

Analysis of Favoritism on China's Social Media in the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract: The Russian-ukraine conflict is the most significant in Europe since World War II, and it is also the first social media conflict of humankind. In China, the attitude of public opinion towards the Russian-ukraine war has been very torn apart by the development of the situation. To understand the Chinese position in the Russian-ukraine conflict, this study uses crawler technology to capture the relevant data of comments and bullet subtitles on Chinese social media platforms. It uses popular tags specific to the conflict to collect data, depicting both sides' neutral or biased views. At the same time, it investigated the social media public opinion communication situation of the Russian-ukraine conflict. Finally, after collecting the information released on the Bilibili platform, it summarized the characteristics of Chinese public opinion in the social media public opinion war as the main pro-Russian. It summarized and analyzed the reasons and positions of different views.

Keywords: public opinion analysis, Russia-Ukraine crisis, statistics

1. Introduction

On the Russian-ukraine battlefield, Russian and Ukrainian troops are indistinguishable and fall into a war of attrition. Outside the battlefield, the field of public opinion has become the most critical position for Russia and Ukraine to win aid. State power, news media, relevant non-governmental organizations, and academic circles cooperate to form a world public opinion war platform with extensive coverage and radiation, gradually spreading from Twitter and Facebook abroad to China's official WeChat accounts, Weibo, and other platforms [1,2]. In the United Nations Security Council on February 25, 2022, Chinese officials stated that Russia- the conflict is "what China does not want to see." While respecting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, it understands Russia's legitimate concerns about security issues [3]. However, the attitude of public opinion towards the war between Russia and Ukraine is very torn closely following the developments. Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, social media, represented by Weibo, Bilibili, has become an important platform for countries worldwide to release foreign policy and related remarks. All parties involved in the Russia-ukraine conflict have actively used Chinese social media to express their positions and opinions to influence the orientation of Chinese public opinion and gain the support of Chinese public opinion. As the focus of domestic public opinion, there are many Russian and Ukrainian supporters of Bilibili.

Looking at the Russian-ukraine conflict from different perspectives has led to a long-term dispute between the two factions. There has never been such a war that has been so widely discussed in Chinese society, which is more extensive than the attention caused by previous wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen. Because China is a world power with considerable strength and a large population, the importance of China's public opinion to the world is self-evident. Studying and analyzing the mainstream public opinion views on the incident on Chinese social media platforms can help fill the views of different countries and regions worldwide. At present, the three main issues about public opinion still need to be solved. This is why the concepts of the two factions in the Russia-Ukraine conflict are so different. The two factions think that their views are correct and the most important. This article crawls the comments below the video of Bilibili, statistics and classification, and analyzes the number and causes of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian factions and obtains the current pro-Russian state of the Chinese people.

2. Data Description and Research Method

2.1. Media Selection

Bilibili is a cultural community and video website with a high concentration of young generations in China. After more than ten years of development, Bilibili has maintained its status as one of the top platforms for Chinese netizens to express political views. According to the announcement of Bilibili's 2022 financial report, the average daily active users reached 92.8 million, and the monthly active users reached 326 million, making it the most active video website in China.

2.2. Video Selection

In this study, six videos were selected, of which two were pro-Russian bloggers, two were pro-Ukrainian bloggers, and two were the Russian-ukraine conflict videos with the highest bilibili views. Each video crawls 1,000 comments and data, a total of 12,000 pieces of data. The National Defense Times and the Global Network were chosen as representatives of pro-Russian media because they are highly well-known official media in China, and Professor Chu Yin was chosen as the pro-Ukrainian representative because he once served as a professor in the Department of Public Administration of the School of International Relations. His research direction is the Chinese and foreign political systems. At the same time, he is the most active fan of the pro-Ukrainian media. The specific selection is shown in Table 1.

2.3. Data Collection

The way to grab the ranking data is to use crawl thousands of user comments and bullet subtitles with crawling software and analyze them according to the needs of emotional analysis. This article mainly does three analysis steps: marking the content of bullet subtitles with SnowNLP: positive, negative, and count the proportion, and the top 10 high. Frequency words, and finally, use statistical software to draw word cloud diagrams.

Table 1: The specific selection of video.

Title	Publisher	Launch time	Playback	Video reviews	Sect
After losing in the red Liman and Kherson Oblast in a row, is the Russian army really going to collapse?	Professor Chu Yin	2022-10-04 12:47:01	1.152 million views.	6227	Ukrainian factions
Zelensky's speech aroused a strong global response. Russia lost a war of public opinion.	Professor Chu Yin	2022-12-23 17:47:31	3.66 million views.	5830	Ukrainian factions
The old Ukrainian woman confused the Russia-Ukraine army! She welcomed the Russian army with the Soviet red flag, but was trampled on by the Ukrainian soldiers in front of her face.	Global Times	2022-04-08 10:27:25	4.242 million views. It has reached the 12th highest video views on all Bilibili.	5506	Russian faction
Putin launched a "heart-to-heart battle" and shouted to the Ukrainian soldiers: Think about your parents	Knews (Shanghai eye)	2022-02-24 17:41:25	4.685 million views. It has reached the 7th highest video views on all Bilibili.	4065	Neutral factions
What kind of great power game is hidden behind the Russia-Ukraine conflict?	Lukwen Studio	2022-02-24 21:28:25	10.356 million views. It has reached the 1th highest video views on all Bilibili.	4,11 million	Neutral factions
Heinous!The Ukrainian army used a hanger to down the statue of the heroine Zoia (Зоя Анатольевна Космодемьянская) in the Soviet-German War and smashed it into two pieces.	Defense times	2022-04-22 14:10:20	2.905 million views. It has reached the 22th highest video views on all Bilibili.	9732	Russian faction

3. Speech Judgment Analysis

This paper determines whether the author of the text is in favor, opposed, or neutral to a proposition or goal from the text through position detection. The position of social media data can be modeled using various online signals. These signals can be divided into two main types: content signals and network signals. This paper studies the former and tries to determine the position of tweets related to bounded geographical locations through keywords.

This paper establishes the text position through the following judgment method.

1. Is there any obvious negative speech about the country it has designated?
2. In the analysis, no one thinks the country he talks about is at a disadvantage.
3. Are there any negative sentiments in the remarks, such as contempt and contempt for the national leaders they talk about?
4. Are there any obvious negative words that lead to war?
5. Some comments and bullet subtitles have no specific meaning and can be listed as invalid remarks.

After research and summary, this paper concludes the top ten keywords in the six videos and their frequency. These will be shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The top ten keywords in the six videos and their frequency.

Keyword content	Frequency of keyword appearance
Ukraine	2024
Russia	1537
United States	761
Soviet Union	707
Country	569
Support	436
War	401
Hero	338
Russian Army	326
Ignorance	292

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Review Timeline Frequency

Determine the nodes with the most time to post by crawling the comment time. It can be found that the most active period of pro-Russian factions was the Russian army approaching Kiev in February 2022 and the Russian army Donetsk victory in April 2023. The most active period of pro-Ukrainian was the thrift defeat of the Russian army from November to January 2022.

4.2. General Analysis of China's Position and Comments in the Russian-Ukraine War



Figure 1: General analysis of China's position and comments in the Russo-Ukrainian war.

After analysis, it can be found that there are 4,028 pieces of information in the pro-Russian faction, 1,609 pieces of information in the pro-Ukrainian faction, 295 pieces of information in the neutral faction, and 68 pieces of invalid information. From the speech information shown in Figure 1, the pro-Russian faction is larger than the pro-Ukrainian faction.

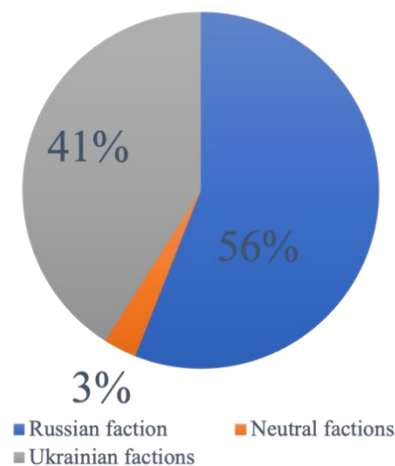


Figure 2: General analysis of China's media barrage position in the Russia-Ukraine war.

According to the bullet subtitles information in Figure 2, the pro-Russian faction has 3,090 pieces of information, the pro-Ukrainian faction has 2,262 pieces of information, 166 pieces of information is war-neutral, and 482 pieces of invalid information. Despite the significant increase in the number of pro-Ukrainian speech, there are still more pro-Russian speakers. The reason why there are so many pro-Ukrainian comments on the bullet screen may be that the bullet screen will not show the sender's account name and IP address, so that they will not be harassed by pro-Russian people.

4.3. Comparison of Post Addresses of Pro-Russian

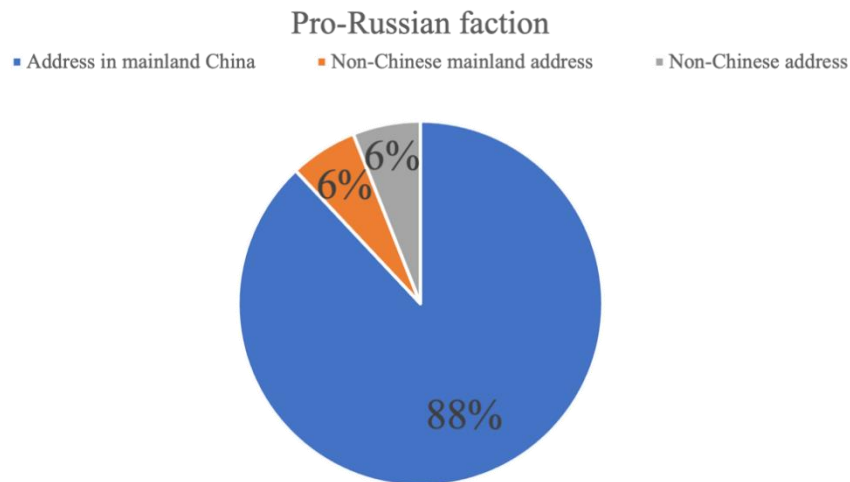


Figure 3: Comparison of post addresses of pro-Russian.

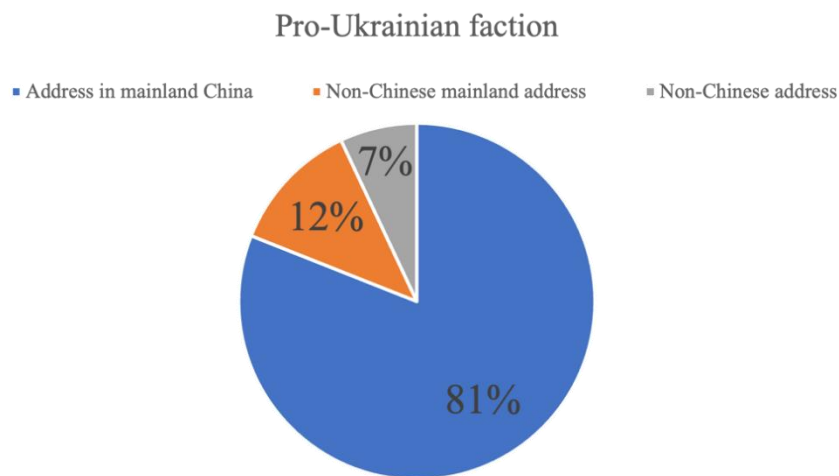


Figure 4: Comparison of post addresses of pro-Ukrainian.

From the IP address counted in Figure 3 and Figure 4, it can be found that the number of IP users of pro-Russian China and mainland China is significantly higher than that of pro-Ukrainian netizens. Judging from the polls that the United States supports Ukraine, some netizens have been infiltrated by American ideology. Judging from the perspective of words, countries, territories, beliefs, and ethnic groups talk a lot, and both sides call the national leaders they support heroes.

4.4. Keyword Frequency Analysis(pro-Russian)

From the word frequency of the pro-Russian video, it can be found that although the two sides are against Russia and Ukraine, the emergence rate of the former Soviet Union is very high, which fully shows that a large proportion of Chinese on Bilibili have illusions about the former Soviet Union. After further research on history and tweets, it can be found that some Russian supporters are dissatisfied with the Ukrainian government and pro-Ukrainian factions. Supporters cannot accept the Ukrainian government's integration of the fascist Azov battalion into the Ukrainian Defence Force.

At the same time, the Ukrainian threshold for recruitment of government personnel has been raised. Try to completely erase the Russian-speaking people in Utung. Supporters call it counterproductive. In the pro-Russian view, traitors, public knowledge, the United States is very common in it.

4.5. Summary of Pro-Russian Reasons for Pro-Russian Factions on China's Internet

1. Thoughts on the friendship and assistance between the former Soviet Union and China. At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union helped China build and rebuild 156 large-scale projects. These projects range from private to military, from all walks of life. Helped China complete its first five-year plan.)

2. the Western forces led by the United States are chasing and intercepting China, and the relevant military bases are spread all over China. At the same time, it hinders China's further development on the Taiwan issue. Therefore, China's anti-American sentiment is fierce, and it is generally believed that the main reason behind Ukraine is the United States.

3. Oppose "fascism" in Ukraine (in 2015, the Supreme Court of Ukraine passed the Decommunization Act to promote "decommunization" and added pseudo-government officials who cooperated with Nazi Germany to the list of "20th-century Ukrainian independence fighters" in another law to establish its statutory memorial status.)

4. Many Chinese people miss and favor Russian history and culture.

5. Oppose the public intellectual professor. "Public knowledge" is often synonymous with scribbling everywhere, low level, moral supremacy, and condescending. They are even accused of motivation, and some dis spinners believe they are "bushed by foreign countries," "disturbed China," and so on.

6. Guidance from the official media: Observer Network, CCTV News, People's Daily, and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League are all pro-Russian factions. The Central Committee of the Communist Youth League shared a pro-Russian former Soviet song on Bilibili on February 24, 2022, with the highest number one on the site.)

Sino-Russian relations are currently at the best period in history. The common national interests of both sides determine this. Each takes what he needs. Both sides are squeezed by the strategy under the unilateral framework dominated by the U.S. imperialists. Moreover, China's complete industrial chain and Russia's rich resources naturally complement each other. Therefore, the common interests brought the two sides together. For Russia, the competition between China and the United States has weakened the position and military strength of the United States around Europe. For China, Russia has large oil and gas reserves, which is very important for China's oil shortage which can also make our country less dependent on oil imports from the Middle East through the Strait of Malacca. As a result, many disadvantages have been reduced [4].

Most importantly, the global political narrative map built by the West based on its interests cannot achieve a fair and just reconciliation of contradictions. People in most emerging countries can recite the increasingly developed global network of instant creation and find that the West is logically hypocritical and unjust in these narratives. The simplest example is the countless wars launched by the United States around the world after the end of World War II, most of which was to protect the political rights and interests of the United States, and many crimes against humanity are not investigated and tried by no one under this system [5]. Many modern Chinese netizens will question why the United States can retreat without trial by doing so. The reality is exactly the opposite. Therefore, the support of the people of many emerging countries for Russia is an important link to breaking the current unjust Western global order and narrative logic. Many foreign netizens support China in public opinion, which is out of the same narrative logic [6].

The people of many small countries realize that their countries do not have the ability to challenge the order of the United States in reality, so they can only put this hope on other powers to reconstruct a fair world [7].

4.6. Keyword Frequency Analysis(pro-Ukrainian)

From the word frequency of the pro-Ukrainian video, it can be found that although the two sides are Russia and Ukraine, the emergence rate of the United States is very high, which fully illustrates the proxy nature of the war. As an ally of Ukraine, the United States has played a great role in the war. Similarly, this method can be used to express opinions around Ukrainian supporters. Ukrainian supporters expressed their views on topics in the timeline that are usually related to negative connotations. The picture on the left shows several themes of aggression, Nazi Party, cyber patriotic youth, independents, etc. This is very common in pro-Ukrainian tweets. When inquiring, there is a strong possibility that these people's condemnation stems from hatred for Russia itself. For example, Russia's atrocities in China and the history of Soviet Union confrontation.

4.7. Analysis of Pro-Ukrainian Reasons for Pro-Ukrainian Factions on China's Internet

Russia's war of aggression is illegal. Russia launched the so-called "special military operation" against Ukraine, a blatant war of aggression in a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Russian aggression broke all the international and interstate agreements in which it recognized the present boundaries and guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine, for example, the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances (1994). A few weeks after the beginning of the all-out war, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine jumped from less than 3 million to nearly 18 million. Today, these people are still in urgent need of assistance to sustain their lives. At the United Nations, as many as 140 countries supported Ukraine against the Russian invasion. Pro-Ukrainian factions believe that Ukraine's struggle to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity is bound to receive the sympathy and support of the world's peace-loving forces [8].

Russia has brought serious suffering to China. From 1849 to 1853, Russia entered the lower reaches of China's Heilongjiang River. It established a colonial stronghold, which deprived China of about 600,000 square kilometers north of the Heilongjiang River and south of the outer Hinggan mountains. In 1860, Russia occupied more than 400,000 square kilometers east of China's Ussuri River, completely depriving China of the northeastern entrance to the Sea of Japan. At the same time, the signing of the Convention of Peking has created a basis for Russia to cede China's western territory further. In the second half of the 19th century, several border treaties signed between Russia and China cut off nearly 440,000 square kilometers of territory from China. In 1946, the government of the Republic of China recognized Mongolia's independence under the influence of the Soviet Union while acquiescing in the Soviet occupation of the Tyva region. During the past 100 years, Russia ceded 3.16 million square kilometers of Chinese territory. These lost territories of China were about the same as the area of India, greatly undermining China's territorial integrity. This has led many pro-Ukrainian factions to believe that Ukraine's victory can undermine confidence in Russia's government because the war consumes too many human, material, and financial resources. When Russia completely collapses, China can recapture its occupied homeland.

The remaining reasons are as follows:

1. Oppose the Russian aggression against Ukraine. (Russia invaded Crimea, which belongs to Ukraine, in 2014 to expand its living space.) Russia is regarded as a Japanese aggressor during World War II.

2. Studying or living abroad is affected by Western ideology.

3. Oppose Russia's "fascism." (Skinheads is a radical organization with Russian youth as the main members, advocating extreme nationalism, Nazism, extreme xenophobia, and specializing in violent attacks on people of color. The members are mainly distributed in Russia, Europe, and the United States, marked by bald heads [9, 10].)

4. Trade and financial shocks caused by war.

5. Love Ukrainian (or US) culture.

6. Most of the supporters of Ukraine also support the United States, and they often choose to support the Syrian rebels on the Syrian issue.

5. Conclusion

This paper presents data to cover conflict-supporting trends. This paper investigates the position of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on Bilibili, made a reasonable summary and explanation, analyzed the specific reasons for the tearing of Chinese public opinion, and could provide supplementary materials for another relevant research. This paper has the potential to collect many insights on a broader scale. Considering the specific time frame surrounding the fierce events, it can provide a channel to understand why people support Russia or Ukraine in the conflict. However, due to the high complexity of keywords, simple classification discussions may only partially capture positions. Moreover, it only summarizes the data of Bilibili. In the future, we can consider using more software as the object of investigation which will help us more intuitively display data from global conflicts.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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