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Научная статья



Conceptualization of “Othering”: An Analysis of Western Media’s Mechanism for Constructing the Discourse of Beijing Winter Olympics

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Abstract. The objective of the Olympic movement is to maintain separation of sports from politics. However, international politics has played a significant role in the survival and development of the Olympic Games throughout its history. Recently, Western media's politicization of Olympic organizers has been on the rise. This research paper aims to examine the role of mainstream media outlets in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Germany. It analyzes carefully selected samples of texts published during the Beijing Winter Olympics, employing critical discourse analysis as the primary methodology. The study aims to uncover the discourse strategies employed by Western media in covering Beijing Winter Olympics, the ideologies behind them, and their constructed image of global governance. The paper also examines the historical and realistic conditions in which this image has been formed and analyzes the discourse mechanism of Western media system. Western media's narrative of the Olympic Games host is not primarily about China but rather a reflection of the West's self-construction needs and embodiment. In this context, China is portrayed as a systemic competitor that challenges Europe, "subverts" international rules, and promotes alternative modes of governance. Through a critical analysis of the political implications underlying Western media coverage during the Beijing Winter Olympics, this study exposes the inherent limitations of the Western "othering" framework. In doing so, it provides invaluable insights that contribute to the development of Chinese discourse and narrative systems, ultimately strengthening the Chinese subjectivity framework in the realm of international communication.

Keywords. Beijing Winter Olympics, Politicization of sports, political intervention, Western media, Othering, Sino-Russian cooperation.

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Original article

Отражение концепта «отчуждение»: анализ механизма конструирования западными СМИ дискурса зимних Олимпийских игр в Пекине

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Аннотация. Олимпийские игры как крупнейшее международное спортивное мероприятие способно выйти за рамки политических систем, рас, идеологий и культурных традиций. Олимпийские игры служат средством для укрепления дружбы и взаимопонимания между людьми по всему миру, и, несмотря на то, что Международный олимпийский комитет (МОК) всегда придерживался принципа политического невмешательства, международная политика всегда играла значительную роль в поддержании и развитии данного мероприятия. Как результат, МОК сумел сохранить Олимпийские игры свободными от политического влияния извне, однако, в последнее время можно наблюдать тенденцию западных СМИ к политизации Олимпийских игр.

Данная исследовательская работа посвящена выборочному анализу текстов средств массовой информации (СМИ), опубликованных в Соединенных Штатах Америки, Канаде, Великобритании и Германии во время освещения зимних Олимпийских игр в Пекине. СМИ были выбраны в соответствии с критерием степени их влияния на мировую общественность и их роли в формировании национального имиджа Китая в развитых западных странах.

Цель исследования — выявить стратегии, используемые западными СМИ при освещении зимних Олимпийских игр в Пекине, с точки зрения используемой ими идеологии и образа глобального управления. Кроме этого, в данной статье рассматриваются исторические и культурные аспекты, которые повлияли на формирование образа Китая в западных СМИ.

Небольшая группа высокоразвитых западных стран осуществляет контроль над производством и распространением информации во всем мире за счёт своих богатых экономических, технологических и капитальных ресурсов. Это является основой для создания искажённого потока информации со стороны западных стран, что, в свою очередь, влияет на формирование национального имиджа Китая. СМИ, доводя информацию до международной общественности путём выборочного освещения событий имеют колоссальное влияние на формирование имиджа определённой страны. Изображение страны-организатора Олимпийских игр западными СМИ, как правило, сложно назвать беспристрастным, так как оно отражает политику Запада, основой которой являются его собственные интересы. Китай выступает в роли соперника Европы, который «ниспровергает» международные права и свободы и продвигает альтернативные способы управления государством. В рамках данного исследования рассматриваются основные элементы построения китайского дискурса

и нарративных систем, а также выделяются преимущества нарративной системы китайских СМИ в процессе выявления политического подтекста и западного подхода в алиенации Китая, которые используются западными СМИ во время освещения зимних Олимпийских игр в Пекине.

В данном контексте западные СМИ используют механизм алиенации, который, в основном, действует по трем направлениям: формирование стереотипов, создание бессознательного чувства непохожести и конструирование мифов. Между тем, можно наблюдать явные различия между образом Китая, представленным в западных средствах массовой информации при освещении зимних Олимпийских игр, и тем образом, которого Китай придерживается в соответствии со своей международной политикой. Детальный анализ этих различий позволит углубиться в культурный, экономический и политический контекст, лучше понять причины негативного изображения Китая, и в последствии достичь совершенствования международного диалога между Китаем и западными странами. Основной вывод данной статьи заключается в том, что значительная часть информации, освещённая в западных СМИ, о проведённых зимних Олимпийских играх в Пекине, основана на предрассудках и предвзятых взглядах, которые скорее соответствуют национальным интересам Запада и не отражают действительность в целом.

Ключевые слова. Зимние Олимпийские игры в Пекине, политическое вмешательство, политизация спорта, западные СМИ, отчуждение, Китайско-Российское сотрудничество.

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Introduction

Since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, domestic scholars have been concerned about the stark differences between domestic and foreign media, especially Western media, in terms of the topics covered and the value orientation in their reporting. While the domestic media mainly followed a propaganda-oriented approach and showcased China's economic development and social progress, the Western media predominantly used an issues framework and even created a negative consensus against China in their coverage. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), in its final report on the 2008 Beijing Olympics, highlighted that the biggest challenge facing the

Beijing Olympics was "severe public and media criticism". This indicates that negative coverage in the Western media has had a significant impact on the foreign public's perception of the Beijing Olympics. This situation reflects the long-standing strength and weakness of the Western discourse in international affairs.

Status of research

The strategy, law and communication effect of large event coverage have always been issues of great concern to the sports journalism and communication community in China. For a long time, the theoretical research on sports journalism in China has lagged far behind the reporting practice. A compre-

hensive and systematic study and research on Olympic Games reporting can provide a sufficient scientific basis for solving many problems in the field of sports journalism and lay a solid foundation for the construction of sports journalism. The Beijing Winter Olympics provide a classic case for studying the relationship between sports journalism and national image shaping, and provide an ideal sampling object for this study, which will also become a milestone in the history of sports journalism communication in China.

There is a distinction between broad and narrow Olympic coverage. Olympic coverage in a narrow sense refers to the mass media's coverage of the Games themselves, which is limited to the Olympic events and sports competitions. In a broader sense, Olympic Games coverage refers to all the coverage related to the Olympic Games [1], including the preparation for the event, the process of the event, cultural activities, as well as the coverage of the political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, and other macro environments of the host countries.

This study provides a comprehensive definition of Olympic Games coverage, encompassing a wide array of related topics. These include the event's preparation, the unfolding of the event itself, the economic development of the host country, cultural activities, environmental protection, social democracy, technological advancements, food safety, transportation and accommodation, the political system, emergencies, intellectual property rights, and international relations. The study examines the reportage of these diverse issues in relation to the Olympic Games.

Olympic coverage is a global media event, which makes the host coun-

try the center of media coverage and the focus of public attention all over the world. As a vital component of international communication, Olympic coverage plays a crucial role in shaping a country's image. China, as an active host of the Olympic Games, recognizes the significance of enhancing its international influence through such coverage. Therefore, alongside fostering a positive national image, promoting international understanding and cooperation through Olympic coverage stands as a key objective for China. The current domestic and foreign research involving this area is broadly focused on the following aspects.

In the case of the Western countries that borrowed from the Olympics to otherize them, for example, established studies have largely followed two paths. The first is critical research, mostly in the form of newspaper opinion articles, which focuses on exposing the evil intentions of the perpetrators of the defilement and generally treating it as a product of arrogance and prejudice, power and discourse [2–7]. The second type of empirical research, mainly in the form of journal articles, focuses on the evolution of the wave according to a timeline, exploring the motives of the perpetrators' behavior from the levels of international structure, domestic politics, and personal traits, as well as proposing China's response strategies from the dimensions of strategic determination, agenda setting, and international communication [7–10]. On the whole, most of the current results either focus on descriptive analysis rather than normative analysis, with a focus on factual commentary or policy theory, or on retrospective analysis rather than prospective analysis, with a focus on short-term coping strategies and

less on long-term strategies for China's de-othering. As a result, there is a need to explore in greater depth the generation, impact, and response to the wave of Western othering of China.

The above-mentioned studies consider the coverage of the Olympic Games as a connection between media, society, and the state, pointing out the close relationship between the coverage of sports events and the image of the state, which provides research ideas for this paper. However, the above-mentioned studies use less critical discourse analysis and focus on the linguistic features and frames used by Chinese media, such as People's Daily, in their specific reports, with less research on "other shaping" and less research on the construction strategies and subsequent improvement of China's national image. In addition, the above-mentioned studies mainly focus on the domestic and international media coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, while the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics have not yet been fully researched by academics. The above problems leave room for theoretical exploration and methodological innovation for this study.

Methology

This paper will use critical discourse analysis to reveal the role of othering mechanisms and their generation in the construction of China's image of global governance by Western media in the context of history and reality. Critical discourse analysis is based on a theoretical perspective that views the relationship between words and truth as highly fragile and problematic, and its goal is to reveal, through the detailed description, interpretation, and criticism of a series of statements in a text, the

textual strategies that make a certain discourse common knowledge and the ideology behind them. The aim of this analysis is to unveil the textual strategies employed to establish a discourse as common knowledge or to naturalize it, while also scrutinizing the underlying ideological and power dynamics. This will be accomplished through a meticulous examination, interpretation, and critique of a series of statements within the text, delving into their intricate details [11]. A critical analysis of a text does not seek to prove whether the claims made by the text are true, but rather to ask what groups might benefit from the views expressed in the text.

In terms of the research subjects, this study has selected representative Western media for analysis based on several criteria. Firstly, the media outlets chosen are considered authoritative and influential within the Western media landscape. Secondly, the selected media outlets are known to cover the Olympics from a Western perspective. Lastly, they have a direct economic source relationship or maintain close ties with the officials of the country to which the media belongs.

To fulfill the above criteria, this study has selected the following media outlets: Associated Press, New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times in the United States; Reuters, The Times, Daily Telegraph, and The Guardian in the United Kingdom; Agency France-Presse in France; Deutsche Presse-Agentur in Germany; and The Australian in Australia. This study has focused on the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, which are scheduled to be held from January 17, 2022, to February 22, 2022. To ensure a comprehensive sample, this study has chosen January 17 to February 22, 2022, as the period for data collection.

After manual screening and removing duplicate reports, this study has collected 92 reports from 11 Western mainstream media outlets as the study sample. The selected media outlets have been chosen primarily due to their significant influence and position as mainstream media in developed Western countries. This is crucial as they play a pivotal role in constructing China's national image among the global public. The foreign media's coverage of the Olympics is often focused on the event's politics, economy, and society, and they excel in extending the relevance of recent events. They discuss the causes, process, background, results, impact, and follow-up of the event, and work on the extension of the event to form a three-dimensional report, which is the most important feature of foreign media coverage of the Olympics. Furthermore, foreign reporters can convey intangible opinions to readers by extending favorable facts, thus influencing their judgment of the event itself. This is more effective than straightforward persuasion and advocacy. This paper aims to use critical discourse analysis to reveal the role of othering mechanisms and their generation in the process of constructing the image of China's hosting of the Olympic Games in the Western media, considering the historical and practical context.

In the 21st century, some Western countries continue to advocate the China threat theory, and the Western mainstream media have been reporting on China in a more negative way to distort China's national image, serve the local government's decision making and protect their national interests. In international communication, the media constructs the national image of other countries through a constant stream of reports on them. The audience's perception of another country's

image is largely dependent on the local media, so when the media's image of another country is constructed in a biased manner, it inevitably leads to misinterpretation by the audience. Today, 80 % of the world's major news stories originate from several major Western media outlets, and the international image of China is largely influenced by the Western mainstream media.

Approach of National Image Building

International communication is a form of communication intricately tied to international politics. Robert S. Fortner provided a definition stating that international communication involves the exchange of information and ideas between nations, with national societies serving as the fundamental unit, and mass communication acting as a crucial foundation for this process [12]. The basic subject of international communication is the state, and in addition to the state, it also includes international institutions, supranational institutions, allied or regional groups, transnational organizations or movements, various domestic groups or organizations, and individuals. International communication is distinctly political, full of contradictions, conflicts, compromises, and joint relationships between the national or ethnic interests of countries. In a variety of international institutions, most of the communication subjects appear as representatives of national societies, and the international reports of the mass media also serve national interests. Studies and content analyses of international news coverage show that the Western media may disagree with governments on domestic policy, but they are highly consistent with them on foreign policy, which also illustrates the

political nature of international communication. Among various sporting events, the Olympic Games have a prominent place, organized and conducted by national governments, with dramatic characteristics and extraordinary appeal to the general public, and are considered an important part of official public culture. While media coverage of sporting events provides an opportunity to enhance the national image of the host country, there is also a risk of damage due to the bias between the “other” and self-image national image in the media communication process.

To sum up, the starting point of mass media is a kind of political communication. For the construction of national image, the influence of its discourse symbolizes the power of the country, which radiates an unreachable influence on other international actors with hard power. At the same time, politics itself implies the meaning of communication [13, pp. 112–116]. In international political life, even a state with absolute hegemony needs to disseminate its strategic ideas, concepts of action, values, and policies to the public, so as to let its allies understand its development direction and steps, as well as to gain more receivers and understanders, to win the legitimacy of its actions, and then give a response or even a blow to its competitors. From this perspective, it can be argued that political power relies heavily on the ability to communicate effectively and persuade others. This encompasses not only the adept management of the communication process but also a profound understanding and skillful implementation of various communication techniques. If we embrace this proposition and acknowledge its validity, it logically follows that, as a topic of

discussion, within the realm of a sovereign state's foreign communication, if the state's own image can be acknowledged by other international actors, it will consequently acquire a form of discursive power over other nations.

In addition, there is a serious imbalance in international communication. Although the process of global informatization is accelerating, there is a serious polarization between information-rich countries and information-poor countries in the world today due to the different degrees of economic and social development of each country [14]. A small number of developed Western countries, with their strong economic, technological, and capital strength, control the production and dissemination of information in the world today, resulting in an unequal structure of one-way flow of information in the world. The imbalance of international information dissemination also affects the construction of national image. In international news dissemination, the media not only provide the international public with a large amount of information about the outside world, but also influence people's overall perception and evaluation of a country through the selection of information, thus playing a role in constructing the image of the state. Some scholars have pointed out that in international communication, the interpretive framework dominated by stereotypes restricts the effectiveness of national image agenda setting. The Matthew effect, in which the strong get stronger and the weak get weaker, leads to a better national image for developed countries than for developing and underdeveloped countries. By virtue of their economic and technological advantages, Western countries have always consolidated their control and

manipulation of global ideological discourse and have initially formed a strategic siege on the non-Western world. In view of this, this study will focus on different issues related to the Beijing Winter Olympics, and take China in Western media coverage as the object of study, to remedy the shortcomings of previous studies to a certain extent.

A very passive factor for non-English speaking countries hosting the Olympics is that their national image is not entirely shaped by themselves. Chinese American scholar Liu Kang has pointed out that the international image of non-English-speaking countries is basically shaped by the U.S.-dominated global information dissemination system, and the role of national media is insignificant. Because English has been the dominant language in the coverage of the Olympic Games, and because of the differences in perceptions and approaches in the coverage of the Games between countries, the media, represented by China, has been in a weak position in the coverage of the Games and has played a limited role in shaping the image of the country.

Analysis: The main path of “othering”

Walter Lippmann has summarized the news frame as a constant framework of perception, interpretation and presentation, and a stable and unchanging paradigm of selection, emphasis and omission [15, pp. 20–23]. It is based on such a framework that the media organizes its discourse in a conventional way. Generalized interpretation is that people are happy to understand things in the way they are familiar with and given by their culture. It goes without saying that news distributors and audiences inevitably fall

into a holistic mode of thinking, or a central construction of meaning, when processing information and meaning, which is informed by a stereotype of the news subject. The term “stereotype” was initially introduced by Walter Lippmann to elucidate a prevalent socio-cognitive phenomenon observed in media reporting. It suggests that individuals' behavior is not solely guided by direct and definitive knowledge, but rather influenced by self-constructed images or those imparted to them by external sources [15]. Once established, these images show great vitality and influence, and are reinforced by the widespread dissemination of various media. Homi Bhabha further points out that stereotypes are the basic patterns of our perception, expectation, and imagination of the culture of “the Other”, which are mainly caused by the asymmetry of information and the desire for heterogeneous culture in modern society [16]. The stereotype objectively fits people's psychological expectation of cultural “the Other” and makes it relatively easy for outsiders to understand the originally isolated heterogeneous culture. Western media construction of Winter Olympics in China is a typical example of this. By applying an “othering” journalistic framework, the reality presented to the audience is not the same as the objective truth, but an artificial construction based on political interests, economic competition, and cultural traditions.

Stereotypes create the “other”

Since China began participating in international sporting events in the 1980s, the Western media has repeatedly produced several negative stereotypes about the Chinese sports system: the state-sponsored sports

system is a large producer of dumb sports robots; the Chinese sports school system embodies state-sponsored, systematic child abuse; and the central government organizes the use of banned drugs by athletes. Chinese sports are often labeled as “sports factories”, “communist sports machines”, and assembly lines to produce pain. These stereotypes and inferences are frequently reinforced by ideological imagination, which portrays China as a socialist country and assumes the adoption of a Soviet-style, communist sports system. From these specific sports practices in China to the conclusion of the “original sin” of the state-lifting system, there are a lot of arguments skipped in between, which are specious.

Reuters has repeatedly pressed China on human rights matters in the run-up to the Beijing Winter Olympics, reporting that human rights groups have strongly criticized the handing over of the Games to Beijing due to Chinese authorities' crackdown on Muslim minorities such as the Uighurs and a host of other human rights abuses. In addition, the sudden disappearance of Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai at the end of 2021, coupled with the death of top IOC official Richard Pound, has put the IOC itself at the center of criticism. The New York Times, in a rhetorical game of unabashed English, used 2–3 different headlines to try to deconstruct the undeniable phenomenon of Uyghur athlete Yilam Jiang lighting the main torch at the Beijing Winter Olympics. The New York Times editor-in-chief Joseph Kahn herself criticized the Chinese team uniforms for highlighting gender differences with a costume issue [17]. CNN and others criticized the artificial snow of the Winter Olympics

with seemingly scientific but absurd descriptions; a Dutch media reporter cooperated with the live broadcast by standing in a controlled area and reporting the facts of the conflict [18]. Lithuanian state radio and television (LRT), often perceived as aligning with the ideological stance of Washington, has been criticized for its line of questioning and attempts to undermine the accommodation and catering arrangements of the Winter Olympics, among other issues. Critics argue that LRT's coverage of the Winter Olympics exhibited a biased perspective that seemed to echo the views and interests of Washington. They contend that this approach resulted in a series of questions and criticisms directed towards the event's logistical aspects, particularly the accommodation and catering arrangements. These allegations suggest that LRT may have focused disproportionately on perceived shortcomings, potentially neglecting to provide a more balanced and comprehensive coverage of the Winter Olympics. It is important to note that media outlets should strive to maintain objectivity and avoid becoming a mouthpiece for any specific political agenda [19].

By analyzing the content of the coverage, the Winter Olympics were supposed to be an opportunity for China to showcase its comprehensive power and cultural appeal to the world, but Western media outlets turned their attention beyond sports, consistently covering issues such as civil liberties, doping, and human rights, creating a biased narrative of political sports that accounted for more than half of the negative news. The Guardian, Deutsche Welle and the New York Times have an inherent consistency in their coverage of the Olympics in China, set-

ting their agendas on issues (such as human rights, freedom of expression, LGBT issues), with the Western media tending to politicize Olympic issues, and negative politicized coverage has deflated the positive signals China is trying to send.

Ian Holliday and others have deconstructed the "other" into two interrelated aspects, such as stereotypes and prejudices. Stereotypes, also known as stereotyping effects, are categorizations and blanket judgments of alleged objects in highly simplistic and generalized symbols [20, pp. 112]. It is almost a consensus that many stereotypes are created by the mass media. The media create and maintain stereotypes through news coverage, and people learn and form stereotypes about the subjects of news coverage through news. Many scholars believe that after the end of the Cold War, the Western mainstream media marginalized and constructed negative images of non-English speaking countries to rationalize the racial superiority of Western countries. At the root of this is the fact that media coverage of countries with conflicting political and economic cultures, especially in terms of ideology, is often biased and influenced by each other, creating a crisis-ridden "other".

The unconscious "other" in news production

According to Erving Goffman's framing theory, which explains that framing is an important benchmark for people to translate social reality into subjective thought, a subjective mode of interpretation and thinking about events by people or groups or organizations. It is derived from past experiences on the one hand and influenced

by socio-cultural consciousness on the other [21]. In the mass media perspective, the framework of the media is the criteria for making choices, the process of screening, organizing, producing, and distributing news. In other words, the entire process of news production, from the selection of the material to the expression of the news discourse, to the editing and distribution of the news, is always characterized by the reproduction of the image of "othering", which reflects the news values of the medium. Barbara Wertheim Tuchman even said bluntly that news is made, not found. Social institutions and collective knowledge and the construction of group images play an important role in the presentation of othering [22, pp. 112–114]. The construction of the image of "othering" is the result of the production of news that produces, routinizes, and simplifies social reality.

During the Beijing Winter Olympics, the New York Times published an article "How China Told the Winter Olympics Story: Robots, Fake Accounts and Water Troops". In China's propaganda "Bo will be the Golden Village," The Winter Olympics were hailed as a resounding success, symbolizing the harmonious interplay between sports and politics. However, critics argue that this portrayal served as a facade, glossing over the country's deep-rooted issues and human rights violations, leading to accusations of whitewashing. While the Winter Olympics showcased impressive sporting achievements and brought nations together in the spirit of competition, it is essential to acknowledge the concerns raised by critics regarding the broader context in which the event took place. These critics argue that the focus on the games overshadowed or downplayed

significant problems and human rights abuses within the host country. The Foreign Correspondents' Association in China (FCC) issued a strongly-worded statement following the conclusion of the Beijing Winter Olympic Committee, expressing serious concerns over the behavior of Beijing authorities. According to the FCC, there have been repeated instances where independent interviews and reporting by foreign journalists were obstructed, and journalists were subjected to harassment and physical altercations. The FCC's statement sheds light on the challenges faced by foreign journalists while trying to fulfill their professional duties during the Winter Olympics. The association accuses Beijing authorities of deliberately impeding journalistic freedom and attempting to control the narrative surrounding the event. Furthermore, they highlight instances where journalists were not only followed but also subjected to rough treatment. The situation is alarming and reflects the deterioration of the general reporting environment for the foreign media, urging the Chinese authorities to abide by their own rules and allow journalists in China to report freely in public places. Meanwhile, some foreign media are still looking at China through tinted glasses, speculating that the extensive use of artificial snow for the Beijing Winter Olympics is not environmentally friendly, talking about bad and dangerous, damaging the environment and serious depletion of groundwater. In fact, several previous Winter Olympics used artificial snow, and the proportion of artificial snow in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea was 98 %. Avram Noam Chomsky once said: "Mainstream media outlets are often criticized for their role in shap-

ing public discourse. Critics argue that these media sources not only proactively set the agenda to align with the expectations of those in power but also make continuous adjustments to conform to government requirements and prescribed standards. Furthermore, they claim that mainstream media unquestioningly accept prearranged narratives and directives from the government. The Western mainstream media, represented by the U.S., is highly unified with the U.S. government on foreign issues, especially on the issue of "anti-China" [23, pp. 87–90].

"Othering" shaped by myths

In the process of constructing a news framework, structuralist scholar Ferdinand de Saussure distinguished between "enlightened" and "referred" signs, and French semiotic theorist Roland Barthes distinguished between explicit and implicit meanings, real concrete references and cultural values and beliefs conveyed by signs or sign systems [24, pp. 109–110]. He also introduced the concept of myth in addition to these two in relation to the media: Cultures has its own myth [24]. This also gives us insight from the semiotic perspective that "othering" in news reporting can in fact be seen as a process of signifying the other, a process of signifying that emphasizes the marginality of the other group, its difference from the subject and deliberately shaping the assimilation of the advanced to the backward. Once this symbolic myth permeates the socio-cultural environment, it becomes the universal identity of the society that conceals the relevant political and social dimensions of meaning, which is the premise and unconscious of media coding and audience interpretation.

Most of the questions from Chinese and foreign journalists focused on the technological and artistic presentation of the opening ceremony, the prevention and control of epidemics in the Beijing Winter Olympics, but there were very few journalists whose focus was always on politics. At the same time, the Beijing Winter Olympic Games have been one of the main focuses of media coverage in various countries because of the outstanding achievements of the US-born Chinese athletes. The number and frequency of coverage of this group in the Western mainstream media selected for this study has remained high.

In such reports, the athletes' performance and accomplishments are often used as quotes, and the attention and public discussion that the athletes receive in both countries due to their nationality and bloodline are the focus of the reports, which usually focus on topics such as Sino-US relations, China's foreign policy, Chinese domestic and international society, and the public opinion generated by such athletes, which can be said to have distinct political overtones. Some media reports claim that the Chinese government has consciously placed this group of athletes at the center of a political tug-of-war between major powers, while accusing Chinese society of being intensely hostile, nationalistic, and xenophobic toward this group. In this regard, Western media reports rarely present objective facts and are characterized by emotional language, with high-frequency terms such as mean-spirited, neglectful, cynical, and the emotional tone is generally negative.

In a word, objectivity, impartiality, neutrality, and balance are regarded as the guiding principles of professional

journalism, but when the natural gulfs of politics, economics, social systems, and ideology are in front of us, the presentation of the "other" will be a necessity in media presentation.

Results: Causes of othering

Any discourse is produced, transmitted, and received in specific socio-historical conditions. "Any history is contemporary history" [25, pp. 22], that is, the endless dialogue between the past and the present, the historical essence of which constitutes the social structure of the present. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the history of discourse formation based on clarifying the social structures of the present on which discourse formation depends.

Firstly, the "othering" strategy adopted by the Western mainstream media in the coverage of the Winter Olympics is inextricably linked to the laws of the Western news media industry. Western news production media has undergone extensive development over time, resulting in a mature system. Professional journalists have received comprehensive education in their field, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge. These journalists are accustomed to traditional news values, which prioritize factors such as conflict, drama, impact, scale, and timeliness when selecting topics. Moreover, in their writing, they often emphasize the central theme and utilize techniques that highlight conflicts. The emphasis on conflict, drama, impact, scale, and timeliness as criteria for topic selection reflects the journalistic principles that have evolved within Western news production. These values are rooted in the desire to engage and captivate audiences, ensuring that news stories are compelling and rele-

vant. By focusing on these elements, journalists aim to create narratives that resonate with readers or viewers and effectively convey the significance and urgency of the reported events. It is important to acknowledge that the Western news production model is not without its critiques. Some argue that the constant emphasis on conflict and drama may lead to sensationalism or oversimplification of complex issues. However, it is also worth noting that the traditional news values serve as a framework for ensuring journalistic integrity and the provision of information that is both timely and impactful. At the same time, in Western journalism, conflict and sensitive stories are more newsworthy and more likely to be published. In other words, when Western media follow industry practices in news production, they tend to favor the dissemination of negative ideas and biases. In the context of Beijing Winter Olympic Games, the negative coverage by the Western mainstream media has the characteristics of deliberately amplifying conflicts and pursuing dramatic effects, following the international community's misunderstanding and bias towards China, and the negative tendency of China's national image is thus created.

Secondly, influenced by the Cold War mentality, the trend of "ideological generalization" has deepened. The historical inertia of the Cold War is still at play in the Western media's shaping mechanism of the Beijing Winter Olympics. The Cold War mentality accumulated by Western countries during the Cold War period continues to shape the direction of perception and evaluation of China. The game between the communist camp and the capitalist camp during the Cold War period made

international interactions very ideologically charged. New China, which belongs to the communist camp, has been classified as a political foreign country by Western societies based on ideological criteria, which are related to the historical Western mystical imagination of China as "Shangri-La" and the orientalist aesthetic "other" that has developed since the modern era. The "other" is not unrelated to the historical Western mystical imagination of China's Shangri-La and the Orientalist aesthetic that has developed in recent times [26]. Even though the Cold War is long over, this characteristic remains. Cold War thinking was no longer limited to the political system, military struggle, and struggle over values between the capitalist and communist camps but was further extended to international relations and the ideological culture generally accepted in the West. There is a trend of ideological generalization: whether developing countries do well or poorly, they will be labeled as contrary to the Western concept of democracy and freedom and thus fall into ideological attacks. The ideological bias brought about by the Cold War mentality has led Europe to put China in the camp of the antagonists, and China has become the antithesis of the liberal and democratic Europe, and on this basis has started to stereotype China in a very clear image.

Thirdly, the Western media have consciously politicized the Beijing Winter Olympics, or used the issue of the Winter Olympics to spread rumors about China's threat theory and then attack China's human rights and democracy issues, presenting an alienated and distorted international image of China to Western readers. This collective misinterpretation of China's im-

age is also reflected in the fact that the media have set the agenda for its coverage according to political and ideological needs, adapting and reinforcing this framework from the establishment of topics, selection of materials, angles, and reporting methods. The truth about the facts is controlled by a few people representing national interests through the media, and the public has to live under the simulated ecology of the media [27, pp. 129–134]. A significant part of the facts in the Western coverage of the Olympic Games is constructed on the level of imagination and misinterpretation, but the answer to the question lies not in reality itself, but in the judgment of the propaganda machine in accordance with the needs of the national interest.

Conclusion

This paper critically examines the discursive strategies employed by Western media to “other” non-Western countries and delves into the underlying factors driving this phenomenon. Through a comprehensive analysis, it presents a comprehensive array of mechanisms utilized in the process of othering. The primary objective is to

provide a theoretical framework that sheds light on how the West, which has long held hegemony over the international community, influences and portrays non-Western nations. The aim is to provide a new perspective on how China can break free from othering, turn it into self-shaping, and present a more realistic, three-dimensional, and comprehensive image of itself. Many rethinking voices in existing studies are mere restatements of Western biases, which are often taken for granted due to the shift in context and fragmentation of information dissemination.

These biases reflect China's dual concerns: as a burgeoning global power, China grapples with the ongoing quest to establish its identity within the prevailing Western framework. Meanwhile, domestically, a profound unease compels individuals to seek alternative narratives. Regrettably, the most prominent voices frequently originate from the potentially biased Western mainstream. It is crucial to acknowledge that the real world is a realm of perpetual complexity and change, and the West's impressions and perceptions of China are likewise undergoing a transformative process.

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