

The Appreciation and Criticism of President Trump: Chinese Young Netizens, Authoritarian Personality, and “Meritocracy Political” Model

CHEN YAWEI

University of Putra Malaysia

ABDUL MUA’TI @ ZAMRI AHAMD

University of Putra Malaysia

MASTURA MAHAMED

University of Putra Malaysia

DIYANA KASIMON

University of Putra Malaysia

ABSTRACT: This article presented an evaluation of the former U.S. President Trump by young Chinese netizens in the Zhihu community. According to it, the ideological stance of young Chinese netizens showed extreme confrontations. First, Liberal netizens with positive comments praised Trump as the great president who saved the US. Second, conservative netizens with negative comments condemned Trump for causing the accelerated decline of US influence. For the neutral stance, Trump was seen as an enthusiastic president with a first-class dream, but his means and wisdom were seen as second-class. The research on young Chinese netizens' evaluation of Trump found that: 1) Liberal young netizens are dissatisfied with the current bureaucracy and expect more reforms; 2) Conservative young netizens believe that Western democratic systems have obvious gaps in electing a qualified president and ensuring that politicians make quick decisions compared to China's meritocratic political model.

Keywords: Young netizens; Ideology; Authoritarian personality; Meritocracy political model; President Trump

Introduction

President Trump has formed a stupid existence with a fixed personality such as conceit, stubbornness, ignorance, and even shamelessness. Many of us do not

understand the laborious election in the US to choose a fool! (Binbin, 22 March 2020)

I hope there will be more Trump-style officials in China's political arena who are brave to

Chen Yawei is a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication at the University Putra Malaysia. **Dr. Abdul Mua’ti @Zamri Ahamd** is a Professor at the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication at the University Putra Malaysia. **Dr. Mastura Mahamed** is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication at the University Putra Malaysia. **Dr. Diyana Kasimon** is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication at the University Putra Malaysia. Please address all communication to the corresponding author Chen Yawei, University Putra Malaysia, 43400 Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Malaysia Email: chenyawei900@gmail.com.

serve, who dare to take responsibility, who dare to do what others do not, and who do not care about the personal gains and losses, that is the real man, an iron man. (GJCaesar, 17 March 2020).

As one of the most concerned politicians in the US and the world, the 45th U.S. President, Donald John Trump, generated enthusiastic Chinese media discussions since he began and ended his tenure. President Trump's image is mainly perpetuated from two channels: the official public opinion and the private-public opinion fields generated by netizens. The ideological antagonism between China and the U.S. generated fear, prejudice, and isolation between the two nations (Lu 2011). Therefore, the field of official public opinion equated President Trump with dynamic temperament and abnormal behavior. Such as he was depicted as a question president, profit-seeking American supremacist, and fickle-minded, hardcore pragmatist (Huang 2020; Lian 2018; Wang 2019; Zhang 2018). The image of President Trump in Chinese social media and official media has similarities and differences. The most popular descriptions of him include "president of Twitter" (Zhao, Yu, and Ye 2017) and "king of knowledge", as well as other nicknames such as "political fool", "smart businessman" and "social madman" (Song and Zhou 2017). Moreover, we found that the metaphors expressed by these nicknames are not consistent with Western media speculations about the reasons for Trump's popularity in China. It explained that Trump's popularity in China is due to Trump's "pro-CCP" [Chinese Communist Party] and "pro-China model" attitudes and his strongman style attracting young Chinese (Carlson 2018; Hernández and Zhao 2017; Lin 2021). But obviously, these The popular nicknames in social media do not match the speculations of Western media.

It is noteworthy that even though Trump is no longer president, public internet opinions dealing with Trump-related discussions can still stimulate our thinking: That is, the internet provides a platform for dialogue and exchange between the public with differing positions, so does this dialogue lead them to reach consensus or be more divided? What are their political leanings? As we all know, young netizens are the main participants of online public opinion in social media and even play a leading role, and they are also the main participating groups in actual political and social fields. Therefore, this article took young Chinese netizens' evaluation of Trump as the research object to firstly examine their evaluation of Trump through a qualitative content analysis of relevant online posts, and in interaction, it checked whether the speculations of Western media about Chinese netizens' evaluation of Trump are accurate; secondly, their political ideological

positions were analysed through their evaluations of Trump. Analysing young Chinese netizens' views of Trump can help predict the development of Chinese ideological trends.

Zhihu Community is a social question-and-answer website (equivalent to the American Quora community) that gathers intellectual elites and rational discussions to produce high-quality content (Li and Zheng 2020; Peng, Cummings, and Li 2020). Zhihu typically encompassed users who were 80% Chinese youth (Li and Zheng 2020; Peng et al. 2020; Ru and Hu 2016; ZhihuReport 2020). The primary characteristics of Zhihu included rationality, friendliness, and high quality (Peng et al. 2020; Ru and Hu 2016). Zhihu Community has been proven by a large number of scholars to be an influential website for researching topics related to young Chinese netizens (Chen and Shi 2020; Li and Zheng 2020; Peng et al. 2021; Zhang 2020; Zhao et al. 2021). In view of this, the popular post on Zhihu, "How to evaluate US President Trump fairly?" is selected as a sample source for qualitative content analysis in this study.

Review of the Literature

The Status Quo of Chinese Ideology

Marx and Engels' book "German Ideology" conceived ideology in different spectrums: one is negative and critical, the other is descriptive and neutral. This study follows the latter. The scholar Hamilton examined the concept of ideology for pages. Specifically, he defined ideology as a shared normative view, beliefs, and attitudes that advocate certain social relations and organizational models and aim to prove the legitimacy of certain behaviors (Hamilton 1987). Ideological construction has been heavily illuminated on the distinction between liberalism and conservatism (Jost et al. 2003). China is no exception. China usually divides netizens into left-wing conservatism and right-wing liberalism, This is different from, and in some ways even opposed to, the basic political and psychological characteristics of "left" and "right" in Western countries (Ma and Wang 2015; Pan and Xu 2018). With the rapid development of digital technology, political factionalism, once confined to the intellectual elite, quickly spread to the popular discourse of Internet users. In general, liberalism was given prestige and status through the use of the Internet (Ma and Lewis 2020). An empirical study shows that both the "left" and "right" factions of Chinese netizens have diametrically opposed attitudes both at the psychological personality level and on social and political issues (Ma and Wang 2015): first, "leftist" cyber-citizens were psychologically more authoritarian

and obeying to mores, authority, order, and official media views; second, the "rightist" netizens emphasized social justice and individualistic issues and supported reform, progress, and unofficial media views. Since this research assumed that young netizens' ideology is influenced by multiple dimensions, this article outlined China's general ideological status based on three dimensions: Politics, Economy, and Culture.

The term, political ideology dimensions, as applied by the Chinese government since the mid-1980s, specifically depicted the return of traditional Chinese ideas (Confucianism) to mainstream Chinese society discourses (Makeham 2008). Authoritarianism, a prominent feature of Chinese political ideology, deliberately emphasized respect and authority-dependent precepts (Ma and Lewis 2020). The nature of Chinese society's dependence on power has greatly affected the young individuals, and it makes the hierarchical system coexisted with the authority transplanted into the subconscious minds (Li 2014). However, multiple values and Western democratic ideologies have had a great impact on them. An empirical study of the ideology survey of 2862 young netizens indicate that: 1) 43.92% of young netizens believe that "The separation of powers is not suitable for China's national conditions, and China must not copy the political systems of Western countries", 2) more than 50% of individuals disagreed that the one-party dictatorship of China was superior to Western democratic systems (Wu 2014). Another study on the ideology of 586 young intellectuals in 2013 revealed that although they were satisfied with the development achievements of China, nearly 50% of the them were dissatisfied with the sociopolitical climate of China, strong negative emotions on below issues were illustrated from them, concerning the rich-and-poor gaps, rising channels, and official corruption, which led to their lesser degree of motivation to join the Communist Party of China (Ye 2013). However, A study demonstrated that the gradual political reform in China might have been favored by the young individuals who were inclined to personal as opposed to political self-realization. The young individuals also did not support risky changes that could generate political chaos (Zhai 2016). At the level of economic ideology, pragmatism dominated the mainstream thought at all economic reform stages, and economic pragmatism as a value has been recognized by the Chinese government and ordinary citizens (Yan 2018). According to Deng Xiaoping, "as long as a cat can catch a mouse, it doesn't matter whether a black cat or a white cat" (Yan 2018). The 40-year economic achievements in China were a solid foundation grounded in economic pragmatism values. In terms of cultural ideology, with the popularization of the

Internet and the influence of multiculturalism, Chinese youth gradually ignore collectivism and hierarchical systems and pay more attention to social fairness, justice and openness (Liu 2010; Ye 2013). A large number of studies have shown that Chinese people are increasingly emphasizing the value of individualism in the Internet age, especially the individualism related to personal achievement is becoming very popular (Cai et al. 2018; Sun and Ryder 2016; Zhang and Weng 2019). At the same time, eclectic values such as consumerism, utilitarianism, pan-entertainment, radical leftism, cultural conservatism, and neoliberalism also have important influences that cannot be ignored, because The eclectic values seemed to have bolstered China as the world's second-largest economy and prompted rapid society-level changes (Chen and Shan 2018). It is worth mentioning that the scholars found that the young Chinese people to some extent tried to find a balance between traditional and modern, collective and individual, Chinese and foreign cultural values (Zhu and Yu 2020).

The Key Influencing Factors of Ideological Position

Personality traits and situational characteristics have been considered the most important influencing factors in the ideological construction of liberal and conservative political orientations (Jost 2006). The "authoritarian personality," proposed by scholars such as T.W. Adorno after World War II, is considered the primary factor. It has attracted continuous discussions and attention of many scholars. The general characteristic is that people with authoritarian personality emphasize individualism and independence, but also have the psychological characteristics of superstition and submission to authority in traditional autocratic society (Adorno et al. 1950). Adorno also stated that authoritarian personality is the psychological and social basis of totalitarian politics, and totalitarian politics also contributes to the emergence of authoritarian personality. Scholar Altemeyer said that authoritarianism exists in different institutional environments, and everyone has authoritarian personality, but the degree is different. Moreover, authoritarian personality is closely related to conservatism but not limited to conservatism (Altemeyer 2006). Scholars Wright & Twitchett (1962) illustrated that authoritarian personality is an individual characteristic in Western countries, but it is a common phenomenon in China. even, and it can be called the national character of Chinese people, whose advantage is that it promotes a high degree of trust in the government (Wright and Twitchett 1962). Although the process of industrialization and globalization has accelerated the development of Chinese economy, the traditional socio-political culture of China has had a

profound influence on the political attitude of the Chinese people, leading to a certain historical inertia. Therefore, the authoritarian personality has always been universal in China (Ma 2002). A large number of scholars have researched the authoritarian personality of the Chinese people and published their views. Based on the previous studies, the authors of this study summarize the characteristics of the authoritarian personality of Chinese people in the following four aspects: 1) In terms of obedience to authority, "respect" and "submission" are highly valued, especially "respect for superiors" is considered the most important value orientation (Huang and Chu 2012); 2) In terms of conservatism, most Chinese people seek adaptation rather than innovation in their thinking, and they are accustomed to following traditional values and social norms (Ma 2002); 3) Contradictory attitudes towards power, people are used to classify power into the social hierarchy and ethical system, which means they usually flatter superiors and are arrogant towards subordinates (Li 2007); 4) Dependency, traditional political culture makes people used to follow the crowd, which makes them internally dependent on elders in the family and externally dependent on authority in society (Ma 2002). In a qualitative study, 14 Chinese adults from different backgrounds adopted the experience of dealing with different authorities. The results showed that most of the participants showed fear and/or obedience to authority (Chuang 1987).

Situational characteristics play significant roles in constructing ideology. The theory emphasizing situational characteristics centralizes the idea that political knowledge is acquired through various means, for example, family environment, school, education, interpersonal communication, media contacts, and specific or general political tendencies (Druckman and Nelson 2003). Druckman argued that the effects of powerful framing destabilize preferences and attitudes; individuals' compliance with political tendencies were generally media-controlled dependent (Druckman 2004). Chinese scholars agreed that the strong information bias in the authoritarian environment could bolster authoritarianism and weaken anti-authoritarian tendencies. Thus, traditionalism and respect for hierarchies may have created a more conservative society (Ma and Lewis 2020). However, studies revealed that the media communication framework played an insignificant role on well-educated people because educated individuals tended to draw upon deep-rooted a priori, which reduced frame communication sensitivity (Chong and Druckman 2007).

Public Opinion Environment in China

The rise of the Internet and new media has fundamentally changed the information landscape, giving citizens more and more choices. The Chinese government never concealed its promise to construct ideology. The promise was realized through the education systems, businesses, social networks, and most importantly, the media (Ma and Lewis 2020). Recently, the Chinese government actively prompted citizens to provide feedback and policy suggestions, including tolerating and repeatedly promoting online public affair discussions (Stockmann and Luo 2017). However, Although China's state media has been trying to guide public opinion in the chaotic social media early on, the state media did not seem to prevail (Wang and Mark 2013). Such as, a large-scale anonymous survey demonstrated that although the Chinese Internet populations with higher education trusted Chinese official's media, which did not receive a higher degree of trust compared to social media (Wang and Mark 2013). In addition, existing research showed that the official media strengthened the ideological position of "leftist" netizens, while the non-official media strengthened the position of "rightist" netizens (Ma and Wang 2015).

The Comparison Between the Chinese "Meritocracy Political" Model and the Western Democratic System

Historically, China was ruled by 443 emperors and many politicians for over 2000 years (Chen 1993). China had a relatively strict, reasonable official election and evaluation system. In the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China's political reforms have produced a unique set of "politics of meritocracy" models based on a combination of multiple models, which are considered suitable for China's population size, political culture, history and national conditions (Bell 2015). Specifically, the "politics of meritocracy" model is typically defined as competent leader selection through a rigorous 20-30 year official competition for the top leadership position in the Chinese government. Thus, the competition ensured that high-ranking politicians had exceptional managerial quality and governance experience (Bell 2015). It should be emphasized that the vision and consideration to distinguish between short and long term public opinion is one of the important qualities of Chinese politicians (Bell 2015). The model of meritocracy requires that politicians should use their own experience and knowledge to lead the society in a way that can promote people's well-being or long-term interests, even if this way is not in line with people's actual desires, cravings or preferences (Fan 2013). The main disadvantage of the meritocracy model is that it can easily lead to dictatorship, that is, in the absence of power checks and balances, powerful leaders can make decisions or

policies that are completely at odds with people's desires, cravings, and preferences, causing terrible social disasters (Fan 2013). The other drawback is that this model also lacks a supporting system to limit the power of ordinary officials, which can easily lead to the proliferation of corruption and excessive power-seeking, which in turn leads to bureaucracy (Fan 2013).

The Chinese people's evaluation criteria for politicians generally focus on the ability and achievements of governance, generally citing three dimensions: First, the public considers the morality and behaviour of presidents. In the Chinese context, the "morality" of emperors is associated with the emperors' willingness to change, flexibility to consider the correct opinions of others, and the emperors' sympathy for the people out of benevolence (Liu 1984). In particular, the emperors' governmental performance could completely hide the impairment of morality and personality (Nie 2006). Second, the public considered the ability of presidents to govern. Presidents' ability to govern was understood in the context of 1) familiarity with the state operating apparatus (Wang 2001), 2) political diligence (Wang 2001), and 3) long-term vision and deliberation (Munk Dialogues 2021). Third, the public's evaluation of the president's performance is mainly based on: 1) promoting the overall development of the country, including politics, economics, and diplomacy (Nie 2006), 2) Creating positive impact on new production relations (Tong 2009).

There is a very popular view in China that the Western democratic system has genetic defects. Three genetic defects in the operation of Western democratic systems have been pointed out by the famous Chinese scholar Zhang Weiwei (2014): 1) Assuming that people are rational. The Western electoral system is based on the assumption that everyone can make rational judgments about their voting behavior, but this assumption is not true; 2) Rights are absolute, everyone emphasizes their rights at the individual level, at the political level, the absolutization of rights is manifested in the increasing trend of "polarization" of party politics. Each party and its supporters place their rights above the interests of the country as a whole. Re; 3) The program is omnipotent. Western democracy has evolved into a procedural democracy with "game democracy" at its core. As long as the procedures are correct, it does not matter who comes to power. The omnipotence of procedures has increasingly "gamified" Western democratic systems (Zhang 2014). The inherent genetic defects mentioned above have led to the polarization of partisanship in Western democracies, the consolidation of interest groups, and the lack of motivation for reform in the country.

In short, Chinese and Westerners have obvious differences in their concerns about the political system, which manifest themselves mainly in the following aspects: 1) Western democratic institutions have legal adjustment procedures, but Chinese tend to trust qualified elites; 2) Western democratic system insists on fair competition among political parties, but Chinese are more concerned about the nature and outcomes of party policies; 3) Liberal democracy system requires everyone to have the right to participate in politics, but Chinese can give political leaders more freedom if they formulate policies that promote the long-term interests of the people (Munk Dialogues 2021; Shi and Lu 2010).

Methodology

Sampling

The convenience of sampling made it attractive to select responses to a Q & A post in the Zhihu community "How to fairly value the U.S. President Trump?" as it focuses on displaying thousands of responses to that question. By the mandatory data collection deadline of January 20, 2021, a total of 1314 responses were received over 12.38 million page views. To ensure universality and popularity of the sample, responses with received 10 likes (thumbs) or more were collected as study data. On this basis, 86 data were obtained. Among them, the highest number of thumbs is 15,009 and the lowest number of thumbs is 12. After reviewing the respondents' information, 79 respondents were under the age of 35 (in China, the age limit for young people is 18-35). However, it should be noted that the convenient way was often at the expense of the representativeness of the sample. Due to the simplification of the sampling method, the data cannot represent all young Chinese netizens, and the survey cannot even represent all young netizens in the Zhihu community.

Data Analysis Process

First, the two coders read all samples multiple times to get an overall impression and formed coding categories and dimensions. Coding categories included positive, negative, and neutral comments. The coding dimensions included Trump's morals and personality, leadership qualities, and government achievements; then the coders carefully read through the data again to extract the concept or meaning of each record; then the data were merged with the same coding dimension under the three coding categories, and the merged data are arranged in combination with the number of thumbs; finally, the simplified data yielded the thoughts or meanings: positive (43%), negative (41%), and

neutral ratings (16%). It is worth noting that some samples contained both negative and positive views, so the coders classified them based on the evaluation ratio. For example, if the proportion of positive ratings exceeds 60%, they are classified as positive opinions. Conversely. If the proportions of positive and negative ratings are essentially equal, they are classified as neutral ratings. The two coders discussed these samples several times to ensure objectivity of the results. Table 1 lists the data categories:

Table1. The categories of the comments on President Trump

Data categories	The total number	Proportion	Specific comments
Positive views	34	43%	Governance achievements: he is the one who has solved the most pressing problems in the United States (Received 44,670 total thumbs); personality: catfish, a champion of the American dream (Received 22,084 total thumbs); Ruling ability: innovative spirit and Twitter governance (Received 11,002 total thumbs).
Negative views	32	41%	Governance achievements: Lack of view and consideration to lead the United States into a crisis (Received 13,220 total thumbs); Ruling ability: Lack of crisis management capabilities (Received 11,574 total thumbs); Personality: Trading thinking, "anti-intellectual" thinking and scapegoat style (Received 6,720 total thumbs).
Neutral views	13	16%	President with first-rate dreams but second-rate political wisdom(Received 14,490 total thumbs).
Total valid data of views 79			

Results

Positive Evaluation: The Fourth Greatest President of the U.S.

Trump was considered the fourth greatest U.S. president by the young Chinese netizens. Two reasons were provided. First, Trump avoided or delayed the conflicts between capitalists and the bottom people that would occur in the U.S. most divisive junctures. Second, Trump was considered a president with a real reform spirit, a trait that bore a resemblance to Lincoln and Roosevelt. Their appreciation for Trump led them to even call for more Trump-style officials in China.

A man with pragmatic spirit to solve American most pressing problems

Among the positive comments, Trump’s crisis awareness and pragmatism were received wholeheartedly by young Chinese netizens. Specifically, their comments emphasized 1) the perilous stage of U.S. national strength following years of exhaustion and 2) the serious U.S. polarization between the elites and

the masses that caused serious domestic contradictions. Therefore, Trump’s isolationist strategy included implementing 1) quantitative easing, 2) reducing foreign strategies, 3) withdrawing from many international organizations, 4) implementing a military contraction strategy, 5) and engaging in trade war with China. These five measures were perceived by the young Chinese netizens as effective in the economic recovery in response to the U.S. current interests and dire situations, and Trump effectively alleviated the U.S. internal conflicts.

One of the strategies centralized young Chinese netizens’ heaviest praise for Trump’s military contraction strategy, and they believed that Trump perceivably deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for being the only American president who did not actively prompt a war since World War II. This single viewpoint received 15009 likes.

Catfish, the American dream, and perseverance in adversity

Young Chinese netizens were very sympathetic to Trump’s political encounters. Many evaluations on Trump depicted Trump’s ‘acting’ like a ‘catfish’ or an uninvited guest who was suddenly drawn into the political arena. Trump’s ‘arrival’ at politics generated great contempt, disgust, hostility, and rejection. For example, the mainstream, elite-controlled media criticized Trump’s policies and actions and often mocked Trump. Although Trump was the president, Trump was not allowed to speak at the 2018 funeral of Bush Sr. In this situation, the comments showed that Trump deserved a sense of both sympathy and admiration due to his commitment to implement policies to “make America great again” in such a challenging political environment. Furthermore, due to Trump’s reform measures and governance style that was different from traditional American politicians, he was rejected by traditional political circles. The comments equated Trump with the fate of two Chinese historical reformers to show their sympathy and respect:

Shang Yang’s reform of the Qin Dynasty (more than two thousand years ago) caused him to be “torn apart” by five horses, and Wang Anshi’s reform (more than one thousand years ago) caused him to be dismissed twice. Consequently, death in the depression ensued. The historical events showed that once reformers challenged established social rules and order, all types of resistance will be prompted, including some events that turned into bloodshed and cruel death (GJCaesar, March 17, 2020).

Cyber violence, "Twitter governance," and innovative spirit

On the surface, the popular "President Twitter" on social media implies a strong negative mockery. However, in the eyes of young Chinese netizens, his "Twitter governance" behavior was seen as innovative, bypassing the boundaries of mainstream media. Trump chose the most direct route from top to bottom (from the highest level of government to the lowest level of society), a manifestation of his innovative ability to turn media disadvantages into advantages. Thus, Trump's use of the media was equated with marketing. Moreover, commentaries argued that Trump's "isolationism" strategy is an innovation that breaks with the traditional concept of American politicians, cyber-violence, and irrational behavior against the president within the United States impeded U.S. progress. Specifically, Trump has been called the leader of online public opinion, an American political icon, and a disruptor of the political communication paradigm.

Negative Evaluation: "Second Hoover"

Young Chinese netizens with negative views believed that President Trump, like Hoover, was a president who mishandled crises, perpetuated "scapegoats," spread lies, and led the United States into a huge crisis.

Lack of long-term vision and consideration

One of the most commonly asserted negative comments highlighted Trump's lack of long-term vision and consideration that resulted in the accelerated descend of the U.S. international image. First, Trump only noticed that the entire world 'benefitted' from the United States, but Trump did not realize the U.S. obligations and responsibilities to play the role of the global hegemon. Second, Trump was heavily depicted as being responsible for simultaneously launching the U.S.-Europe, and Sino-U.S. trade wars. The wars 'delivered' a fatal blow to the U.S., a country that is heavily dependent on global trade. Third, Trump's pursuit of the "America First" policy, retreat from many important international organizations, fickleness in diplomatic negotiations, including conceit and self-centeredness, denied global leaders' dignity. By focusing on comments that undermined the U.S. political credibility, Trump's actions raised suspicion as they led to U.S. decline on a global scale.

Lack of crisis management abilities

Trump's lack of crisis management abilities was presented as another important aspect of negative

comments. First, the online comments highlighted that the out-of-control 2020 U.S. COVID-19 pandemic and Trump supporters who disrupted Congress were typical manifestations of Trump's lack of crisis management abilities. At the beginning of the pandemic, Trump took measures that were too accommodative to the public's request such as deemphasizing mask-wearing as opposed to employing scientific pandemic prevention measures to overcome the virus spread. It was found that the measures that complied with the public's preferences were purported to win votes. Second, Trump deliberately downplayed the danger of the pandemic and continued to maintain the operation of the economic fields to exploit steady economic growth that helped to secure votes. By focusing on Trump's lack of crisis management capabilities, they exposed Trump's extremely selfish character of prioritizing votes at the expense of people's lives.

Notably, a majority of cyber citizens argued that the U.S. democratic political system was to be blamed because Trump's eagerness to victory in the election 'forced' him to pay too much attention to securing people's votes. The reason behind this is that traditional political authorities alienated Trump, with almost no support from the two major interest groups, finance, and technology. Furthermore, Trump encouraged supporters to attack Congress, this behavior also exposed his lack of political acumen and crisis management capabilities. The dissenting comments illustrated the dominance of this viewpoint: Trump should have thought of the crises calmly and estimated the consequences before making prudent decisions as opposed to being hasty and taking arbitrary actions before repenting halfway. The comments were made by exemplifying the Gaopingling Rebellion¹ in Chinese history as a metaphor for the U.S. Congressional riots; the comments suggested that President Trump should have either initially accepted the election outcome with humiliation or prompted the riots after the election, and forced Congress to reconsider the election results. In other words, Trump's existing practice of giving up halfway indicated blind and lack of crisis management abilities. Trump 'fed' the world with a laughing stock that undermined American democracy.

Transactional thinking, fickleness, "anti-intellectual" thinking, and scapegoating

According to some young Chinese netizens, Trump's core personality traits ranged from transactional thinking to fickleness and "anti-intellectual" thinking. First, Trump's governance reflected the notion that everything could be traded, irrespective of political, economic, or international relations circumstances.

Secondly, the comments highlighted another tendency: Trump was able to shift from a political standpoint to emotional expressions easily, which behavior showed that Trump lacked thoughtfulness and political stability. Thirdly, Trump's "anti-intellectual" thinking and "scapegoat" leadership styles were typical characteristics. Specifically, his contempt for science and professional medical knowledge indicated a sense of anti-intellectual thinking, while Trump's deliberate reference of COVID-19 to "Chinese virus" showed his "scapegoat" style.

Neutral evaluation: A President with first-rate dreams but second-rate political wisdom

Analysis of the dataset revealed that neutral views about Trump included positive and negative ratings. Therefore, neutral ratings were categorized as "other representative views" in summary form. First, Trump was considered a "performance" type personality. As such, Trump gained public attention, revered power, and preferred to control everything, including his will over others. Second, Trump emphasized actual economic as opposed to ideological interests. During Trump's tenure, the U.S. economy actually went up, the unemployment rate went down, and the problems with illegal immigration were gradually solved. Third, the longstanding international political credibility of the US was destabilized, and the US global political and economic system went into disarray. In sum, Trump was seen as a president with first-class dreams and enthusiasm who lacked resources and brains.

Discussion

The popularity of the Internet has taken the dispute between "left" and "right" among Chinese intellectual elites to social media. Netizens with different viewpoints and positions are beginning exchanges and dialogs through new media such as forums, microblogs, blogs, and WeChat. As mentioned earlier, research by Chinese scholar Ma&Wang (2015) has shown that Chinese netizens have a serious distinction between "left" and "right", and the number of "right-leaning" netizens on the Internet is relatively large (Ma and Wang 2015). In addition, "left" conservative netizens have a stronger authoritarian personality, and they are more inclined to adhere to traditional values and uphold the existing social order, while "right" liberal netizens are more inclined to advocate the restriction of power and pay more attention to the issue of social justice and the pursuit of a spirit of freedom (Ma and Wang 2015). Judging from the descriptive analysis of this study, it was obvious that young Chinese intellectuals' evaluations of Trump were

antagonistic, that is, positive evaluations believed Trump was the greatest American president who saved the United States, they generally emphasized Trump's rule-breaking reforms and innovative spirit, and this evaluation accounts for 41%; While negative evaluations linked Trump to the US's descent into chaos, they generally emphasized how Trump's lack of vision, thoughtfulness, and crisis management skills jeopardized the U.'s image, and this evaluation accounts for 37%. Moreover, these views also imply that the Western media's inferences on "why Chinese netizens like Trump" are incomplete or biased, as this study has shown that Chinese netizens' preference for President Trump could also be based on his spirit of reform and innovation.

In this study, the netizens with positive comments can be considered as "right" liberals, while those with negative comments can be considered as "left" conservatives, based on scholar Ma&Wang's (2015) refinement of the ideological characteristics of "left" and "right" netizens. There are two explanations for this antagonistic phenomenon: first, previous studies have shown that the official Chinese public opinion has strengthened the "left" position while the social media public opinion has promoted the "right" position, which meant that the viewpoints of the "left" and "right" were shaped by the dissemination frameworks of these two types of media with different tendencies (Ma and Wang 2015). Second, previous studies showed that the percentage of cyber citizens with liberal attitudes on the Internet is relatively high, while educated Internet users are less sensitive to the spread of frames (Ma and Lewis 2020). Therefore, the percentage of positive comments in the name of liberalism on this study is relatively high. These comments emphasizing ratings about Trump revealed the political ideological viewpoint of young Chinese netizens.

Liberal netizens are dissatisfied with the bureaucracy and call for further reforms

Regime theory has long argued that authoritarian systems are inherently unstable because of their reliance on coercion, over-centralization of decision-making, and privileging of personal over institutional power. Over time, these inefficiencies tend to weaken the legitimacy of the ruling government, leading to widespread civil unrest and discontent (Cunningham, Saich, and Turiel 2020). However, the CCP is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its founding and has ruled China for 72 years. It seems to be as strong as ever. The explanation from Harvard University scholars is that the CCP is flexible and this flexibility is based on the people's support for the regime's policies (Cunningham et al. 2020). In other

words, the CCP's continuous introduction of new policies to carry out self-correction mechanisms gives flexibility to the CCP's rule. This research has acknowledged the above view, but adds another explanation, which is that Chinese people in general have authoritarian personality, which leads to trust in the Chinese Communist regime.

In the positive assessment toward Trump, young netizens praised Trump's "dare to serve, dare to be responsible, and dare to do what others dare not do" and hope that China will have more officials like Trump. This view expressed their dissatisfaction with the current bureaucratic rigidity and implied that the politics should be reformed further. However, it is worth noting that in their overall positive evaluation of Trump, they mainly praised Trump's innovations and reforms that broke with the traditional political concept or rules of America, implying that they do not admire the American political system much. This kind of ambivalence about the comparison of political systems between the East and the West is always present among Chinese youth (Wu 2014; Ye 2013), which is rooted in the fact that Chinese youth generally have an authoritarian personality, which would lead to different degrees of trust in the regime based on the degree of authoritarian values. Generally, the stronger the authoritarian values, the higher the trust in the government (Ma 2007). It is noteworthy that the liberal netizens in this study also showed strong authoritarian personality. For example, the second-ranked positive comment showed that the young Chinese netizens' sympathy for Trump's political experience elicited praise for his reform spirit in adversity, which symbolized the sanctity of Trump's dignity and the youth's unquestioning loyalty to power and hierarchy. This behavior thus represented a typical authoritarian personality. Although the degree of authoritarian personality of liberal netizens is probably very different from that of conservative netizens, this nevertheless reminded us that they not only strive for freedom and equality, but are also deeply influenced by hierarchy and authoritarian thinking, which leads to a certain degree of trust in the regime. An empirical study published by Harvard College in June 2020 showed that from 2003 to 2016, the average satisfaction of Chinese citizens with the four levels of government generally increased, especially with the central government reached 93% (Cunningham et al. 2020), which proves that the CCP's gradual political reform has gained widespread trust among the people, and there is no doubt that liberal netizens (A group with a higher proportion on the Internet) also belong to "the people". Moreover, the popularity of individualism, hedonism, and pan-entertainment values in China means that Chinese youth are satisfied with and enjoy

the material conditions of contemporary Chinese society. Therefore, we have speculated extensively that China's progressive political reform have reduced liberal netizens' negative views of the political system and further gained a certain level of trust. Therefore, they probably do not support the risky changes that would cause social unrest, but the rigidity of the system, the lack of innovation and social justice is still an issue they were concerned about and a strong demand for improvement. In addition, we found that positive comments about Trump focused mainly on his pragmatism, his spirit of reform, and his spirit of innovation. These evaluative dimensions emphasized the personal achievements that resulted from leveraging President Trump's Maverick personality, which is fully consistent with the values of young Chinese netizens who seek individuality and the realization of personal values, leading to the further hypothesis that young people are more likely to seek challenges and achievements at the personal level than adventurous changes at the political level. This echoed scholar Zhai's (2016) conclusion that "gradual political reform in China may have been preferred by young individuals who tended toward personal rather than political self-actualization, and they also did not support risky changes that could cause political chaos (Zhai 2016).

Conservative young netizens approve of China's meritocracy and believe that there are loopholes in the Western political system.

The negative comments from this study focused on Trump's lack of long-term vision, consideration, and crisis management skills. In addition, these comments publicly criticized the U.S. presidential electoral system for allowing the pandemic to spiral out of control in the United States. This not only reinforced the belief that the Western democratic system falls short in the selection of leaders and immediate decision-making, but also reflected the recognition by conservative young netizens of the "meritocracy politics" model in the Chinese political system. It is useful to refer to the following response.

"Different political systems have their advantages and disadvantages. In the authoritarian system of the East, people's control over politicians is indirect, allowing politicians to make relatively independent decisions without excessive public interference. However, in a democratic system, people's votes could directly determine the political sustainability of politicians. This will most likely lead politicians to abandon some long-term comprehensive strategic agreements for short-term electoral gains." (Y. Jun, August 7, 2020).

In the context of China, it is widely believed that the selection and evaluation mechanism in China's political system can help to select politicians with rich political experience, exceptional vision and consideration (TEDTalk 2013). While the presidential election system of western countries is relatively simple compared to China. The reason for this is pointed out by scholar Zhangweiwei (2014): Western political system overemphasizes the legitimacy of the process rather than the ability and political experience of politicians. For example Donald John Trump, a president who has no political experience but appeals to the most dissatisfied emotions of the people and is lucky enough to become the president of a superpower, bringing chaos to the United States. Therefore, the Western presidential electoral system is considered to be deeply flawed (Munk Dialogues 2021). Here, we try to explore why the conservative young netizens are full of confidence in the political model Chinese Meritocracy? First, psychologically, conservatives have higher authoritarian personality, which leads to a high level of trust in the regime. In particular, when the information conveyed the superiority of the authoritarian system and was supported by actual evidence (economic development achievements), it had a strong persuasive power; Second: From the perspective of external factors, China's huge economic development made them realize that China's political system has obvious advantages and vitality; Third, the powerful anti-corruption movement in the era of Xi Jinping made them realize that China's political system is not static, on the contrary, it has a good self-correction ability; Fourth, Trump's obvious poor governance ability, which has been negatively perceived, has also strengthened the recognition of China's political system; Fifth, the media propaganda framework of the authoritarian information environment has shaped their relatively unified political ideology.

Conclusion

This research analyzed Chinese young netizens' evaluation of the former U.S. President Trump. It was found that the ideological stance of young Chinese netizens mainly consisted of fierce confrontations. First, liberal netizens praised Trump for being pragmatic, innovative and courageous for reform. Second, "leftist" conservatives declared that Trump was accelerating the decline of American international influence because of his lack of vision, thoughtfulness, and crisis management skills. Third, neutral commentators believed that Trump was a first-class dream and an enthusiastic president, but he lacked the means and wisdom. Regardless of whether they are conservative or liberal, however, young netizens'

evaluations of Trump focus primarily on Trump's ability to govern and his accomplishments. This evaluation dimension reflects the biggest difference in evaluation dimensions between Eastern and Western political systems, that is, China focuses on politicians' governing abilities, while the West focuses on the legitimacy of election procedures or results (Bell 2015; Zhang 2014). This difference can explain one of the reasons why China was able to rise from a poor and backward country to the second largest economy in the world in 40 years: that is, the Chinese people track the performance of the ruling party and judge their qualifications by governance performance, which forced the Chinese Communist Party to improve their governance skills and performance. In addition, this study also verified a reason, namely, why do Chinese netizens like Trump? Judging from the results, his innovative and reform-minded spirit is mainly in line with the trend of the values of Chinese youth who strive for personal achievement. Which extends the Western media's previous conclusions.

China is a country completely different from the West in terms of culture and values, which has shaped the unique values and ideology of the Chinese people. Although today, under the influence of multiculturalism, many young people are striving for individualism and liberalism, there are still some deeply rooted traditional and Confucian cultures that profoundly influence their values and ideology. These are other findings of this research: 1) Liberal young netizens are dissatisfied with the current bureaucracy and expect more reforms, but their far-reaching authoritarian personality made them unlikely to support risky political changes that trigger social unrest; and 2) Young netizens who took a conservative stance recognized China's political model of meritocracy and believed that Western democratic systems have visible loopholes in electing a qualified president and ensuring that politicians make quick decisions. These findings revealed the contrast between the ideological positions of the "left" and "right" netizens, but at the same time, they also showed that they share a common characteristic, which is that they all have authoritarian personalities. Although the degree is different, this authoritarian personality has led to different degrees of trust in the Chinese Communist regime.

This study on President Trump showed that young Chinese netizens have thought about and compared the advantages and disadvantages of the political systems of the East and the West. Therefore, future research can pay better attention to how Chinese youth view the difference between democratic and authoritarian political systems. This is a challenging but realistic research topic. Limitations of the research

include the limitation of sample data and the opinions of young Chinese netizens from single websites, which means that the generality of the research cannot be applied to all young Chinese netizens. However, although not all young Chinese netizens were invited to express their opinions, it is clear that the selected response illustrates the views of young Chinese netizens and their opinions on Trump.

luxurious life” and cease the resistance. Finally, Cao Shuang and his three-generation family were immediately killed and Sima Yi prevailed and was accorded authority on the Wei Kingdom.

Note:

1) The coup of Gaopingling: The incident occurred in the Gaopingling of the Wei Kingdom during the Three Kingdoms Period (249 AD). At that time, general Cao Shuang who held the actual power of the Wei Kingdom was deprived of power by his enemy Sima Yi. Although Cao Shuang had a chance to turn defeat into victory, he credulously believed in Sima Yi's false promise: “As long as you stop and surrender the power, you can still retain the Knighthood and enjoy a

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