

# An Inquiry into the Construction of China's Image in *Proposal on the Reform and Development of Global Governance* from the Perspective of Attitude System

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**Abstract:** As a symbol of national soft power, national image plays a pivotal role in international competition. National image is largely shaped by diplomatic political discourse. *Proposal on the Reform and Development of Global Governance* issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlights China's responsibility and commitment to comprehensively participate in global governance and actively contributes Chinese wisdom. It is an important part of contemporary Chinese foreign discourse practice. From the perspective of Attitude System, the following is found: the Chinese government demonstrates a national image of shouldering responsibility, actively acting, and adhering to peaceful development.; the 'Chinese solution' demonstrates the responsibility of a great country and is of great significance in enhancing the power of international discourse.

**Keywords:** National Image; Global Governance Discourse; Attitude System

## 1. Introduction

With the development of economy and information and communication technology, the shaping and dissemination of national image have gradually become the focus of international relations and cultural exchanges. In order to win respect and recognition in the international arena, every country is actively using diversified means to present itself. To a large extent, national image is shaped by diplomatic and political discourse. On September 13, 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) released the *Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance*, which comprehensively elaborates China's position on the key areas of current global governance, as well as China's plans for the development and reform of the governance system. This "Chinese solution" is of great significance to the practical implementation of China's effective

global governance practices. The "Chinese solution", which appears on the Chinese government's official website, visualizes the community of human destiny, highlights China's responsibility and commitment to comprehensively participate in global governance and actively contributes to China's wisdom. It constructs a positive national image, which is positively oriented towards enhancing the influence of China's discourse. At present, the research on China's global governance discourse mainly focuses on political science and communication science, and few people have analyzed China's global governance discourse from the perspective of evaluation theory [1][2][3][4]. In view of this, based on the attitude system of evaluation theory, this paper adopts a qualitative research method to analyze the attitudinal resources for constructing the state image in the English translation of *Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance*, and to explore the generative motives behind it.

## 2. Attitude System in Evaluation Theory

Evaluation theory develops the interpersonal function in systemic functional linguistics, focuses on how speakers use language to express their emotions, attitudes and opinions, and emphasizes how speakers indicate their position through language in the process of linguistic communication, so that the listeners clearly understand their own claims, and regulate intersubjective positions, so as to construct complete interpersonal relationships and promote the realization of interpersonal meanings [5][23]. It has The three subsystems of "intervention", "gradation" and "attitude" and focuses on how the discourse expresses attitudes and values through evaluative vocabulary and lexical resources, so as to realize the interpersonal function of the discourse. The main focus of this paper focuses on the image of China in "the proposal", and the attitude system will be explained

in detail below.

“‘Attitude’ refers to the psychological and behavioral tendencies held by the evaluator towards a particular object, and ‘attitude system’ refers to the judgement and appreciation of human behaviors, texts, processes and phenomena after being influenced by psychology”<sup>[6]</sup>. The attitude system can be divided into three subsystems, namely, “emotion”, “judgement” and “appreciation”, which are closely related and together constitute the speaker’s attitude orientation towards behaviors, texts, processes and phenomena. The affective system is the core of the whole attitudinal system, and both the judgmental system and the appreciation system are derived from it. “The affective system belongs to the category of reaction in psychology, which is the subjective emotional experience of things and phenomena, reflecting the effect of the thing or phenomenon on the subject’s emotions”<sup>[5]</sup><sup>53</sup>. In the attitudinal system, emotions with different affective significance are interpreted as semantic sources of affective reactions and changes such as happiness, anger, sadness, and so on. “The judgement system belongs to the ethical category, which evaluates the behavior of language users according to ethical and social norms”<sup>[5]</sup><sup>54</sup>. “The appreciation system belongs to the aesthetic category, which refers to people’s evaluation of texts, behaviors, and natural environments”<sup>[5]</sup><sup>55</sup>. The appreciation system also is an institutionalized expression of emotion, with positive or negative evaluations in terms of how the value of products, performances and natural phenomena are judged. In summary, “affect” is emotional evaluation, “judgement” is the evaluation of people or behaviors based on moral and social norms, and “appreciation” is aesthetic evaluation. Emotions, as essential elements of the attitude system, can be translated into judgement or appreciation, which in turn can evoke emotions. “The attitude system focuses on the expression of human emotions in discourse, the evaluation of behavior and the value judgement of events”<sup>[7]</sup>.

### 3. Analysis of the Corpus

The research corpus is a policy document released by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 13, 2023, sourced from the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As an official policy document, the “China’s Proposal” has stated its position and attitude on global governance issues. Based on the questions to be examined, this research analyzes the use of attitude resources in the corpus.

#### 3.1 Affective System Analysis

In the attitude system, emotions with different affective meanings are interpreted as semantic sources of emotional reactions and changes, such as happiness, anger, sadness, etc. The affective system is categorized into positive emotions and negative emotions. Positive emotions are usually optimistic while negative emotions are pessimistic. The analysis found that the emotion system accounts for the smallest number of words, which reflects the political textual nature of the “Chinese solution”, as it is published on the official website in a more formal linguistic scenario. The use of a small number of positive emotion words is the discourse’s attempt to mobilize the audience’s emotions, trigger their empathy, and better convey China’s attitude. For example:

- (1) ... encourage Afghanistan to put in place an inclusive political framework, adopt moderate policies, combat terrorism and develop friendly external relations.
- (2) The Japanese government needs to show sincerity and have full communication with neighboring countries, accept strict international oversight, and ...
- (3) Given the current situation, parties concerned need to remain calm and restrained, work to ease the situation and make efforts to create conditions for the resumption of dialogue, rather than insisting on sanctions and pressuring, which would only aggravate problems and escalate tensions.
- (4) China has been actively promoting peace and talks, and will continue to work with the international community to follow the dual-track approach...

The above four examples relate to the positive affective words “friendly”, “sincerity”, “calm and restrained” and “actively” respectively. By using positive affective vocabulary to express China’s consistent respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries, its insistence on international justice, and its support for the international community’s endeavor to achieve common security, the speaker demonstrates China’s image as a great power that is committed to peaceful diplomacy and supports the adoption of positive emotions in the face of international disputes. Through the use of positive emotional resources, “China’s proposal” expresses the Chinese government’s willingness to participate in global governance in order to promote the development and improvement of the global

governance system, and its emotional will to build a community of human destiny with the international community.

### 3.2 Judgmental Analysis

Judgmental attitude resources can be divided into two categories: social constraints and social judgements. Social constraint focuses on the legitimacy and morality of the evaluation object, which is divided into two tendencies: praise and condemnation, including truthfulness and decency. Social judgement, on the other hand, focuses on whether the behavior of the object of evaluation is of excellent quality, competent and praiseworthy, and it is divided into two tendencies: appreciation and criticism. It is further divided into the following three subcategories: normality, competence and tenacity. normality is linked with whether people are normal and regular in doing something; competence refers to whether people use their abilities to accomplish a task when dealing with something; tenacity refers to whether people are reliable and down-to-earth when it comes to something<sup>[5]55</sup>.

(5) The international community needs to stick to opening up as the overall direction, uphold multilateralism, ... and encourage integrated development; stick to equality as the basis, respect the social systems and development paths of different countries.

(6) China supports necessary and equitable reform of the Security Council to boost its authority and efficiency, enhance its capacity to tackle global threats and challenges, and ...

(7) Countries that are major players in outer space should take up primary responsibility for safeguarding peace and security in outer space.

Example (5) uses the word “foundation” as a positive term for the norm, stressing that the premise of the “Chinese proposal” is to promote the construction of a new type of international relations based on mutual respect and equal treatment. China unswervingly follows the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, exchanges modernization experiences with other countries on an equal footing, but never imposes its will on others, thus constructing an image of a country that treats others on an equal footing.

Example (6) uses social judgement words like “capacity” to show that China is willing to work with all parties to actively and constructively participate in the reform of the Security Council, so as to enhance its authority and efficiency, and

improve its ability to deal with global threats and challenges, thus constructing a national image of “concern for international affairs”.

Example (7) uses the affirmative word “responsibility”, which is similar to tenacity. China's space industry will fully adhere to the basic will of space development to serve the country. China advocates the peaceful use of outer space, opposes the militarization and an arms race in outer space and actively promotes the building of a community of human destiny in outer space. This reflects China's image as a “responsible space power”.

### 3.3 Appreciation Analysis

Appreciation of resources can be categorized as aesthetic, which can be divided into positive and negative appreciation. There are three variables in this system: reaction, composition and evaluation. Reaction is the degree to which a text or process attracts public attention and has an emotional impact on the public in an interpersonal perspective. Composition is the description of the details or features that make up a product in a discourse context, identifying whether the text or process is normative or not. Evaluation is the judgement of the social significance or harm of a text or process from the perspective of social value<sup>[5]56</sup>.

(8) In advancing human rights, countries should put the people front and center, make the people's aspirations for a better life their starting point and ultimate goal, ..., so that people can lead a good life.

(9) China will work with the rest of the international community to push for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and ...

(10) We need to attach importance to the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, fully harness the relevance of histories and cultures to the present times, ... and innovative development of all fine traditional cultures in the process of modernization.

Example (8) uses a positive word in the “good” reaction category, which tends to resonate with the audience's expectations of a better life and makes them feel favorably toward the speaker, and in this case creates a “friendly” image of the country.

Example (9) uses the positive phrase “work with”. This phrase shows that China actively participates in the global governance of climate change. China is also an active practitioner of the Paris Agreement, and it has never been absent from the fight against global climate change, demonstrating China's role as a great power in global environmental

governance.

The word “innovation” or “innovative” in example (10) is an element in the category of social values, representing renewal and change, which shows that China respects the diversity of world civilizations and at the same time stresses keeping pace with the times, and emphasizes the importance of seeking wisdom and pooling strengths in the inheritance of the world’s outstanding cultures and innovations in order to contribute to the solution of the various challenges faced by mankind, thus constructing China’s “change-oriented” national role in global environmental governance. This has constructed China’s image as a country that “focuses on change”.

#### 4. Conclusion

The “China’s Proposal” puts forward the concept of global governance of common business, common construction and sharing, highlights China’s wisdom and responsibility in global governance, and is an integral part of contemporary China’s foreign discourse practice, which provides a carrier for the dissemination of values to build China’s national image, and can enhance China’s discourse power in the field of international public opinion in a more effective way. China has actively led the reform process of the global governance system and puts forward a series of new ideas and initiatives to address regional hotspots and global challenges, demonstrating the role of a developing country. In participating in the construction of the global governance system, the concept of peaceful development has always been China’s basic philosophy in handling international relations. From the perspective of its responsibility as a country,

China has actively participated in global governance. The Chinese Government has demonstrated its image as a country that shoulders its responsibilities, acts positively and adheres to peaceful development.

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