

# Wolf Warrior Diplomacy – Foreign Policy for Internal Use in China

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## Abstract

The article reveals the content of the new concept of “wolf warrior diplomacy” that first appeared in 2019. “Wolf warrior diplomacy” is a metaphorical phrase denoting a new demeanor of Chinese diplomats, characterized by particular assertiveness and aggressiveness. The author examines the emergence of the concept and its popularization in Chinese media discourse, and comes to the conclusion that this behavior of Chinese diplomats was not only condemned by the Chinese leadership and Chinese society, but, on the contrary, was supported and publicly approved. This is consistent with the new conceptual foreign and domestic political ideas of China – the strengthening of the “discursive power” in the international arena and the strengthening of the “four certainties” within the country. Wolf warrior diplomacy is intended to demonstrate China’s ability to turn in its favor even ideas, concepts and formulations that were originally anti-Chinese in nature and were developed by Western countries to discredit China and undermine its international image.

## Key words

Wolf warrior diplomacy, China, diplomacy, foreign policy, discursive power

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In recent years, China's foreign policy has been characterized by a departure from the diplomatic principles formulated by Deng Xiaoping, which were expressed in the formula *"observe cold-bloodedly, stand firmly on your feet, be unflappable, hide your capabilities and bide your time, never take the lead, take the opportunity and do what you are capable of"*. With Xi Jinping's accession to power, Chinese diplomacy has taken on new features – not only new concepts that shape the diplomatic narrative, but also new forms of diplomatic response and the language of diplomacy itself are changing.

Domestic experts have already noted that Chinese diplomacy has changed since the election of Xi Jinping. They claim that: "after 2012, the search for a new model of China's relations with the outside world intensified, moving discussions on the need for a new proactive diplomacy into the practical sphere" (Денисов, 2017, p. 86); "Despite the fact that the 'fifth generation of China's leaders' retains the traditional policy of 'not joining', 'keeping a low profile', 'showing restraint and modesty', the very quality of China's foreign policy is changing" (Козыкина, Муратшина, 2017, p. 54). The transformation of China's foreign policy allowed V. Kashin and A. Pyatachkova to talk about a "new style" of Chinese diplomacy during the pandemic (КАШИН, ПЯТАЧКОВА, 2020).

Practice has shown that the new Chinese diplomacy gives priority not to soft power, but to strengthening its "discursive power" internationally (Denisov, 2020), with rather severe and aggressive statements used for its reinforcement. This behavior of Chinese diplomats is called *Zhan lang waijiao* (战狼外交) – translated into English as "wolf policy"<sup>2</sup>, "battle wolf diplomacy"<sup>3</sup>, "wolf diplomacy"<sup>4</sup>, "wolf warrior diplomacy."<sup>5</sup> Without going into details of translation, we will simply note that the latest formulation proposed by I.E. Denisov and I.Yu. Zuenko, seems to us to be the most accurate and will be used in this article.

<sup>2</sup> Габуев А., Умаров Т. Политика волков и масок: как Китай защищает свою репутацию в кризис. РБК, 30.04.2020 [Gabuev A., Umarov T. The Policy of Wolves and Masks: How China Protects Its Reputation in a Crisis. RBK, 04/30/2020]. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/politics/30/04/2020/5ea9d6519a794770045da33f> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>3</sup> Скосырев В. Агрессивный тон Китайского МИДа задают молодые «волки-воины». Независимая газета, 20.05.2020 [Skosyrev V. The Aggressive Tone of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Is Set by Young "Wolf Warriors". Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 05/20/2020]. URL: [https://www.ng.ru/world/2020-05-20/6\\_7865\\_china.html](https://www.ng.ru/world/2020-05-20/6_7865_china.html) (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>4</sup> Как работает «дипломатия волков»? Информационно-аналитический портал «Империя», 01.04.2021. [How Does Wolf Diplomacy Work? Information and Analytical Portal "Empire", 04/01/2021.] URL: <https://www.imperiyanews.ru/details/1e4d6e2b-1193-eb11-8122-020c5d00406e> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>5</sup> Денисов И., Зуенко И. Почему новый язык китайской дипломатии звучит так грубо. Профиль, 26.05.2020. [Denisov I., Zuenko I. Why the New Language of Chinese Diplomacy Sounds so Rude. Profile, 05/26/2020] URL: <https://profile.ru/abroad/pochemu-novyy-yazyk-kitajskoj-diplomatii-zvuchit-tak-grubo-320380/> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

“Wolf warrior diplomacy” has come to be referred to as the severe, tough, aggressive (often insulting) reaction of Chinese diplomats to statements by foreign colleagues, officials, journalists, etc. that touch issues that are sensitive to China.

If we look for parallels to such behavior in Chinese culture, Jeanne M. Smith, PhD in Law and Senior Fellow in the Strategic Technology Program at the U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), writes that the origins of “wolf warrior diplomacy” should be sought in the *Dào Dé Jīng*, a study of which is extremely useful for understanding the behavior of China and Chinese diplomats.<sup>6</sup>

It seems that the correlation with Chinese stratagems can be of great importance for understanding the nature of “wolf warrior diplomacy”. V.S. Miasnikov writes: “Everything that is required to win a political struggle needed a strategy... Strategy in diplomacy drew its means not from its principles, norms and customs of international law, but from the theory of military art, which has a total nature and claims that the end justifies the means... A strategy is the ability to calculate moves in political game, and sometimes not only to calculate them, but also to program them based on the specifics of situation and qualities of the opponent” (Мясников, 2004, p. 8-10).

The transformation of Chinese diplomacy from the “silence of the lambs” to “wolf warrior diplomacy” can be characterized by the transition from the strategy “Hide a dagger behind a smile” (seek the trust of your rival and inspire calm; only then carry out your own hidden agendas; prepare appropriately, attack without hesitation and do not let the enemy recover) – to the strategy “The cicada sheds its skin” (always keep an air of confidence, not allowing flaws in your viewpoint). This way one can prevent an ally from giving way to fear, and not give an enemy the chance to launch an attack. As noted by I.N. Panarin, these strategies are among the most frequently used in modern diplomacy (Панарин, 2015, pp. 211-212). In addition, the use of “wolf warrior diplomacy” can also be seen as a way of emotionally goading an opponent in the hope that he will say or do something that can then be actively used against him. As the treatise by Sun

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<sup>6</sup> Smith Zhanna M. New Tail for China's 'Wolf Warrior' Diplomats. CSIS, 13.10.2021. URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-tail-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomats> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

Tzu says: “Having aroused anger in him, put him into a state of disorder” (Сунь-цзы, 2002, pp. 68-69), and the incisive comments of Chinese diplomats, which caused an unusually violent reaction in the West, characterize this postulate in the best way possible.

For a deeper understanding of “wolf warrior diplomacy”, we should go back to the origins and look at how and when this phenomenon took shape. The Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia claims that the phrase “wolf warrior diplomacy” first appeared in December 2020, linking it to a speech by the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China Hua Jianmin and the reaction to the use of this wording in the German newspaper “Der Tagesspiegel.”<sup>7</sup> However, according to the Chinese web search engine Baidu, the phrase “wolf warrior diplomacy” (*zhan lang waijiao*) appeared much earlier. The concept gradually formed in stages.

The word combination *zhan lang* (*wolf warrior*) might be traced back to 2015-2017, but exclusively as the title of the blockbuster Chinese action film that tells the story of a Chinese Rambo defending the interests of China. Western observers also associate the phrase *wolf warrior diplomacy* with the sequel, “Wolf Warrior 2.”<sup>8</sup>

The image of the wolf was chosen as the basis of the metaphor for the following reason – in Western countries, as well as in China and Russia, the image of the wolf has negative connotations. It is in this negative connotation that the English-language media and Western experts used the phrase *wolf warrior diplomacy* in relation to Chinese diplomacy.

The Chinese behaved differently. They took the English phrase *wolf warrior diplomacy* and actualized its positive connotation when translated into Chinese. They essentially left the form (using semantic calquing) and filled it with their own content (replaced the negative connotation with a positive one), finding a proper justification for it – the sensational movie “Wolf Warrior 2”, which brought in a record 5.68 billion yuan at the Chinese box office. Thus, the first part of the blockbuster “Wolf Warrior” already introduces two connotations for

7 战狼外交. URL: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%88%98%E7%8B%BC%E5%A4%96%E4%BA%A4/55451735?fr=aladdin> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

8 Bandursky D. Xi Jinping: Leader of the Wolf Pack. Global Asia, September 2020. URL: [https://www.globalasia.org/v15no3/focus/xi-jinping-leader-of-the-wolf-pack\\_david-bandurski](https://www.globalasia.org/v15no3/focus/xi-jinping-leader-of-the-wolf-pack_david-bandurski) (accessed: 15.07.2022)

“wolf warriors”: positive and negative. The positive connotation is a special unit of the People’s Liberation Army called the “Wolf warriors”, which carries out special tasks to protect China’s national interests. The negative hypostasis of the wolves is represented by external forces – firstly, the wild wolves that attack the unit, and secondly, a criminal drug cartel of foreigners in the first film, and African rebels and their foreign collaborators in the sequel.

The need to build a positive connotation for the image of the wolf arises from the fact that in traditional Chinese culture the wolf has always had negative features, which is reflected in numerous phraseological expressions, such as 狼心狗肺 *ferocious, inhuman (lit. wolf’s heart, dog’s lungs)*, 豺狼成性 *hardened villain (lit. jackal and wolf became character traits)*, 官虎吏狼 *greedy inhuman officials (lit. tiger officials and wolf officials)*, etc. The wolf was considered as a symbol of cruelty, greed, heartlessness, and a lack of understanding of moral norms.

The word combination “wolf patriotism” (*zhanlangshi aiguo*) has negative connotations, first appearing in the Chinese media in 2018 and applied to Chinese tourists who behave indecently while emphasizing that they are Chinese. For example, the Chinese Internet published articles about the provocative behavior of the Chinese at airports of Iran<sup>9</sup> and Bali<sup>10</sup>, where they started singing the national anthem or shouting the word “China” to attract the attention of the Chinese embassy to solve the problems with flight delays. This behavior clearly demonstrates that as the country grows in power, its citizens begin to feel a certain permissiveness. However, the positive image of the “wolf warrior” from the movie displaced the negative connotation associated with this zoomorphic symbol from the consciousness of the Chinese speakers, which served as the basis on which the positive assessment of “wolf warrior diplomacy” within China later grew.

The positive understanding of the Chinese “wolf warrior diplomacy” was strengthened by the fact that the phrase “wolf warrior” (战狼) was contrasted with other phrases carrying a clear negative connotation and embodying exter-

<sup>9</sup> 战狼式爱国？三家中国大使馆连发声明，都强调这两个字 01.02.2018. URL: [https://www.sohu.com/a/220296466\\_349954](https://www.sohu.com/a/220296466_349954) (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>10</sup> 战狼式“厉害了，我的国”怎么让外交部受不了了呢？ URL: <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5514683622> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

nal negative forces, such as *wolves* (狼), *wild wolves* (野狼), *evil wolves* (恶狼), *evil people* (恶人), *enemies* (敌人), *dancing with wolves* (与狼共舞). It is against these “evil forces” that Chinese “wolf warrior” diplomats fight.

In addition, Chinese authorities talked about putting the hat of “*wolf warrior diplomacy*” (扣帽子) on China, *attaching a label of “wolf warrior diplomacy”* (打标签), which in the minds of Chinese speakers directly corresponds with the Cultural Revolution period and unfair accusations, a sense of shame and disgrace for their inability to justify themselves. Thus, through the Chinese language in the situation with “wolf warrior diplomacy”, China characterizes itself as a victim, defamed, slandered, vilified and unjustly accused (these words are also used in speeches about China’s position on “wolf warrior diplomacy”). For example, Le Yucheng, Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, speaking at a forum on think tanks in Beijing in December 2020, said that “China is labelled as having ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’, and at the very least this is a misunderstanding... In fact ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’ is just a new version of ‘Chinese threat theory’ and a ‘discourse trap’ that aims to make China not respond to offenses and insults and stop fighting.”<sup>11</sup> Since China feels itself to be a great power, it considers silent tolerance of insults unacceptable, thereby justifying “wolf warrior diplomacy”, and emphasizing its defensive nature.

In early 2019, the Chinese media was not yet using the phrase “wolf warrior diplomacy” (*zhan lang waijiao*), although the trade war between the US and China had already heated up. In March 2019, responding to reporters’ questions regarding the arrest and detention of Meng Wanzhou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China Wang Yi still stuck to rather sensitive language: “This is not just a legal case against a company or an individual, this is deliberate political pressure... We also support companies and individuals to legally defend their interests rather than being voiceless lambs.”<sup>12</sup> Following Wang Yi, the metaphor of voiceless lambs became a leitmotif and has been repeatedly used by other Chinese MFA officials as an antagonist of “wolf warrior diplomacy”, thereby reinforcing the positive connotation of “wolf warrior diplomacy”.

<sup>11</sup> 乐玉成: “战狼外界”是“中国威胁论”的又一翻版 // 北京日报 (05.12.2020). URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1685215313515724923&wfr=spider&for=pc>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

This may well have been a signal that other models of response are needed to make China's voice heard, which directly correlates with the intensification of the theme of China's "discursive power" in the international arena and the emergence of "wolf warrior diplomacy."

In mid-2019, the Chinese Internet featured the derivative word combination *zhan lang hua* (战狼化) "turning into a wolf", and headlines contained the phrase "中国外交越来越“战狼化”了吗？ *Is Chinese diplomacy getting more wolfish?*", and *zhan lang* (战狼) is used as a verb, for example "中国外交战狼了吗？ *Has Chinese diplomacy become wolfish?*"<sup>13</sup> The expression "战狼 外交官 *wolf warrior diplomat*"<sup>14</sup> began to be applied to Zhao Lijian. The starting point for the promotion of the concept of "wolf warrior diplomacy" was the altercation between Zhao Lijian and Susan Rice on Twitter.<sup>15</sup> Hu Xijin, the Global Times editor, noted that the West reacted so strongly to Zhao's answers because the West is not used to Chinese diplomats launching sharp criticism against the Western countries<sup>16</sup> – the West has always considered it a priority to accuse other countries, while Chinese criticism was quite accurate and revealed the lies of the West. After this event, the media lexicon began to include first the phrase *zhan langshi waijiao* (战狼式外交) and then *zhan lang waijiao* (战狼外交) "wolf warrior diplomacy".

The notion was baptized in 2020, when the Western countries, led by the United States, accused China of spreading the coronavirus. A series of accusations and claims against China were echoed by the diplomatic corps. Peter Martin, the Bloomberg reporter and author of "China's Civilian Army", noted in an interview that "after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, Chinese diplomats felt attacked, but also proud of the way their country handled the crisis. A new mixture of confidence and growing uncertainty came together to create what we now call "wolf-warrior diplomacy."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 中国外交战狼了吗？ // 环球时报新媒体. URL: <https://view.inews.qq.com/a/20200525V00AYE700?tbkt=1&uid=> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>14</sup> 华春莹新同事报到：推特上最红的“战狼”外交官. URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1642843210855477493&wfr=spider&for=pc>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> 胡锡进：中国外交越来越战狼化？看看这场骂战就知道了. URL: <https://v.ifeng.com/c/v/7oNuFDHTEaG> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>17</sup> Understanding Chinese "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy". The National Bureau of Asian Research, 22.10.2021. URL: <https://www.nbr.org/publication/understanding-chinese-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

The Chinese reacted particularly sensitively if the virus was called the Chinese or Wuhan virus, if the country was accused of silencing the initial spread of the coronavirus, blamed for its emergence and spread, as well as claims for damages or negative assessments of Chinese actions in countering the waves of COVID-19. Liu Xiaoming, China's ambassador to the United Kingdom, said in May 2020: "It is noted that China now has many 'wolf warriors'. That's because 'wolves' have appeared in the world. And if there are wolves, there must also be those who will fight them. So we welcome diplomats at all levels to actively join the fight. Where there is a 'wolf', it is necessary to actively fight back, defending national honor and interests."<sup>18</sup>

Chinese "wolf warrior diplomacy" is not impersonal, but rather personalized. The MFA spokesperson Zhao Lijian is one of the leaders of China's new diplomatic "pack". Both domestic and Western observers noted that Zhao Lijian's militant tone on Twitter when he served as an envoy advisor to Pakistan contributed to his promotion. On February 24, 2020, he gave the first official briefing as the 31<sup>st</sup> spokesperson of the MFA Press Service.<sup>19</sup> It seems that his appointment was not accidental, because after China imposed a total lockdown on January 23, 2020 due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, China was hit by a wave of criticism, which could no longer be answered by "voiceless lamb diplomacy", and the "wolf warrior" Zhao Lijian came in handy.

Other "wolf diplomats" singled out by the foreign and Chinese researchers include Zhao Lijian's colleagues in the Foreign Ministry's Press Service, Hua Chunying and Wang Wenbin, as well as Qin Gang, Ambassador to the United States, Liu Xiaoming, Ambassador to Great Britain, Zhang Hanhui, Ambassador to Russia and Zhang Xiao, Ambassador to Kazakhstan. Thus, the so-called "wolf warriors" are represented by two "packs" – the Foreign Ministry press service and Chinese ambassadors abroad. Wang Yi, the head of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and his deputies, Le Yucheng and Qin Gang, prior to his appointment as Ambassador to the United States, are more diplomatic and do not use harsh

<sup>18</sup> 中国驻英国大使：之所以有“战狼”是因为这个世界有“狼”。 URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1667618492052055714&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>19</sup> 赵立坚就任外交部第31任发言人 首场发布会“火力全开”// 人民日报 (24.02.2020). URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1659421033448722343&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

language in their speeches. But they do not prohibit their subordinates from employing this style of language. In one of his speeches, Wang Yi stressed: “We will give a resolute response to deliberate slander, we will firmly guard national honor and national dignity. As for gratuitous slander, we will demonstrate the true state of affairs in order to preserve impartiality, justice and human conscience... And all those who keep trying to put a hegemonic hat on China are themselves the ones who cannot part with their dominance.”<sup>20</sup> Wang Yi thus gives the green light for his subordinates to engage in tough response tactics.

Chun Han Wong and Chao Deng, journalists at Wall Street Journal, note: “In the past, Chinese diplomats have allowed outbursts of harshness, mostly over core interests such as disputed territorial claims, foreign visits by the Dalai Lama and alleged independence activism by other figures whom Beijing views as separatist threats. More recently, they have been pushing Beijing’s narratives on a much broader range of topics, from the treatment of Muslim minorities to Chinese aid and loans to developing countries.”<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that China tries to apply “wolf warrior diplomacy” in a variety of ways. In December 2020 Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for China’s Foreign Ministry, said that “to protect China’s own legitimate interests, its sovereign security and development, national honor and dignity as well as international justice, why don’t we use ‘wolf warriors’?”<sup>22</sup> From this statement one can conclude that China can use “wolf warrior diplomacy” on a wide range of issues.

In 2021, “wolf warrior diplomacy” continued to strengthen its position. On January 2, 2021, Wang Yi, China’s Head Foreign Minister, said in an interview with CGTN: “We treat friends with hospitality, we are ready to cooperate with partners, we will fight against evil people. As for benevolent criticism, we are ready to listen humbly; as for sensible advice, we are always ready to move towards it. However, if it is unreasonable to blacken and maliciously attack us,

<sup>20</sup> CNN 记者提问“战狼外交”·王毅霸气回应! (24.05.2020). URL: [https://www.sohu.com/a/397399762\\_157164](https://www.sohu.com/a/397399762_157164) (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>21</sup> Chun Han Wong, Chao Dan. Chinese diplomatic “war wolves” are ready to fight. The Wall Street Journal (InoPressa), 05/20/2020 URL: <https://www.inopressa.ru/article/20May2020/wsj/wolfwarriors.html> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>22</sup> 华春莹：为维护国家荣誉与尊严·就做“战狼”又何妨？// 人民日报 (11.12.2020) . URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1685739805069904233&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

we will certainly fight back vigorously. If it is psychological terror (bullying) that threatens peace, then we have an even greater need to restore justice.”<sup>23</sup> On February 9, 2021, Qin Gang, the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister, answering questions from German journalists, called those who slander and blacken China *elan* “wild wolves.”<sup>24</sup> March 2021 was marked by a furious squabble between the Chinese and US representatives at the Anchorage talks. “The United States has no right to speak to China in a condescending tone, the Chinese people will not accept it”, Yang Jiechi, the head of the Chinese delegation and Party foreign policy handler, said at the time.<sup>25</sup> In December 2021, Qin Gang, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, answering questions from the US media, said, “Chinese diplomats are not fighting wolves, but dancing with wolves.”<sup>26</sup>

The metaphor of “wolf warrior diplomacy”, coined in the West, has taken root in Chinese media discourse. Tough response tactics became regular and entrenched in the arsenal of Chinese diplomats after 2019. The metaphor even began to be considered by Chinese experts as one of the problems of modern Chinese diplomacy. For example, Professor Jiang Shisue, the professor at Shanghai University, cites discussions on whether Chinese diplomacy has departed from one of Deng Xiaoping’s basic principles of *hiding capabilities and biding time*, how to treat “wolf warrior diplomacy”, what China’s international “discursive power” is, and the fact that building a theory of international relations with Chinese specifics is a difficult and lengthy process.<sup>27</sup> Professor Jiang, like many others in China, emphasizes that “wolf warrior diplomacy” is China’s defensive tactic. “Whether ‘wolf warrior’ or ‘voiceless lamb’ are merely metaphors for national diplomatic style... In special conditions, ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’ may be the best choice, and in other conditions, it will be difficult to avoid ‘voiceless lamb diplomacy’. Each country’s diplomatic style is a unity of ‘wolf warrior di-

<sup>23</sup> VideoCina News. URL: <https://video.sina.cn/news/2021-01-02/detail-iiznctke9815058.d.html>

<sup>24</sup> 中国外交部副部长秦刚回应“战狼外交”. URL: <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2021/02-10/9409370.shtml> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>25</sup> Мингазов С. США и Китай обменялись резкостью в начале встречи на Аляске. Forbes 19.03.2021. [] URL: <https://www.forbes.ru/newsroom/obshchestvo/423965-ssha-i-kitay-obmenyalis-rezkostyami-v-nachale-vstrechi-na-alyaske> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>26</sup> 秦刚：中国外交官不是战狼，而是与狼共舞// 中国新闻网. URL: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1720033065708873979&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>27</sup> Westcott B., Jiang S. China Is Embracing a New Brand of Foreign Policy. Here’s What Wolf Warrior Diplomacy Means. CNN, 29.05.2020. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/28/asia/china-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-intl-hnk/index.html> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

plomacy' and 'voiceless lamb diplomacy'. Except that the frequency of use and degree will be determined following changes in that country's external and internal conditions and diplomatic policy."<sup>28</sup> What stands out in Professor Jiang's statement is that the use of "wolf warrior diplomacy" is a deliberate choice (hence, less aggressive styles could well have been used), whereas the "voiceless lamb diplomacy" is clearly forced behavior. Professor Jiang thus views "wolf warrior diplomacy" itself and its application positively.

The Chinese would be acting out of character they did not turn inventions of the West directed against China to their advantage – it is no coincidence that the Chinese language has the expression 洋为中用 (*yangwei zhongyong*) – *to use foreign achievements in the interests of China*. This is what happened to the vivid metaphor of "wolf warrior diplomacy", which began to be used by Chinese newsmakers with a focus on the domestic audience. I. Denisov and I. Zuenko rightly note that "it is not a fact that 'wolf warrior diplomacy' is aimed specifically at the outside world. It would be logical to assume that it is aimed at China itself and even more specifically at the Communist Party, which Xi Jinping wants to unite and mobilize as much as possible to solve internal problems (economic stagnation) and external problems (Western pressure)"<sup>29</sup>.

It even seems that the diplomacy of the wolf warriors is aimed not only at uniting the party, but also to a greater extent at the broader Chinese public. Jessica Chen Weiss, an associate professor at Cornell University, who has studied the role of nationalism in China's international relations, argues that the Chinese citizens increasingly expect the Chinese government to stand tall on the world stage and meet challenges with dignity. In confirmation, the Global Times published a poll on December 30, 2020, showing that 71.2% of the Chinese support "wolf warrior diplomacy" since the West has not yet learned to coexist on the principles of equality with China.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Денисов И., Зуенко И. Почему новый язык китайской дипломатии звучит так грубо. Профиль, 26.05.2020. [Denisov I., Zuenko I. Why the New Language of Chinese Diplomacy Sounds so Rude. Profile, 05/26/2020] URL: <https://profile.ru/abroad/pochemu-novyy-yazyk-kitajskoj-diplomatii-zvuchit-tak-grubo-320380/> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>30</sup> 七成中国人支持“战狼外交”：西方还没学会与崛起的中国平等共处. URL: <https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20210102a0byw600> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

Zhao Lijiang himself expressed approval of “wolf warrior diplomacy” at the beginning of 2020 both at home and abroad; an article posted on the Chinese portal for ethnic Chinese living abroad stated: “Recently a new spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry was appointed, who just took office and started with denials! This ‘wolf warrior’ diplomat is really not to be trifled with, and all of us Chinese expatriates can breathe a sigh of relief. Our diplomats should not all be the embodiment of the Five Confucian virtues.<sup>31</sup> In addition to “Confucian diplomats”, we need the power of “wolf warriors” who strike without a miss.”<sup>32</sup> This consolidated Chinese endorsement of “wolf warrior diplomacy” and also linked to traditional attitudes to strategy. V.S. Miasnikov states that if a hero acts in the interests of the state and for the welfare of the people, he has a positive image, his strategies and the steps and measures based on them are noble by definition” (Мясников, 2004).

The focus of “wolf warrior diplomacy” on the Chinese public is also noted by Peter Martin, who said in an interview with the Indian newspaper *The Hindu*: “the truth is that we are not spectators. They do it to show people in Beijing that they are loyal to the regime, they are loyal to Mao or Xi Jinping or whoever. The foreign audience there is really a kind of byproduct.”<sup>33</sup>

Initially, the representatives of the Chinese Foreign Ministry began to make harsh statements on Twitter, blocked on the territory of China, and so the original message was really addressed to the outside. However, this behavior does imply that one of the goals was to attract the attention of the Chinese leadership, to serve as a show of loyalty to the regime. Meanwhile, it is precisely the information about how the “wolf warriors” sharply criticize Western politicians in foreign social networks that quickly spread on the Chinese segment of the Internet, becoming a kind of confirmation of China’s strengthening voice in the international arena, something that the Chinese people have long desired.

Chinese and foreign experts and journalists alike began to look for other examples of “wolf warrior diplomacy”, and met many examples of undiplomatic and even offensive statements and actions made by Chinese diplomats.

<sup>31</sup> The five Confucian virtues are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and kindness.

<sup>32</sup> Huayiw. URL: <http://www.huayiw.com/information/html/2020/2/26/1395.html> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

<sup>33</sup> The making of China’s ‘wolf warrior’ diplomacy. In Focus podcast. The Hindu. URL: <https://www.thehindu.com/podcast/the-making-of-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-in-focus-podcast/article35538120.ece> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

Peter Martin, speaking of the undiplomatic behavior of Chinese ambassadors, says: “If Chinese diplomats were at a disadvantage and afraid of losing their reputations, even the smallest offenses or insults would be magnified into major international problems. They were, I think, driven by the fear that if they did not, they would be considered traitors at home. Thus a ‘wolf-warrior diplomacy’ has emerged.”<sup>34</sup> It seems that this statement is only half true, because such “undiplomatic” behavior should not be retrospectively attributed to “wolf warrior diplomacy”; it is more correct to view it as evidence of diplomatic intemperance rather than a systemic phenomenon in Chinese diplomacy, since there was no concept of “wolf warrior diplomacy” before Zhao Lijian’s appointment. The metaphor “wolf warrior” appears only in 2019, and “wolf warrior diplomacy”, with the tacit consent of China’s leadership and the support of the Foreign Ministry leadership, becomes a trend in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 epidemic. On the other hand, from the ethno-psychological point of view, Chinese diplomats who use harsh language may indeed do so because of the fear of losing their reputation and losing face (*mianzi*) or, on the contrary, because they wish to improve their reputation, attract the attention of their superiors, and to earn approval.

It might be concluded that “wolf warrior diplomacy” is not something completely new for China and has deep historical-cultural and ethno-psychological roots. This strategy explains not only the reasons, goals and actions of the Chinese side, but also helps to understand why “wolf warrior diplomacy” has been perceived positively by the Chinese society. On the other hand, the Chinese language’s skillful play on the initially negative imported concept of *wolf warrior diplomacy* demonstrates the real possibilities of the language to replace the content of the concept and create an emotional background around it that meets public expectations and serves the goals of the Chinese leadership. The linguistic formalizations of the concept also indicate its conceptual consistency and its transition from the media discourse to the diplomatic narrative and the field of theoretical reflection.

<sup>34</sup> Фрэнк Фан. Политика Китая породила дипломатию «волков-воинов». The Epoch Times, 05.11.2021. [Frank Fan. China’s Policy Has Given Rise to “Wolf-Warrior” Diplomacy. The Epoch Times, 05.11.2021] URL: <https://www.epochtimes.ru/mnenie/politika-kitaya-porodila-diplomatiyu-volkov-voinov-130777/> (accessed: 15.07.2022)

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### **«Дипломатия боевых волков» – внешняя политика для внутреннего использования в Китае**

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**Аннотация:** В статье раскрывается содержание нового понятия «дипломатия боевых волков», которое появилось в 2019 г. «Дипломатия боевых волков» является метафорическим оборотом, обозначающим новую манеру поведения китайских дипломатов, характеризующуюся особой напористостью и настойчивостью. Автор, основываясь на хронологии появления данного оборота в СМИ, раскрывает эволюцию формирования понятия в китайском медийном дискурсе и приходит к выводу, что подобная тактика китайских дипломатов не только не была осуждена со стороны руководства Китая и китайским обществом, но и, наоборот, была поддержана и одобряется в обществе, что напрямую согласуется с новыми концептуальными внешне- и внутривластными идеями Китая – усилением «дискурсивной силы» на международной арене и укреплении «четырех уверенностей» внутри страны. Дипломатия боевых волков на практике демонстрирует возрастающие возможности Китая оборачивать в свою пользу даже те идеи, концепции и формулировки, которые изначально имели антикитайский характер и разрабатывались странами Запада для дискредитации Китая и подрыва его международного имиджа.

**Ключевые слова:** дипломатия боевых волков, Китай, дипломатия, внешняя политика, дискурсивная сила

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