual narratives of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual support to position China as a proactive and responsible global leader in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Through imagery, music, and textual elements, Xinhua conveyed a message of unity and shared responsibility. Secondly, Xinhua strategically used cultural symbols, colors, and imagery to evoke emotional responses and convey meanings. By incorporating Chinese culture and symbolic elements, Xinhua reinforced the message of solidarity and cooperation while attempting to appeal to a global audience. Finally, Xinhua used testimonies and interviews to humanize the crisis and foster empathy and understanding among viewers. By showcasing real-life examples of aid delivery, cooperation, and support, Xinhua reinforced the discourse of global solidarity and collective action in times of crisis.

Moreover, the multimodal discourse analysis via Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar provided valuable insights into the visual techniques and storytelling strategies. For example, throughout the videos, Xinhua strategically incorporated symbols that carried cultural, political, and emotional significance. These symbols were carefully selected to resonate with the audience and evoke specific associations and meanings. Images of medical workers in protective gear symbolized dedication and sacrifice, while visuals of people coming together to hand out masks symbolized unity and cooperation. Additionally, I explored the strategic placement of text and music in the videos. Textual elements such as captions, titles, and subtitles were strategically positioned to complement the visual narrative and reinforce the key messages. Whether

providing context, emphasizing key points, or guiding the viewer's attention, text played an important role in enhancing the overall meaning of the videos. Similarly, music evoked emotions and set a certain tone for the overall narrative. Xinhua chose music that matched the videos' emotional context and thematic content. For instance, if a video aimed to convey urgency and determination in fighting COVID-19, Xinhua would add music with fast-paced rhythms or intense melodies. Conversely, if the video aimed to inspire hope or resilience, uplifting music was added to the video. The use of music not only adds depth and dimension to the visual narrative but also holds the power to elicit emotions.

These findings hold significant implications for understanding how authoritarian governments leverage digital media. While prior studies have researched how digital technologies reshape propaganda tactics within authoritarian regimes (King et al. 2017; Yingdan & Pan 2021), the results of this thesis underscore the persistence of certain practices despite the advent of digital platforms. This is not contradictory, as social media platforms are not inherently designed to foster pluralist democratic interaction. Instead, these platforms can be used to reinforce existing power structures and communication methods (ibid). State-affiliated media entities maintain a presence on social media; however, their usage often mirrors traditional broadcast methods rather than embracing new approaches by digital technology (King et al. 2017). As d'Hooghe discusses, this reflects the dual modes of public diplomacy – traditional and new.<sup>14</sup> Shirky (2008) discusses how new technologies such as email, mobile phones, and social media drastically lower the barriers of group formation and collective action. These tools can enable new organizing methods that bypass traditional institutional structures, leading to diverse and large-scale collaboration (ibid). Despite the potential for new public diplomacy afforded by digital platforms, state-affiliated media often adhere to the traditional mode, using digital tools to disseminate controlled top-down messages. This shows how new technology does not necessarily equate to new practices but can be adapted to reinforce existing communication strategies.

Moving forward, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this thesis.

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<sup>14</sup> Traditional diplomacy involves controlled, one-way communication aimed at managing a country's image, while new public diplomacy emphasizes engagement, dialogue, and relationship-building through interactive and participatory methods (d'Hooghe 2015).

Firstly, this qualitative research is based on a small corpus of seven videos, which only partially represent the entirety of Xinhua's communication efforts related to mask diplomacy. However, I surveyed a larger corpus, providing a broader context and increasing confidence in the findings, despite the limitation of being unable to examine everything in detail. Future research may consider conducting a quantitative analysis encompassing a broader selection of mask diplomacy videos to enhance unbiased perspectives. Furthermore, I only examined Xinhua's constructed discourses and strategies in the videos, yet I didn't explore the effectiveness of the videos.

Understanding the user comments in the videos could offer deeper insights into the effectiveness of Xinhua's mask diplomacy videos. Additionally, I only analyzed videos available in English, which limits the scope of the analysis and potentially overlooks nuances in videos published in other languages, or in the Chinese language alone. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct a cross-analysis of videos produced by various sources in diverse languages, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of mask diplomacy narratives in general.

Despite potential areas for further research, not exploring them doesn't diminish the significance of this qualitative thesis. Qualitative research delves into real-world problems, offering deeper insights than quantitative methods (Tenny et al. 2022). Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and interventions, qualitative research helps to generate hypotheses and delves into understanding experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (ibid). It addresses the how and why rather than how many or how much (ibid). Understanding how Xinhua communicates is crucial because it reveals the power dynamics and strategic narrative employed by an authoritarian regime to shape perceptions and maintain influence. The Foucauldian concept of biopower might be relevant here. Biopower involves managing populations through interventions to enhance and regulate life (Foucault 1980). Mask diplomacy can be seen as a form of biopower, where providing medical supplies becomes a way to manage health and geopolitical relationships (Zahradníčková and Kašparová 2024). By sending masks and other medical supplies, China exerts biopolitical influence, enhancing its image as a global health leader and fostering dependency and goodwill. Zahradníčková and Kašparová (2024) highlight how mask diplomacy operates as biopower, using health aid to exert influence and reinforce power structures. This insight is significant

for understanding how such regimes leverage digital media to assert their power, control, the narrative, and influence international opinion during global crises. The results of this thesis provide a valuable understanding of Xinhua's visual methods and strategies to communicate its messages and shape global perceptions of China's approach to the COVID-19 crisis. In an age where information is power, dissecting narratives can help to understand and navigate the complex landscape of global influence and control.

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## Appendices

**Table 1: Overview of the selected videos.**

Number	Title	Hashtags	Date	Length	Link
1.	Chinese, Japanese give out masks for free in Tokyo	#coronavirus #StayStrongChina	1-3-2020	1:58	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn6ItVCO2l8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn6ItVCO2l8</a>
2.	Chinese foundations donate 1 million masks to Japan to aid COVID-19 fight	#Jackma #coronavirus #FightVirus	3-3-2020	0:38	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EP6BPdg4Hbg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EP6BPdg4Hbg</a>
3.	Iran, China fight coronavirus in spirit of solidarity	#coronavirus #FightVirus	5-3-2020	1:22	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1M4WuQRe-Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1M4WuQRe-Y</a>
4.	A show of solidarity! International cooperation in response to COVID-19	#coronavirus #FightVirus	6-3-2020	1:12	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtjgAd2qcbY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtjgAd2qcbY</a>

5.	China shares experience with Europe, jointly fighting COVID-19	#coronavirus	7-3-2020	2:39	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YC8M4WUinUo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YC8M4WUinUo</a>
6.	China offers help to virus-hit countries to minimize COVID-19 impact	#FightVirus	8-3-2020	5:56	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG4TgePiKx8&amp;t=2s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG4TgePiKx8&amp;t=2s</a>
7.	People from different countries put wise words of #SharedFuture on #Coronavirus donations	#SharedFuture #CoronaVirus	23-3-2020	0:49	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5Mf6dRdFc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5Mf6dRdFc</a>



**Table 2: Overview of themes in the videos.**



	A shared future for mankind / Future	Battle rhetoric / War / Enemy	Mask donations / aid ceremony	Doctors	Influential people	Flags	Encouraging texts
Chinese, Japanese give out masks for free in Tokyo			x		x	x	x
Chinese foundations donate 1 million masks to Japan to aid COVID-19 fight			x			x	x
Iran, China fight coronavirus in spirit of solidarity			x			x	
A show of solidarity! International cooperation in		x	x		x		





response to COVID-19							
China shares experience with Europe, jointly fighting COVID-19	x	x	x	x	x		x
China offers help to virus-hit countries to minimize COVID-19 impact	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
People from different countries put wise words of #SharedFuture on #Coronavirus donations	x	x	x			x	x



### Sample shot protocol: video 5.5.


Number	Image	Length	Camera shot	Image content	Acoustic	Spoken text	Written text	Location
1.		0:00-0:02	Long shot	A building is shown. Lots of European flags on the street in front of the building. Few people walk in the shot	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	None	As the coronavirus epidemic is leveling off in China, more infections are reported in Europe	Unspecified, but I think it is most likely in Brussels
2.		0:02-0:08	Medium close up	A woman working in a hospital.  Clothes: protective suit, gloves, face mask, goggles.	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	None	As the coronavirus epidemic is leveling off in China, more infections are reported in Europe	Unspecified, but the background suggest Belgium or France


				Get supplies for something unspecified, probably testing kits.				
3.		0:08-0:12	Long shot	A street in Italy with an ambulance and a few pedestrians.  Ambulance is the main focus of the shot	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	None	Italy is the worst hit European country, with some 4,600 cases confirmed as of Friday	Italy
4.		0:12-0:17	Long shot	A man sitting on a bench in front of a wall with written text on it. One pedestrian passes by.  Man sitting	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	None	Italy is the worst hit European country, with some 4,600 cases confirmed as of Friday	Italy, Milano

				wears face mask.  Subway station, people waiting for their subway to come. Some wear a face mask				
5.		0:17-0:36	Medium shot Close up Medium shot Long shot	A video meeting is shown, where which one party is seen through the screen, as the other party (the Chinese) are seen in real life.  The Chinese	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	The two parties conversing, but it is very difficult to hear what is being said because the music is louder than the audio	On Wednesday, Chinese medical experts from Wuhan shared experiences treating the COVID-19 with Italian peers.  Experts shared the key points in	Shot from a point of view of Chinese medical experts


				<p>medical experts wear white doctor coats and face masks and make notes.</p> <p>The man in the video conference doesn't wear a face mask.</p>			<p>criterion of wards, treatment schemes and protection of medics among others.</p>	
6.		0:36-0:52	<p>Medium close up Medium shot Medium close up Medium close up</p>	<p>Street scenes in Italy.</p> <p>First two shots focus on people from Asian descent wearing face masks Third shot shows others wearing</p>	<p>Piano music, gives off a serious tone.</p> <p>Legato</p>	None	<p>Meanwhile, China has also donated medical supplies to hard-hit regions</p> <p>Officials and experts say it is worth learning from China's experience</p>	Unspecified, most likely in Milano, Italy.


				<p>face masks.</p> <p>Fourth shot once again focus on Asian people wearing face masks.</p> <p>Focus on face masks or lack of.</p>			to tackle the epidemic	
7.		0:52-0:54	Long shot	<p>Almost empty subway train.</p> <p>Only one person in there. Light blue interior, yellow accents</p>	<p>Piano music, gives off a serious tone.</p> <p>Legato</p>	None	Officials and experts say it is worth learning from China's experience to tackle the epidemic	Unspecified, most likely in Milano, Italy.
8.		0:54-0:56	Long shot	Shot of the Milano	Piano music,	None	None	Milano, Italy

				Duomo, with pedestrians in the foreground.	gives off a serious tone. Legato			
9.		0:56-1:07	Medium close up	Maria van Kerkhove speaking about China and their COVID-19 experience, with a background of the WHO	Piano music, gives off a serious tone. Legato On the background of van Kerkhove's talk	The experience that China has with COVID-19, the work that they are doing and taking an evidence-based approach to this response, is something that the world needs to	Maria van Kerkhove WHO's Health Emergencies Program  The experience that China has with COVID-19, the work that they are doing and taking an evidence-based approach to this response, is something that the world needs	Unspecified


							to learn from	
10.		1:07-1:31	Medium close up	<p>Kathleen Depoorter, A Belgian Federal MP, shares her thoughts about China and COVID-19 and what they've learnt from China.</p> <p>On her desk stands a poster with: good luck China, good luck us! West &amp; East Stay Strong Together</p>	<p>Piano music, gives off a serious tone.</p> <p>Legato</p> <p>On the background of Depoorter's talk.</p>	<p>And the minister said that we've learned a lot from the crisis in China. For example, we've learned who are the risk patients, so right now we can take measures. And we are really counting who are the people who are most at risk. And we can really take our</p>	<p>Kathleen Depoorter Belgian Federal MP</p> <p>And the minister said that we've learned a lot from the crisis in China. For example, we've learned who are the risk patients, so right now we can take measures. And we are really counting who are the people who are most at</p>	





						measures, towards these facts we've been passed through by the Chinese.	risk. And we can really take our measures, towards these facts we've been passed through by the Chinese.  Source is also mentioned: W.E. Culturefest	
11.		1:31-2:10	Medium Close up	Vincent de Saedeleer, Hon. vice president, port of Zeebrugge shares his thoughts about the COVID-19 situation.  Suit.	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato  On the background of de Saedeleer's talk	So one of the major elements in this crisis we have now is that the Chinese government as from the very first moment has been very open	Vincent de Saedeleer  Hon. vice president, Port of Zeebrugge.  So one of the major elements in this crisis we have	Port of Zeebrugge, Wuhan Center for Disease Control & Prevention

				<p>Different shots in China, Wuhan Center for Disease Control &amp; Prevention.</p> <p>Shots of doctors in China sitting behind a computer.</p> <p>Shots of doctors in China looking at an X-Ray, all the doctors so far wear hair nets, gloves and white doctor's coats.</p>		<p>in sharing the data. And as a result, all the medical world all over the world is searching for a fast vaccine to fight this virus. That openness and openness in return of the whole world to share the data and what we have is a major result and will contribute to solving this issue.</p>	<p>now is that the Chinese government as from the very first moment has been very open in sharing the data. And as a result, all the medical world all over the world is searching for a fast vaccine to fight this virus. That openness and openness in return of the whole world to share the data and what we have is a major result</p>	
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				During these shots one still hear's Saedeleer's talk about the situation.			and will contribute to solving this issue.  —— 武汉市疾病预防控制中心  Wuhan Center for Disease Control & Prevention	
12.		2:10-2:24	Medium close up	Johan Neyts about COVID-19  Common enemy: virus.  Second shot: people of the	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato  On the background	We have one common enemy and that common enemy are viruses. And we should all fight	Johan Neyts  Professor of Virology, University of Leuven, Belgium  We have one common enemy and	Unspecified

				Chinese red cross posing on a station somewhere in China	of Neyts stalk.	together to make sure that we are not dying from these viruses. We shouldn't fight each other, we should fight viruses.	that common enemy are viruses. And we should all fight together to make sure that we are not dying from these viruses. We shouldn't fight each other, we should fight viruses.	
13.		2:24-2:34	Medium shot Medium close up Medium close up Medium close up Medium close up Medium close up	Different scenes of Chinese medical 'battling' COVID-19  All wearing protective clothing from head to toe.	Piano music, gives off a serious tone.  Legato	None	None	Somewhere in a Chinese hospital

								
14.		2:34-2:39	Long shot	Fading out of the video, Xinhua's label is shown.	Piano music, gives off a serious tone. Legato	None	Xinhua News	Unspecified