

Analysis of the Changes in the Characteristics of Diplomatic Discourse between China and Cuba (1960-2022)

Shuanglin Li^{1,a,*}, Xinyue Sheng^{2,b}

¹ College of Marxism, Harbin Engineering University, Street Nantong, Harbin, China

² Department of Foreign Languages, Minzu university of China, Street Weigezhuang, Beijing, China

a. lishuanglin@hrbeu.edu.cn, b. shengxinyue1016@163.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: For more than sixty years since diplomatic ties between China and Cuba, the exchange discourse between the foreign ministries and the press releases and treaties signed also contain discourses that convey to the world the cordial ties between the two nations. Based on five joint statements and documents signed between 1960 to 2022, the study focuses on the Chinese and Cuban diplomatic discourse through textual and paradigmatic analysis and explores the reasons for the changes. The paper takes a positive view of the future of the relations between China and Cuba. The diplomatic ideas and concepts of the Chinese Communist Party have been externalized into Chinese diplomatic practice through cooperation, along with China's high-quality and efficient development. In light of the recent modifications to the current worldwide scene, China and Cuba have fully developed in all aspects. The two countries have developed a harmonious and cooperative diplomatic concept based on shared interests. They have proposed a new diplomatic strategy sufficient to build a unique discourse of diplomatic exchanges and cooperation.

Keywords: Sino-Cuban relations, Diplomatic discourse, Changes in China's diplomacy

1. Introduction

On 24 December 2021, the “Cooperation Plan between the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Cuba on Jointly Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative” was signed by the governments of China and Cuba, which has attracted widespread attention from the international community. The Plan will better complement each other's strengths and add new impetus to their joint development. It will positively impact the development of relations between the two countries, strengthening economic cooperation and exchanges between them and enhancing the well-being of both peoples.

Based on this background, China and Cuba have always maintained friendly exchanges and mutual learning diplomatic ties between China and Cuba. Cuba was the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic ties with China after the founding of the People's Republic of China [1]. From 1959 to 1965, leaders and people from many fields of the two countries made frequent visits, and friendly exchanges between the peoples increased significantly [2]. Since 1989, the friendly cooperative relations between China and Cuba in the political, economic, and cultural fields have been developing continuously [3].

Although China and Cuba are both socialist countries, they still have differences. For example, Cuba still lacks a complete theoretical system of socialism with Cuban characteristics. In economic terms, it is strongly opposed to a market economy, and in diplomatic terms, China and Cuba have established different relations with the United States. Based on these commonalities and differences, the diplomatic discourse between the two countries is inevitably different, which leads to some academic significance in this paper.

Here is an example of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chinese academic database. There are 211 Chinese documents with “China-Cuba” as the theme or title. However, there is less coverage of applied policy research or research on the beneficial role of diplomatic discourse construction in the context. Some relevant scholars argue that the construction of discourse provides theoretical linguistic support for changes and developments in multiple disciplines such as sociology, political science, philosophy, and education. Western scholars have paid increasing attention to interstate diplomatic discourse in the last three years and convened related international conferences, such as the Forum on Diplomatic Discourse and International Communication, in 2021.

Western scholars have studied the subject of “discourse”, especially “political discourse”, for a long time, and many systematic doctrines have been studied and sought, which are also lacking in Chinese scholars. This has enriched the paper’s content, enabling the actual integration of theory and practice. In the literature search, five studies of Chinese and Cuban foreign policy, three studies of Chinese and Cuban exchange discourse, and twelve studies of Cuban political discourse were mainly linguistic and cultural, not political. There are seven studies of the development of China and Cuba in a changing world context.

The paper mainly adopts the literature and comparative analysis by comparing the official regulations of China and Cuba from 1966-2022. The paper will first analyze the changes in Chinese and ancient diplomatic discourse characteristics through texts and paradigms. Secondly, it will compare and summarise the differences in the characteristics of the two countries’ discourse. Then it will be analyzed the reasons for the changes in the characteristics of Chinese and ancient diplomatic discourse in the context of the two countries’ ideological and foreign policy changes. Finally, the future outlook of the two countries will be summarized.

2. Analysis of the Chinese-Cuban Diplomatic Discourse

2.1. Discourse Analysis of the Joint Communiqué 1960 to 1961

On September 28, 1960, A joint communiqué from China and Cuba on the opening of diplomatic relations was published, in which “in order to develop further the already friendly and cooperative relations between the fraternal peoples of the two countries, the two governments decided to exchange diplomatic representatives at the ambassadorial level within the shortest possible time”, which was followed by two friendly visits in November 1960 and September 1961.

In the joint communiqué issued in November 1960, Joint Communiqué between Li Xiannian, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, and Major Ernesto Che Guevara, Head of the Economic Delegation of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba, the words “friendship”, “China”, “independence”, “Cuba”, “peace”, “independence” are used. “Cuba”, “People’s Republic of China”, “Peace”, “Independence”, “Democracy”, “friendship”, “nation”, “support”, “uphold”, “struggle”, “sincerely”, “imperialism”, etc. are used as keywords, with “satisfactorily”, “with great pleasure”, “resolutely”, “solemnly”, “happily”, “firmly”, “emphatically”, etc. as connectives, “epithets” [4].

In the joint statement released by the leaders of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Cuba in October 1961, the terms “friendship”, “China”, “Cuba”, “the People’s Republic of

China", "socialism", "aggression" were used. "People's Republic of China", "socialism", "U.S. imperialism", "aggression", "Latin America", "people", "revolution", "peace", "democracy", "liberation" and "cooperation" are keywords, altogether with words such as "with great pleasure", "unanimously", "consistently", "resolutely", "severely condemn", "reiterate", "strongly support", "satisfactorily", etc. "epithets" [5].

Compared with the 1960 joint Communiqué, the contents of the 1961 Joint Communiqué are richer. From the text's perspective, the Sino-Cuban diplomatic discourse contents are superficial and metaphorical. For example, the connectives in the two joint announcements are both positive and emotional words, such as "with satisfaction" and "with great pleasure". Behind the use of these words is the firm commitment of diplomatic connections are amicably established between the two nations and the determination of mutual assistance and win-win results in future development. In establishing diplomatic relations between China and Cuba for several decades, the two sides have become more confident and value their friendship.

From the perspective of paradigm, in political discourse, traditional political speeches and regulations often contain various paradigms such as structural analysis, value, and class paradigm [6]. The Sino-Cuban Joint Communiqué uses the discourse paradigm by combining the structural analysis paradigm with the value paradigm, which makes the political discourse between the two countries richer and more natural. Based on conforming to the characteristics of the paradigm, the normality and functionality of the content of community and regulations are fully considered.

Among them, the structural analysis paradigm focuses on the study of political structure, including the constitution of the state system, the political system and power mechanism, and the legitimacy of the structure [6]. In the 1960s, both China and Cuba were in a transitional stage, with political systems similar to those formed by referring to the "Soviet model" and being in the socialist camp. However, due to the internal contradictions between the communist party and outside forces involved in a variety of factors, such as complete make conflict more intense in the United States and the Soviet Union, the bipolar structure of the world political situation is unstable, which is the key to the game in the United States and the Soviet Union period, the diplomatic relations between the China and Cuba. Both the emotional connectives in the joint communiqué and the strong condemnation of the imperialist and aggressive forces of the two countries reflect the pragmatic and realistic diplomatic discourse expression based on the actual national conditions under the guidance of Marxist theory.

In the study of political discourse, the essence of the value paradigm lies in how values are perceived and understood to be distributed [6]. For example, the word "both sides" in the 1961 joint communiqué, which is more frequent than in the 1960 joint communiqué, reflects the mutual transfer of values between the two countries rather than the unilateral claim of values. China has consistently upheld the idea of "one China" when forging diplomatic ties, and the 1960 and 1961 joint communiqué, in which it writes, "Cuba fully supports the Chinese people in their just struggle to liberate their territory of Taiwan". The Cuban side firmly supports the just struggle of the Chinese people for the liberation of their territory, Taiwan, and strongly supports the restoration of the People's Republic of China's rightful rights at the United Nations, opposes the U.S. imperialist plot to create "two China" in order to occupy Taiwan permanently. The stern position and reasonable claims of the Chinese government to adhere to the one-China principle are directly reflected in the diplomatic communiqué. The words "resolutely", "severely condemn", "reaffirm," and "resolutely support" even more firmly classify the Taiwan issue as an internal matter of China. This proves that Cuba recognizes the one-China principle and the value of the friendship between China and Cuba and applies it to the Chinese Cuban diplomatic discourse.

2.2. Analysis of the Political Consultations between the Chinese and Cuban Foreign Ministries through Cooperation Plans in 1981, 2007 and 2022

There are five provisions in the 1981 Cooperation Plan between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Cuba, the primary keywords of which are "consolidation", "deepening", "both sides", "international", etc. [7].

Twelve articles make up the 2007 Cooperation Plan between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba and the People's Republic of China, the main keywords of which are "both sides", "strengthening", "deepening", "equality and mutual benefit", and "international". "equality and mutual benefit", "exchange", "mutual assistance and cooperation", "representative institutions", etc. [8].

In the 2022 Foreign Ministry press statement, Political discussions between the Chinese and Cuban foreign ministries are held by vice ministers of foreign affairs Xie Feng and Rodriguez. The main keywords are "China-Cuba relations," "international," "regional," "Latin America," "friendship", "justice", "Belt and Road Initiative", "Taiwan issue", "interests" etc. [9].

The vision of bilateral exchanges has expanded, and the influence has become more macro. Take the press release of the 2022 political consultation as an example. The two sides discussed several discourse topics such as "global development", "world peace," and "socialist cause" [9]. The words "international", "regional" and "friendly" show that the two countries both pay attention to international affairs and advocate regional peace. Their scope ranges from regional to national, and their vision ranges from domestic to global. The "One Belt One Road" and the building of a "Community of Common Destiny" mentioned above reflect the rapid and timely updating of the discourse. Behind it, they reflect the convergence of values and concepts, especially China's commitment to being a responsible country. The words "Latin America" and "the United Nations" also show that our two countries firmly support the work of the United Nations and uphold humanitarian principles. Cuba has developed four types of cancer vaccines for clinical use [10]. Additionally, China has given the WHO US \$20 million to encourage global cooperation in the COVID-19 epidemic [11]. The two countries are committed to contributing to the world's health, medical treatment, and environment, not only in words but also in deeds.

3. Reasons for the Change in Cuba's Diplomatic Discourse

3.1. Adaption to the Domestic and Foreign Situation

From the development perspective, China has experienced two significant stages since the 1960s. One is the Reform and Opening up since 1978; the other is the new century.

In the 1960s, due to the dual diplomatic pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union, China further divided the "middle zone", arguing that the countries in the middle zone were different and that there were two middle zones: "Asia, Africa, and Latin America are the first, middle zone; Europe, North America, Canada, and Oceania were the second middle zone. Japan is also in the second middle ground. "At the same time, China worked hard to practice its revolutionary diplomatic line, actively developing relations with "third world countries" such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, opposing the expansion and hegemony struggle of the United States and the Soviet Union in developing countries, practicing proletarian internationalism and resisting the hegemonic expansion of the United States. China has actively conducted diplomatic activities against independent national states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America [12].

Based on the international situation and the establishment of new diplomatic relations with Cuba and other countries in the 1960s, diplomatic documents frequently appeared with words such as "firm" and "solemn". Words such as "Latin American", "the people", "revolution," "peace",

“democracy,” and “liberation” of “cooperation” revealed the established diplomatic relations between the two countries.

China’s society has seen profound changes since the implementation of the Reform and Opening up Policy. China has developed a socialist market economy and is now the second-largest economy in the world. Politically, China has continuously promoted the reform of the administrative and economic systems. Democracy and the legal system have been constantly improved. Cultural diversity and inclusiveness have emerged, and China’s confidence in its culture and history has been constantly demonstrated.

China has put forward the four principles of “equality and mutual benefit, pragmatic, various forms and common development”. Equality and mutual benefit, communication, cooperation, and other terms are frequently used in the 2007 Cooperation Plan between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Cuba. At the same time, China actively develops economic cooperation of equality and mutual benefit with third-world countries and carries out various forms of cooperation with Cuba and many other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, including trade, technical exchanges, labor service cooperation, and enterprise establishment, thus promoting the development of each other’s national economies [13]. This explains the frequent appearance of the words “Sino-Cuban relations” and “interests” in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press statement in 2022.

China is showing its unique strength in economic, political, social, and ecological aspects in the new century. In light of the changes on the international stage, China has made corresponding changes in its diplomatic strategy. Guided by the strategic thought on diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, China’s diplomacy has taken the initiative to shape the top-level design and comprehensive planning of its grand diplomatic strategy with a profound global perspective. With careful planning, China actively directs and manages diplomatic operations with significant nations, neighbors, and emerging nations, and multilateral areas. It will be implemented the concept of win-win cooperation in political, economic, security, cultural and other fields with pragmatic principles and policies [14].

Since the revolution, Cuba has forged its path of independence, primarily as the field of tourism has grown, social stability remains, and health care and education are free. Under the premise of continuous economic development, the discourse of China and Cuba has become more confident. Based on the development of China’s and Cuba’s national conditions and changes in diplomatic strategies, this paper explains the reasons for the frequent use of words such as “global development”, “world peace,” and “socialist cause” in the press release of the 2022 political consultation between the foreign ministries of China and Cuba, which was held by vice foreign ministers Xie Feng of China and Rodriguez of Cuba.

3.2. Based on China’s Practical Considerations

Since the 1960s, China and Cuba have made particular development in various aspects. With the increase of domestic power and the promotion of international status, China and Cuba have paid more attention to putting forward corresponding foreign policies based on their conditions, thus changing their diplomatic discourse.

China is currently the largest developing nation in the world, and its overall national strength and standing abroad are quickly improving. China is playing an increasingly important role on the world stage. China’s wisdom and proposals have all demonstrated China’s image as a major responsible country in the world. With the rise of its overall strength and status, China has begun to consider a more optimized foreign policy based on its actual conditions. On the one hand, China has changed from the purely moral and revolutionary diplomatic philosophy logic in the early days of the People’s Republic of China to consider how to conduct bilateral relations based on equality of

status and identity. On the other hand, China has not only provided free economic assistance to the vast number of developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America but also, in full consideration of its realities, provided foreign development assistance to countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the form of providing them the way of developing [15].

As an essential member of Latin America, Cuba has been making frequent appearances on the international stage. In January 1961, the United States and Cuba cut off diplomatic relations. In July 2015, the two countries formally restored diplomatic relations. In January 2017, when Donald Trump took office as US President, the US announced to tighten its policy towards Cuba. Whether blockade or cooperation, Cuba has been able to withstand pressure and gain some support from the international community. As Raul Castro said when he attended the 60th anniversary of the victory of the Cuban Revolution, Cuba is neither humble nor overbearing in the face of the United States. However, Cuba is still willing to maintain peaceful, respectful, and mutually beneficial bilateral relations with the United States.

4. The Future Prospect of China and Cuba's Diplomatic Discourse

4.1. The Diplomatic Arena of Cooperation, Openness and Inclusiveness

The People's Republic of China has opened diplomatic relations with Cuba, the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to do so. Since the 61st anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations, China-Cuba relations have strengthened with a high degree of mutual trust in politics. The friendship between the two countries has been strengthened.

Cuba and China have a critical consensus on strengthening socialist construction, developing bilateral relations, and improving the well-being of the people. In the two phone calls of the leaders of both countries in 2022, they repeatedly stress that China and Cuba are worthy of being good friends, comrades, brothers, and partners. With deepening economic and trade cooperation, Cuba's second-biggest commercial partner in the Caribbean is China, which is currently Cuba's greatest trading partner in terms of goods. The two sides have extensive cooperation in agriculture, new energy, biopharmaceuticals, information and communications, tourism, infrastructure, and other fields.

On Jan 15, 2019, the Think Tank for Globalization (CCG) held a roundtable themed "Cuba and the Belt and Road: Prospects and Perspectives" at its Beijing headquarters. At the conference, Chinese companies showed a strong willingness to invest in Cuba, and Cuba and China also showed a strong willingness to cooperate. It is hoped that China and Cuba can further strengthen cooperation in the future and work together for win-win results.

Under the vital impetus of the Belt and Road Initiative, the two countries will continue to maintain friendly exchanges in all fields and aspects, build an open and inclusive diplomatic arena for cooperation, promote the development of the Belt and Road Initiative in Latin America, enhance China-Pakistan friendly and cooperative relations, promote China-Pakistan economic integration and explore more China-Pakistan investment opportunities. At the same time, China, Cuba, and other Latin American countries will vigorously promote regional economic prosperity, diplomatic harmony, and mutual assistance through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Extending the Belt and Road Initiative to Latin American countries will establish one or more trans-Pacific economic corridors, thus enriching the cooperation agenda and areas with China.

4.2. A Discourse Platform for Peace, Equality and Justice

Since the 21st century, cooperation has increasingly become the mainstream of China's diplomatic discourse. The Party's diplomatic thoughts and concepts have been internalized into China's diplomatic knowledge and practice through cooperative discourse. A harmonious diplomatic

concept with the theme of “emphasizing common interests” has been formed. The concept of harmonious diplomacy, in turn, has been recognized in the international community to a certain extent with such words as “the path of peaceful development”, “a win-win strategy of opening up,” and “a harmonious world”.

The cooperation between countries will be based on peace, equality, and justice and China’s diplomatic discourse system in the 21st century. The two countries will establish the following discourse system on the diplomatic stage of cooperation and inclusiveness:

First, it is significant to establish the policy of “diplomacy for the people”, emphasize that diplomacy should protect the legal rights and interests of Chinese nationals and other legal entities abroad, and place a high value on the growth of “people-to-people diplomacy” and “public diplomacy.”

Second, it is necessary to put forward the concept of a “harmonious world” to promote the construction of lasting peace and shared prosperity. The report of the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party elaborated the actual contents of a harmonious world from five aspects: politics, economy, culture, security, and environmental protection, thus forming the new concept of order, civilization, security, and environment of China’s diplomacy.

Third, adhering to the “path of peaceful development”, China’s development will not threaten anyone but will only bring more development opportunities and a broader market.

Forth, adhering to the “win-win strategy of opening up” and stressing that “to make economic globalization more balanced, beneficial and win-win, we must foster the concept of equality, cooperation and win-win”.

5. Conclusions

From 1966 to 2022, the diplomatic discourse between China and Cuba has been constantly enriched. In each period, new words of the times have been put forward, profoundly reflecting the different diplomatic perspectives and diplomatic relations and the continuous friendly exchanges and in-depth relations.

The paper analyzes the discourse system from the text and the paradigm. From words such as “the two sides”, “satisfaction,” and other relevant words, China and Cuba are yearning for peace, democracy, equality, and mutual development of the socialist countries. The two countries, in various aspects, all learn from each other and promote the building of friendship and in-depth development. The reason lies in the efforts of the two countries and the mutual assistance and promotion of both sides. After the Reform and Opening up Policy, China continued to expand and, along with the ongoing changes in the international situation, established a new diplomatic approach. At the same time, Cuba gradually acquired the determination and strength to resist the pressure after the Reform. Both sides have won international support and are working hard to build their unique diplomatic discourse systems.

In the background of the Belt and Road Initiative and the profound friendship between the two countries, looking into the future, Cuba and China will surely build a diplomatic arena of cooperation, openness, and inclusiveness and an equal and fair discourse platform to strengthen cooperation and make progress together.

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