Nationalism and The Construction of Others in China

Exploring Social Media in the Shadow of the “Refugee Crisis”

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Table of Contents

1  SUMMARY.................................................................................................................................................. 1

2  INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................................................... 3
   2.1  AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ....................................................................................................... 3

3  BACKGROUND............................................................................................................................................... 5
   3.1  “REFUGEE CRISIS”, A LOADED NOTION WITH WIDE PRESENCE IN THE WEST ...................... 5
   3.2  CHINA-ASIA-GLOBAL REFUGEE PROTECTION REALITY .............................................................. 5

4  THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ...................................................................................................................... 9
   4.1  INTRODUCTION...................................................................................................................................... 9
   4.2  NATIONALISM, INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION .................................................................................... 11
   4.3  AGENDA-SETTING ................................................................................................................................. 13
   4.4  TWO-STEP FLOW OF COMMUNICATION AND “OPINION LEADER” .............................................. 14

5  PREVIOUS STUDIES ..................................................................................................................................... 16
   5.1  “REFUGEE CRISIS” IN WESTERN LANGUAGE .................................................................................. 16
       5.1.1  “Refugee Crisis” in the Domestic Domain: the “Capability” Discussion.................................... 17
       5.1.2  “Refugee Crisis” in Defining the Others...................................................................................... 18
       5.1.3  “Refugee Crisis” Indicating a More Comprehensive Political Ideology – Neo-Nationalism ........ 19
   5.2  NATIONALISM AND CHINA ................................................................................................................... 20
       5.2.1  Nationalism as a Relationship ....................................................................................................... 22
       5.2.2  Chinese Domestic Discourses about Multi-ethnicity and Muslim ............................................ 23
   5.3  MEDIA, PUBLIC ATTENTION AND NATIONALIST EXPRESSIONS ................................................. 27
       5.3.1  Social Media and Public Perception .............................................................................................. 27
       5.3.2  Chinese Media Censorship ........................................................................................................... 28

6  METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................................................... 30
   6.1  CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ...................................................................................................... 31
       6.1.1  The Discourse-Cognition-Society Triangle .................................................................................. 32
       6.1.2  “Us” versus “Them” Discourses Analysis ...................................................................................... 32
   6.2  METHOD AND THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE STUDY ......................................................... 33
   6.3  MATERIAL .............................................................................................................................................. 34
       6.3.1  Selection of Material ...................................................................................................................... 35
   6.4  ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .................................................................................................................. 36
   6.5  DELIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES ................................................................................................. 38
       6.5.1  The Representability of the Collected Material ............................................................................ 38
       6.5.2  The Loss of Certain Original Material .......................................................................................... 38
   6.6  TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION ..................................................................................................... 39

7  SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ..................................................................................................... 40
“[L]ook at what happened last night in Sweden.”¹

Donald John Trump, the 45th and current president of the United States, dramatically signaled an anti-immigrant position through this alarming quote during a rally with his supporters. This panic-arousing discourse eventually turned out to be a citing of a non-existent incident, inferred to be referring to a clip aired on Fox News of a documentary about alleged violence committed by refugees in Sweden (BBC News, February 19, 2017). However, I found that this false alarm on Sweden remotely set off in the United States by its president, could be of certain representativity of a reaction currently happening in regions where people express nervousness about the “European refugee crisis”, while in reality they are still distanced from the “European refugee crisis”. The very term of “European Refugee Crisis”, along with references of several European countries (Germany and Sweden, for example), have peremptorily become a set of emblematic rhetoric symbols laden with concrete implications, inside and outside the territory of Europe. This thesis is a work produced out of the pondering on alarms of such kind released in China, a country whose capital city Beijing is of 6,704 kilometers distance to Stockholm, and 6,930 kilometers to Damascus.

1 Summary

This research examines discourses on the social media site Weibo around the group of international asylum seekers during an online campaign launched by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to raise awareness of asylum seekers in the People’s Republic of China on June 2017. Sina Weibo is a Chinese social media site with its users making up of around 50% of total Chinese internet users (Weibo, 2017). Despite the background that Chinese government aims at taking more significant responsibility in global governance, in the same time as China demonstrates emerging interests in refugee issues, commentaries from grassroots Chinese on social media, however, held an altered stance. According to the author’s observation, during and after the UNHCR

¹ Fully cited as: “You look at what’s happening in Germany, you look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this. Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible”.

1
campaign of World Refugee Day on June 20, 2017, comments on topics of international refugee, refugee protection as well as certain religious and ethnic groups (Islam and Muslim, for example) on Weibo were mainly loaded with negative emotions, biased stereotypes, and resistant sentiments.

The study is an interdisciplinary study contemplating theory in several disciplines, such as international migration and ethnic relations, international relations, public attitude dynamics, public communication, and new media. It is based on a critical discourse analysis approach, where the relationship between cyber discursive practices and the social, cultural, and power structure in the Chinese context is studied. Chinese public perception of the European “refugee crisis”, the public reaction toward several humanitarian pursuits which are deemed to be possessed by the West, grassroots identification of us and them, the global production and dissemination of particular xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments will be studied. Last but not least, features of social media concerning their possible impacts on the aspects mentioned above are analyzed.

This study can supplement current academic discussions around the “refugee crisis” with an empirically grounded analysis from a non-Western context. It can also provide knowledge on cross-national similarities and differences of anti-immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric for organizations aiming at fostering international cooperation and engagement on refugee issues.
2 Introduction

As has been observed by many scholars, anti-refugee attitudes are increasingly visible in public discourse throughout Europe (Kundnani, 2008; 2012). While the public discourse in China about refugees, on the other hand, has not gained much international scholarly attention. June of 2017 has witnessed a cascade of rhetoric about the asylum-seeker group on the Chinese Internet. Differed from some views that Chinese citizens tend to follow the guidance coming from "above" and have lower political participation, however, the large engagement they have displayed online shows us another image of the Chinese citizens. In the context of "Web 2.0", what has been shown and heard on the internet tends to reflect more of users' direct reactions and thoughts on various events. Those events, be it political or economic, global or local, all touches the nerves of each individual.

2.1 Aim and Research Questions

Research on refugee reception has been scarce concerning China. This thesis focuses on how foreign refugees and refugee supports have been discussed in Chinese social media, while refugee situations geographically close to China has dominated the international refugee reception in China. The first and most known refugee groups received in China are Vietnamese refugees from 1978 to 1982. More recently, China has received displaced foreigners from North Korea, ethnic Kokangs from Myanmar and ethnic Kachins from Myanmar (Song, 2018). In a UNHCR fact sheet from 2015, the additional countries of refugees mentioned to be received by China are Somalia (182 refugees), Nigeria (86), Iraq (52) and Liberia (45) (UNHCR, 2015b), with comparatively small number compared to refugees received by Europe. In June 2017, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) carried out an online campaign in informing and mobilizing support for refugees. This thesis departs from this campaign and explores the continued discussion by Chinese on the microblogging platform Weibo.
The thesis aims to explore and analyze the main characters of how the issue of refugees in China was portrayed in Chinese social media in the wake of an international refugee and solidarity crisis and following a pro-refugee campaign in China by UNHCR. In doing this, central questions exploring the aim are:

- What are the explanations of Chinese Weibo users for international refugees?
- What characteristics are linked to the refugees in the social media accounts?
- How are the actors supporting refugees discussed in the posting of Chinese Weibo users?
- Finally, to what extent can one find similarities and differences in the view of Chinese social media accounts on refugees compared with the more studied responses in Europe?

In the thesis, I shortly review the scant research on Chinese refugee reception in a broader context of research on refugees and refugee reception. I am especially interested in how narratives on the refugee crisis, against refugees and on refugee supporters were constructed. The empirical study is based on text analysis of Weibo posts following the UNHCR June 2017, refugee support campaign. Using critical discourse analysis of Weibo posts, I explore how refugees were discussed in Chinese social media by the official media outlet, opinion leaders, and the mass public. These works will be related to previous studies analyzing views on refugees more general and particularly as expressed on social media, both from Europe and from the few studies on China and other Eastern Asian countries. In doing so, there are three focus areas for the analysis. One concerns international politics and the global contexts of the so-called “crises” of refugees. The second concerns the relationship between nationalism in China and the perception held by the public toward support for refugees. Finally, the third discusses the actors contesting refugees as a constructed image and how pro-refugee actors were characterized on Chinese social media. Through thorough discourse analysis, by correlating the expressions with the historical reality and comparing them with refugee-related discussions produced in the Western society,
possible similarities and differences in the responses to refugees of China and Europe can be observed and therein researched.

3 Background

3.1 “Refugee Crisis”, a Loaded Notion with Wide Presence in the West

In the first nine months of 2015, more than 487,000 people were arriving on Europe’s Mediterranean shores, twice the number for all of 2014 (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015). Many of them were Syrians fleeing the country’s civil war, which began in 2011; since then, almost 429,000 Syrians have applied for asylum in Europe (UNHCR, 2015a). German chancellor Angela Merkel had once asserted that the contemporary crisis would define this decade (UK Guardian, August 21, 2015).

Although this paper attempts to study Chinese internet users’ reactions toward the European “refugee crisis”, the author holds a critical stance to view this very notion named as “refugee crisis”. As noticed and addressed by many, the topic of immigration has become an issue extensively politicized in both the political realm and public sphere in Europe, especially by the radical and right-wing populist parties (e.g., Buonfino, 2004; Krzyżanowski, 2018). The normalization of the so-called “crisis”, along with a set of standard immigration-related arguments, has been viewed not only with regard to the historical facts of top-down right-wing populist politics’ presence in Europe (Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Odmalm, 2011), but also in relation to the zealous bottom-up anti-immigration activities background (Ekman, 2014; Krzyzanowski & Ledin, 2017).

3.2 China-Asia-Global Refugee Protection Reality

When it comes to the refugee protection works achieved in the East-Asian countries, there is previous voice criticizing Asia, particularly certain well-developed countries concerning these states’ reluctant acts on global refugee protection and their restrictive immigration policy. The critique often takes the argument that Asian countries did not follow the “global norms” of protecting refugees and neglecting the humanitarian
pursuits. For example, in an article written by Katharine H.S. Moon (2016) “Why is Asia MIA on refugees?”, Moon harshly criticized many Asian countries’ stingy acts in accepting foreign asylum seekers and resettling refugees, which read by her was in contrast to the region’s fast economic growth, high quality of human capital as well as entrepreneurial innovation. She criticized these well-developed but petty-behaving countries for their “myopic state-centrism”, “backwardness in adopting international standards and law that promote human rights”, “narrow view of sovereignty” and the lack of “good regional models of constructive refugee policy and capacity-building to host the strangers at the gates”.

According to statistics listed in her article, two of the leading economies in Asia, South Korea and Japan has been very restrictive in receiving refugees of ethnic foreign nationals. In 2015, Japan accepted 27 refugees while rejecting 99 percent of the record-high 7,586 asylum applications. When it comes to South Korea, until August 2016, only 600 non-ethnic Korean refugees have been legally admitted out of 18,800 applicants. The Korean government granted refugee status to only three Syrians out of 1,144 applicants (since 1994), and after much international criticism in recent years, granted 670 Syrians the so-called humanitarian visa where no social welfare provisions were offered (Moon, 2016).

Immigration policies by certain Asian countries, read by Moon, were due to Asia’s hesitation in moving from the “untransformed mindset” of nation-state and borders to the global responsibility-sharing cosmopolitanism. With an exhort and appeal to the nations and their political leaders, Moon’s article presented us reasoning of Asian countries’ positioning and performance in global refugee acceptance and assessed the nonfeasance of certain Asian countries on the political and regional level. Although interestingly, Moon did not discuss China’s refugee policy in detail as she has assessed South Korea and Japan. It could be due to that China was somehow unfitting to be positioned in her dichotomized way of presenting two types of Asian countries based on their economic developments, namely, the wealthy countries which were reluctant to receive refugees and their poorer neighbor countries which acted more
actively. In her augment that refugee protection is “not a money problem”, Moon stressed the Philippines and Malaysia’s recent supportive acts in receiving Syrian refugees, which according to her were “in contrast to Japan and Korea”. From this way of reading, China with its self-presentation as a developing country and its complex economic developmental reality where its economy is the world’s second-largest while its per capita income is less than one-quarter of the average of OECD countries (World Bank, 2019). Although China per se was not in-depth discussed in Moon’s article, I think it of great use for us to have a general picture of the Eastern-Asia’s acts and politics on immigration and refugee protection and a political analytical perspective to understand these realities in Asia. I intend, through an assessment of the empirical material, to discern whether China’s current political reality about refugee reception suits to Moon’s inspection.

It has been a basic consensus in China that its international strategy should be domestic-oriented, which means that the international acts China takes should derive from the purpose of facilitating its own interests (Fan, 2010). Previous research of Lili Song (2018) assessed China’s engagement in the international refugee protection regime. Song examined China’s experience with outgoing and incoming refugees, its accession to and implementation of the Refugee Convention and Protocol, and its interaction with UNHCR and other key actors in the international refugee protection regime. Her study found out that, despite the fact of China being a longtime source of refugees and an emerging destination as well as transit for refugees, it has not prioritized refugee protection. And even though China has consistently emphasized addressing root-causes as a solution to the global refugee issues, it sometimes failed to demonstrate a consistent readiness to honor the provisions and spirit of the Refugee Convention and Protocol.

These studies have well examined the inaction or omission of some Asian countries in protecting foreign asylum seekers from the perspective of state governing from above. Such approaches however have, at a certain point, neglected the public reactions and grassroots opinions toward the refugee issues from the large-scale below.
Perspectives of individuals as well as non-state factors from civil society needs to be introduced in order to achieve an assessment closer to reality.

One year prior to the event I intend to analyze in this study, May 19, 2016, a collaborative survey conducted by Amnesty International and consultancy GlobeScan was published with its result illustrating that Chinese citizens were the most welcoming ones to refugees among other countries in the world. The survey report showed that China, with a Refugee Welcome Index of 85/100, ranked first place among 27 countries around the world. The Refugee Welcome Index was calculated based on people’s willingness to let refugees live in their countries, towns, neighborhoods and homes. For each country, approximately 1,000 people were surveyed. The survey in China was conducted in 18 different cities, and all of them were province capitals or province-level municipalities. The survey in China was carried out through phone (GlobeScan, 2016).

In the survey of Amnesty, one question was raised as “how closely would you personally accept people fleeing war or persecution?” This question offered five choices for the interviewees to choose from, and the result in China shows that 46 percent of Chinese interviewees would like to host the refugees in their own household, ranking the first place among 27 countries (the average percentage for this answer to be chosen by all 27 countries is 10).

The news of Amnesty’s survey was posted on Sina Weibo by different Chinese media, and they attracted thousands of comments over two days. However, many comments show that Chinese netizens do not identify with the results of Amnesty’s report (Guo & Koetse, 2016). An online survey launched by a prominent Chinese news media outlet also measured a completely different public acceptance of refugees in the PRC - Global Times (May 19, 2016) conducted an online survey on the same day as Amnesty’s survey was published, with two questions “would you accept refugees in your own household?” and “would you accept refugees in your neighborhood or city?” posted. In this survey, 90.3% participants answered “no” to the first question, and 79.6% answered “no” to the second, largely in contrast with the findings by Amnesty (Guo & Koetse, 2016).
This survey regained considerable attention in 2017 after being referred to by several media and Weibo accounts along with the discussion of the UNHCR incident. Similarly to the move formerly taken by state media – running another survey asking the same question, a Weibo user launched a Weibo survey on June 21st with one question “Do you want or not that China receives refugees?”

This survey received participation by more than 150,000 Weibo users in one day, with an even more negative result – only 2.5% of participants chose the answer “receive refugees”. This leads me to explore how I can theoretically understand these attitudes expressed on social media.

4 Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

The main research aim of this study is to analyze the Chinese social media response in the wake of an international refugee and solidarity crisis. To achieve this goal, multiple theories on a transdisciplinary base will be utilized in this study.

The material in this work, namely grassroots discourses, discourses by "influencer", along with discourses by the state and state media, will be analyzed by deploying a series of theories which relate to different forms of discussing refugees and migration.

Our primary theoretical framing is based on theories explaining the process of "othering", scilicet, the constructive demarcation between "us" and "them" in the society, particularly among individuals with different nationality and ethnicity (Anderson, 2013). Further, theories on the social construction of nation, nationhood, nationality (Gellner, 2013; Anderson, 1983) with relation to contemporary immigration politics will be included.

To fully understand contemporaneous Internet public expressions and public sentiment, theories around mass communication, public opinion formation and mass attitude fluctuation particularly in relation to social media (e.g., Lippmann, 1922;

<sup>2</sup>“你是否愿意中国接受难民？”
McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Khosravinik, 2017; Khosravinik & W. Unger, 2016) will be associated in the analysis of the material.
4.2 Nationalism, Inclusion and Exclusion

I depart my theoretical prospect from several scholar’s readings on nationalism. Ernest Gellner (1983) read nationalism through the lens of industrialism, and saw the internal drive of State’s constructing a national identification among its people to be the lack of homogeneous and mobile workforce, which was largely needed in an industrialized society. Through a state-controlled education and linguistic communicability and cultural uniformity achieved through the education, the primary identification of individuals was transferred from segmentary communities to the nation-state. Nationalism became thus the critical part of the industrializing societies.

Besides Gellner’s reading of nationalism focusing on its functionalist nature, Benedict Anderson (1983) provided us another perspective of reading the very concept of nation from its subjective nature as “imagined community”. Anderson depicted nation as a socially constructed community imagined by people who distinguish themselves as a member of the group, actualized with the help of the mass vernacular literacy. Anderson’s reading of the subjective nature of nation-state was reflected in his definition of nation as “imagined” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983: 49). The imagined community provides people senses of affiliation and comradeship. As Anderson put it:

“regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imagination” (1983: 50).

The main analysis of Chinese social media user’s discourses is to observe the explanations of Chinese Weibo users for international refugees, the characteristics linked to foreign refugees and the discursive arguments adopted to discuss actors supporting refugees. For many discourses detected in my initial observation are framed
with a clear connotation differentiating “refugees” and “we Chinese” where an image of China with several recurring commonly shared Chinese characteristics functioned as a key framing. I intend to track down these commonly shared Us Chinese identity with the help of nationalism theories.

Further, I explore the process where a constructed national identity is constructed in the social media accounts with an exclusionary positioning of foreign refugees. Bridget Anderson read that citizens and migrants define each other through sets of relations which shift continually and are not in straightforward binary opposition (Anderson, 2013). "Failed citizen" is a concept raised by Bridget Anderson, through the recognition of whom the community of value is defined (Anderson, 2013: 4). The concept of "failed citizen", juxtaposed with the concept of the “foreigner (non-citizen)”, together defined the community of value (Anderson, 2013: 2). In this research, the "values" and “norms” expressed and reflected in the discursive behaviors by the Chinese social media users will be examined. From my observation, several popular commentaries on Weibo deployed similar framings to describe the imagined refugees, often in contrast to another set of norms and values describing the Chinese. I combine the semantic linguistic analysis of the language deployed in these discourses to express exclusionary attitudes toward refugees with the theory of Anderson’s “community of value” to find out which are the most-highlighted norms and values that Chinese internet users intended to define themselves through their exclusionary expressions.

According to Anderson, “the community of value is defined from outside by exclusion, and from inside by failure, but the excluded also fail, and the failed are also excluded” (Anderson, 2013: 4). The community of value is both local and national at the same time. Internally, “failed citizens” define the border of the imagined local community, externally, “non-citizens” define the border of the nation. However, do “failed citizen” and “non-citizens” share the same degree of exclusion?

Extending from Anderson’s theories on “good citizen”, “value” and “values”, Chinese social media users’ attitude toward whether to receive refugees or not might fluctuate with the reduced indexes of “citizenship”, “non-citizenship” as well as “good values” and “bad values”.

As Anderson (2013) put it:

“The good citizens of the community of value are social beings shaped by national culture, national obligations, and national history, and the borders of the nation can also be called upon to exclude the Failed Citizen (who can be presented as not having national values)” (p.178).

I intend, through thoroughly assessing the collected material, to explore whether this exclusion toward “failed citizen” has occurred during the huge anti-foreign refugee sentiment in China, in the meantime of analyzing the rhetoric arguments deployed on social media to exhibit “national culture, national obligations and national history” owned by the Chinese national.

Echoing Anderson’s “community of value”, Wodak (2008) also examined the criterion-shaped constructed topologies in her study of inclusion and exclusion in the society. She interpreted the public management of inclusion and exclusion as “a question of ‘grading’ and ‘scales’ ranging from explicit legal and economic restrictions to implicit discursive negotiations and decisions” and see this “inclusion/exclusion” process in a perpetual fluctuant movement changing alongside the “social-political situational contexts and interactions”. In this system of “grading” and “scale”, the ever-changing constructed criterion becomes the “criterion for exclusion” (Wodak, 2008: 57).

4.3 Agenda-Setting

I understand social media as a newly emerged voicing tunnel extending from traditional mass media in an aim to explore the government-public communication in the discussion of whether China should receive foreign refugees. I therein seek theoretical support in this study from the disciplines of communication science and political science. Agenda setting is a hypothesis proposed and provided with empirical evidence by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their studies of mass media’s function in shaping political reality. It refers to the capability of mass media to gear the public’s attention and focus on political issues. The process of mass media gearing the public’s
attention to certain political issues is viewed in close relation to “the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177). Agenda-setting can be traced to the writing of Walter Lippmann (1922) *Public Opinion*. Lippmann argued that the mass media were the primary connection between events in the world and the images in the mind of the public (Lippmann, 1922). Following Lippmann, Bernard Cohen (1963) observed that the mass media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The world will look different to different people” (p.13).

In a country with a one-party system, it is interesting to observe how attitudes and viewpoints on refugees were mediated and negotiated by tensions between state and government on the one hand, and the public on the other. The media to which I carry out my observation and analysis is mainly social media, which is rather recent compared to the time when the theory of agenda-setting was developed. Thus, I will include a discussion of social media’s characteristics and uniqueness in comparison to the traditional mass media in my analysis. I plan to associate agenda-setting theory along with studies on opinion leaders in assessing this specific type of voicing and particular discourses, their positions and their effects in the fermenting of the very event on Weibo.

4.4 Two-step Flow of Communication and “Opinion Leader”

The importance of interpersonal relations in the media flow and communication was firstly studied in the discipline of communication studies in the 1940s and 1950s (Weimann, 1991; Nip & Fu, 2016). The concept of opinion leadership has long been related to a lingering theoretical and methodological debate. Primitively, opinion leadership was conceptualized as a combination of personal and social factors (Weimann, 1991: 276). For instance, Lazarsfeld, Katz and his colleagues suggested that opinion leaders acted as intermediaries between mass media and society to pass on ideas that they derive from the mass media to their peers (Nip & Fu, 2016). The study of opinion leaders extended from the two-step flow of communication model where the wider public was hypothesized to form their opinions under the influences of opinion
leaders, who in turn are influenced by the mass media (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1968).

With previous academic discussions on the relationship between government, mass media, opinion leader and the public, I am interested to explore the set of relationships against the backdrop of the newly-emerged communication system – social media, in an era where “print newspapers are haemorrhaging readers and their circulation is on the decline” (Khosravinik & W. Unger, 2016). I am interested in exploring if there were particular Weibo users that could be identified as opinion leaders and how their influence may be captured during this online event. Combined with the use of the agenda-setting theory, I will explore the interactions between different factors. These factors include those supporting and resisting refugees, those from the State’s side, the international organization’s side and the civil society’s side.

With its interactive nature and a comparatively more democratic communication ecology, I find it interesting to observe social media and its various kinds of users’ positioning in the agenda-setting communication process. From the initial observation of the Weibo responses to foreign refugees during the event of World Refugee Day 2017, I noticed a multi-stratum participation in the expressive reactions involving official Weibo accounts (e.g., UNHCR, state media and party office), individual Weibo blogger with certain follower-base, verified Weibo account\(^3\) of civil groups and large amount of grassroots users. In consideration of this unique context, I think it of great importance for me to associate theories from the discipline of communication and interpersonal influentials along with the theory of nationalism and exclusion to assess various textual outputs produced by Weibo users of different kinds.

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\(^3\) Sina Weibo offers registered accounts the option of displaying their status as “Sina verified” through an application and verification process of the user’s offline identity (Nip & Fu, 2016).
5 Previous Studies

I start the research review by reading several Western studies concerning the perceptions and framings of refugees. It sets a general context and prepares us for one of the research questions - the exploration of the possible relevance and the extent of the similarities and differences between Chinese social media accounts on refugees and the anti-refugee responses in Europe and North America. Thereafter I proceed with presenting more China-focused research both concerning the context and the general aim of the thesis.

5.1 “Refugee Crisis” in Western language

Many scholars have deployed discourse analyses to analyze the languages used in the Western hemisphere where the concept “refugee crisis” was locally produced. By local I would like to suggest a comparison between the “refugee crisis” discussed in China and Europe, for the actual receptions of foreign refugees in the discussion of the very specifically defined concept “refugee crisis” were mainly happening in Europe, with considerable geographical and factual distance to China.

Several topoi are constituting the discourses around “refugee crisis” in the West and North European context. Regarding the construction of the being of host: overcrowded, limits of capacities and/or goodwill, Western cultural values, social order and public decency, etc. Regarding the construction of the being of refugee: victim, intruder, deservingness, containment, wave, swamp, etc. For example, Krzyżanowski (2018) has observed the official politicization of the “refugee crisis” in Sweden and has observed the political discourse under the theme to be generally concluded as that “Sweden is a small country that has done enormously lot in refugee crisis” expressed through the social media platform Twitter. This framing not only served as the legitimation of the Swedish State’s political actions regarding tightening its immigration and asylum policies after the so-called “refugee crisis”. In the German context, the notion of crisis is observed by researchers such as Kosnick (2019) to be a concept primarily lodged on the suffering experienced by the German (e.g., overburdening, a crisis of social stability, moral conventions and cultural norms), rather
than a “crisis” experienced by foreign asylum seekers (e.g., suffering, threatening, plight and pain during forced movement).

5.1.1 “Refugee Crisis” in the Domestic Domain: the “Capability” Discussion

One significant distinction between the reality about refugees in China and in Europe is the actual works that have been done on refugee reception. As has been introduced in the background part, considering the actual number of refugees from war-torn Middle East regions, China has taken in meager amounts of refugees compared to many European countries. “Refugee crisis” issues or “post-crisis” issues in European language were often framed to involve domestic societal issues and implicitly and explicitly relate to the task of accommodating and integrating the refugees (Krzyżanowski, 2018).

The Western-based studies have observed a tendency to reduce people to barely culture, ethnicities or religions in the Western discussions and debates over immigration issues (Kundnani, 2012). Examples could be drawn on the French and Belgian niqab ban and the Swiss minarets ban (Lean and Esposito, 2012). The reduction of people to various tags marked by “nation” “religion” or “culture” led to an over-simplification of the migration issue involving among others structural violence and discrimination into a yes-or-no question about “multiculturalism”. European-based studies on the discussions around the reception of refugees often observe the refrain lodging the attention toward the “capability” of the nation to hold or accommodate refugees, refugees own possibilities and the humanitarian call on helping the deprived were carefully designed to be overlooked (Krzyżanowski, 2018).

This distinct reality may have some results. European right-wing populist, anti-immigrant or anti-Muslim racist linguistic productions can directly be borrowed and presented in China as a legitimation of the alleged adverse influence of receiving refugees. During the process of borrowing and reusing, the problematic essentialized notions such as culture, religions, ethnicities and races constructed in the West are not being deconstructed. Instead, they follow their old path in the Chinese contexts and
continue to work out their power of dividing people. One perspective that scholars in the West usually bring into the interpretation of West-based racism against various constructed Others is the history of European colonialism and imperialism. People are deemed to be foreign as species beings of culture based on their visual appearance, religion, nationality, or descent. And colonial powers could hence justify their maltreatment of these allegedly inferior ‘races’ with various biological and genetic arguments (Kosnick, 2019), or under the name of passing on (Western) civilization.

5.1.2 “Refugee Crisis” in Defining the Others

Beyond the act of framing refugee crisis as an issue concerning the problem of integration which needs to be addressed domestically, anti-immigration rhetoric also cultivated a language to compare the refugee migration to a religious and cultural threat to the European nations (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2014). In these discourses, people in need of protection are projected as various images ranging from cultural outsiders to demographical invaders, although the world under threat is always framed to be the Western or European world (Kosnick, 2019).

One key framing of refugees observed by researchers is the refugees group recognized as the Muslim Others (Kosnick, 2019), represented by the Mohamed cartoon crises, the French and Belgian niqab ban, and the Swiss minarets ban. Accompanied with which are several framings designed to construct the inferior Other opposed to the superior European identity, or, Europeanness. One of these framings involves the reoccurring theme of gender equality, as the French prime-minister Emanuel Valls once commented on the Muslim swim-cloth, the so-called burkini: “It is the expression of a political project, a counter-society, based notably on the enslavement of women”. While Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right Front National, claimed that the “soul of France is in question” and supported the ban on the Muslim swim-cloth by “France does not lock away a woman’s body” (The Independent, August 24, 2016). Beyond the discussion on the cultural and religious level, Islam and Muslim became more of a politicized tag deployed to suggest an uncivilized other, whose disrespect, even “enslavement” of women was allegedly parts of a “counter-society” “political project”,

which would endanger the European civilization. Reference to gender equality and women’s right have become the core element of the production of national boundary, and gender nationalism became a central instrument in the nationalist repertoire to legitimize the exclusion of the Other (Abdou, 2017: 84).

Along with many other stereotypes specifically targeting at Muslims extended from the Islamophobic camp is the deliberately constructed “demographic threat” (Ekman, 2015). The framed threat constituted by Muslims entails two implications, one is that Muslim immigrants are coming to the West in large numbers, and the other is that Muslims seen as a group carrying certain nature innately all have a much higher birth rate than Us. Ekman concluded that there had been and would continue to be a tendency to connect crime news and individual cases to the conventional cultural practices within Islam, and this connection was a reframing of the traditional racist stereotypes about Muslims and the East in a contemporary Western context (Ekman, 2015).

5.1.3 “Refugee Crisis” Indicating a More Comprehensive Political Ideology – Neo-Nationalism

Maureen A. Eger and Sarah Valdez (2014) conducted a study to map out the political positioning of parties with explicitly anti-immigration claims. For they discovered that formerly often-adopted terms such as ‘radical right’, ‘extreme right-wing’, ‘far-right’ or ‘populist right’ could not sufficiently represent contemporary anti-immigration parties and their politics, considering their often more left-leaning economic stances. Their study has found out that the parties in European countries with anti-immigration claims often also took anti-supranational-governmenting (e.g., EU) stances and increasingly favored social expenditure and welfare state redistribution (though, preferably among co-ethnicities), which differentiated them from the traditional far-right political concerns.

Through their cross-national research on parties problematically ascribed under the tag “radical” or “far-right”, Eager and Valdez analyzed that parties labeled as such
have actually changed qualities and political concerns in recent years, and their voters have now different reasons to support these parties compared to the past. The new characteristics saliently defining these parties are understood as “neo-nationalism”, where nationalism is the primary political concern, and therein many policy preferences are made through the lens of nationalism. Apart from this, neo-national parties share with the far left in anti-establishment populism and their disdain for supranational organizations. Neo-national political pursuits also seek to limit access limit and the affiliated benefits to it to certain groups of ethnic minorities and often hold an anti-immigration stance (Eager & Valdez, 2014: 127).

These texts present us the current studies around the European “refugee crisis” in Western academia. They provide us with contemporary theoretical reasonings of anti-refugee discourses which have gained their currency in Europe. These previous studies might contribute to a better understanding of the subject of this study, although they need to be further contextually located. I will thus also shortly present some more China-focused studies discussing contextual issues that may be of relevance for this study.

5.2 Nationalism and China

In the prominent writing of Orientalism, Edward W. Said discussed how misperceptions could occur when Western scholars attempt to understand non-Western cultures. According to Said (1979: 272), there is no one-to-one correspondence between reality and how reality is presented. This is because “all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representator”. Yongnian Zheng (1999) in his tracking of the Chinese scholarly development in the study of Chinese nationalism has found the popularity of Said and his ideologies represented by Orientalism among Chinese intellectuals when constructing their own discourses of Chinese nationalism, usually posited in a stance against the Western academia’s “ethnocentric distortion (Cohen, 1984:1)” in studying Chinese history (Zheng, 1999: 9). Zheng followed Cohen’s suggestion on studying China by deploying a China-centered approach and
suggested a way to discover China’s nationalism in China, instead of in the West; to dig out Chinese internal forces of nationalism rather than those perceived by many in the West; to identify the major themes of China’s nationalism instead of constructing or imagining a Chinese nationalism entirely based on Western theories (Zheng, 1999: 10).

Zheng illustrated the development of the State, national identity and national sovereignty of China with the presentation of a series of related historical factors to explore how nationalism developed in China. Zheng defined the growth of modern China’s nationalism as reactions to solve the problems concerning state power, national identity and national sovereignty. These problems (or crises) occurred in modern China’s history threatening China as a nation-state, igniting Chinese nationalist reactions have generally be summarized as from the international factors and the domestic factors. Zheng concluded these factors to be: (1) the intrusion of the Western powers in a declining dynastic state structure, and the decline of the traditional state structure; (2) the semi-peripheralized, semi-colonized status of China caused by Western invasion, which weakened state power domestically and destroyed China’s sovereignty internationally; (3) revolutions in China with the aim of building up a new polity; (4) China’s modernization and the preinstalled image of modernization where China was conceived in a dependent and laggard position as opposed to the West. From Zheng’s reading, the burgeoning of modern Chinese nationalism was the threatens brought by the Western powers, and the initiation of nationalism happened simultaneously with China’s modernization, in aims of a strong State and national survival (Zheng, 1999: 16). With the knowledge of these historical background where modern Chinese nationalism developed from, I hope to conduct a more contextualized and historically informed analysis of Chinese social media reactions toward UNHCR, an international political organization where the contextual factors from the Chinese reality are not omitted.

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4 内乱，外患
5.2.1 Nationalism as a Relationship

Challenging the modernization theories in understanding nationalism and national identity, Prasenjit Duara (1996) denoted the fixation and objectification of a phenomena (i.e., the meanings of the nation to both citizens and nation-state) which is actually “subjective, fluid and elusive” (p.151), pointed out that it was problematic to understand the nation as a “unique and unprecedented form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between empire and nation, tradition and modernity, and center and periphery” (p.151). Duara read nation identity as a collective subject with a fluid periphery which defines its subjectivity outside itself, and these fluid peripheries were defined by Duara as “fluid relationships” where different views of the national contests and negotiate with each other (p.152).

Duara observed the membership of premodern China defined by the participation in a ritual order embodying allegiance to Chinese ideas and ethics centered on the Chinese emperor, and pointed out the correspondence of contemporary Chinese nation’s territorial boundaries and peoples to them of the Qing empire (the last imperial dynasty of China), suggesting a continuity from the imperial idea of political community from the premodern China to the Communist China.

Through a presentation of several scholars’ exploration of the ethnocentric notion of Chinese-ness in Chinese history, Duara observed the interchangeability underlying in the definition of Others in China. From Zuo Zhuan’s “the hearts of those who are not of our race must be different”\(^5\), to the ethnocentrism constructed in Song dynasty to unify the state and people in resistance against the Jin. These ideologies of Othering in premodern China though were based on a Han-centric ethnocentrism with the cultural values and doctrines of the Chinese elite. The Chinese universalism (or culturalism) was superior, but not exclusive. Barbarians in imperial Chinese histories were seen to be possible to become a member of the Chinese community by deploying the shared common values and distinguishing themselves from other barbarians. In this

\(^5\) 非我族类，其心必异。
sense, criterion of the modern day’s nationalism defining the Other’s admissibility into the community was lodged on the educability into Chinese values rather than race or ethnicity, serving the political needs of the imperial dynasties (p.156).

To summarize Duara’s reading of China’s history in discussion with national identity imagination, what has been suggested by Duara is the unfixed, multiple sources of identity creation and narratives of history, which often are constructed in an eternal and essential appearance, and the aim of them is to achieve a more cohesive ideal and identification. The lesson we can take from Duara is the unfixed, multiple strategies to construct nationalist ideology in China, and see each nationalist expression through the combination with its given temporal contexts rather than sealing my reading of contemporary Chinese nationalist expression into one or two particular historical, ideological reasoning.

5.2.2 Chinese Domestic Discourses about Multi-ethnicity and Muslim

Because a large part of initially studied materials are observed to be framed with the connotation referring foreign refugees as Muslims and extend their pejorative critique from this stance, I think it could be helpful to approach the Chinese public’s opinion formation on foreign Muslim refugees with a reading of former studies conducted around the topic of Chinese domestic discourses about ethnic minorities, especially Muslim. With Han Chinese as an ethnic group making up 92% of China’s population and taking dominance in many aspects of the society, and other 55 officially recognized ethnic minority groups constituting the rest of the population.

The phrase “56 ethnic groups are one big family” has well gained its public perception and served its role to unite all people of China. With a constant and major refrain of state propaganda with the rhetoric of solidarity between all ethnic groups to fight separatism (Bovingdon, 2010), problems large and small emerge in China’s domestic society involving ethnic relations, bringing on academic interests in all

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* A Chinese song from 1991 starting with the opening line “56 stars, 56 flowers, brothers and sisters of the 56 ethnic groups belong to one family” and the chorus “Love my China”.

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aspects within China. Their focus includes issues as income inequality, educational inequality between ethnic majority and minorities, to domestic labor migration (e.g., Zhang, 2011; Ma, 2007).

Researches in China domestically on ethnic issues have started as early in the 1950s, led by prominent Chinese social scientist and anthropologist Fei Xiao Tong. In the 1980s, Fei read ethnicity as a concept recognized and emphasized through the processes of involving with “others”. In 1988, Fei for the first time raised a social structure model in China – multiple integration⁷. In the multi-integrated structure, 56 ethnic groups are the fundamental ethnic consciousness and the Chinese nationality is an ethnic consciousness on a higher level (Fei, 2006). Fei presented a full-sided discussion on the relationship between ethnic groups and their correlation with the greater Chinese identity, although these discussions have to certain degree missed considering the relation between modern nation-state identities and ethnic identities.

On a political level, Fei’s theory was in accordance with China’s self-presentation as a “united multi-ethnic country” (P.R.C. Const., pmbl.). The Constitution of the People's Republic of China stipulates:

"All ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the ethnic minorities and upholds and develops a relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's ethnic groups. Discrimination against and oppression of any ethnic group are prohibited.” (P.R.C. Const. art. IV, § 1)

Chinese law protects ethnic minority groups, and the fragile relations among ethnic groups (including minority groups); it maintains political stability by prohibiting citizens from instigating hatred or discrimination aimed at ethnic customs and practices (Luqiu & Yang, 2018). In addition to the criminal law of the PRC, the government also

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⁷ 多元一体
has a series of regulations to discipline the Internet, gaming, publishing, entertainment products, and the news media.

In studying Chinese social media users’ online expressions on foreign refugees, and among this online sentiment, a large part of negative emotion was expressed toward an imagined *Others* ascribed to be Muslims. Therefore, I also include a reviewing of previous researches focusing on Chinese domestic perceptions about Muslims. In China, Islam is both a religious and an ethnic and a racial category (Luqiu & Yang, 2018). According to the official China Islam Association, there are over 20 million Muslims in China, constituted by ten distinct ethnic groups including among other Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, making up 1.6% of the entire population. Muslims in China live in 27 provinces and four municipalities in China (China Islam Association, 2012).

Negative emotions toward Muslims domestically have been observed and studied by several scholars. Luqiu and Yang (2018) studied Islamophobia in China through observation of state media’s news report about Muslims in 10 years. Their study discovered an overall negative framing of Muslims and Islam projected from the Chinese news reports and revealed several negative stereotypes of Muslims among the non-Muslim Chinese population.

Many of reports (e.g., *Xinhua*, March 12, 2017) from the official state media and articles passing on official policies have stressed the “destabilizing factors” appearing in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, a Muslim-majority area in northwest China. These factors include “uncertainties from global counter-terrorism movements” and “infiltration of religious extremism” (*Xinhua*, March 12, 2017). Responding to these “destabilizing factors”, multiple measures have been taken, including ban on burqas, veils and ‘abnormal beards’ in Xinjiang (*The Independent*, March 30, 2017) and “vocational education and training program” introduced for the re-education of Uyghurs and other Muslims with a formally advocated aim to combat terrorism and religious extremism included in “three evil forces (terrorism, extremism and separatism)” (*Xinhua*, October 16, 2018). In the meantime, the Chinese government officially avoids any harmful or controversial messages to advocate harmony among
different ethnic groups. This careful move to avoid possible controversial discussions on Muslim ethnic minorities, in combination with state media’s biased perspective in reporting Muslims and Islam, read by Luqiu and Yang, could be problematic (Luqiu & Yang, 2018).

Based on previous studies results, a series of discursive expressions on Chinese ethnic minorities, with Muslims in particular, has been strictly followed in the official voicing. One example if the reoccurred usage of “development” and “stability”. The stressed concept of “stability” and “security” can be reflected from the policy reports and the political leaders’ speeches (Xinhua, March 12, 2017; October 16, 2018). As has also been observed by David Tobin (2019), after a massive ethnically targeted violence involving Muslim Uyghurs bursting out in July 2009, an official Chinese identity discourse based on ethnic unity became intensively hailed to construct a shared multi-ethnic identity under the threatening from outside Islamic terrorists and Western “enemies of China”. This framing of ethnic minorities in relation to anti-extremism, anti-violence fights (e.g., “zero-sum political struggle of life and death”8) as well as glorified dedication for security and stability could have caused an inhibiting effect on major public’s cognitive processes to have a more full-sided picture of ethnic minorities other than the image represented by violence or terrorism.

To conclude, as has been pointed out by Luqiu and Yang (2018), both the topic of Islamophobia in China and the role of the news media in supporting Islamophobia in China are under-researched. By presenting an empirical case on public opinion expression on foreign refugees and conceived foreign Muslims, I wish this study could inspire further researches on Islamophobia in Chinese contexts.

8 你死我活的政治斗争
5.3 Media, Public Attention and Nationalist Expressions

Besides the reading of several previous pieces of research on Nationalism, Islamophobia and public perceptions as well as the functions that media has played in these ideological constructions, I turned to the studies that specifically researched on social media and the online expressive behaviors of the users. For the empirical data I analyze in this study were presented and collected on the very platform – Social media. Increasingly researchers have pointed out the uniqueness with social media (as will be elaborated on in methodology parts or this thesis), I now turn the focus towards the understanding of social media in relation with the public.

5.3.1 Social Media and Public Perception

I have observed several reoccurring framings and themes deployed to attack foreign refugees and the supporting factors of refugees (e.g., UNHCR, its good-well ambassador and several media) and regard it to be important to include the unique characteristics of social media communication to assess them. Webster and Ksiazek (2012) observed that digital technologies have made it much easier for both content and users to move across platforms, thus brought about a harsher competition for the public’s attention. Also in their study of public attention in the digital media, they called on focus to the newly emerged social media, where the motivations behind each provider are “not always as uniform or transparent as those of traditional media, but many seek fame or fortune”, and further “to achieve that, they too compete for an audience” (p.40). I think this point is of great importance for us to notice when we are handling material collected from social media platform, produced by users from all social stratum, most of whom express on the internet anonymously and it is difficult to understand their online behaviors in relation with their real-life identities.

Khosravinik and W. Unger (2016) has pointed out the interactive, multimodal and user-centered nature of social media opposed to the unidirectional nature of message flows in traditional media (2016: 211). As has also been indicated by Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) through their Marxist perspective of reading users’ producing-
consuming embedded activities on participatory platforms, contemporary corporate internet platforms accumulate capital from users’ both “value as producer” and “value as consumer”. W. Lance Bennett (2012) even saw the participation on the social media platforms as a kind of personalization of politics, characterized by being large-scale, rapid-forming and having a large variety of targets. An important point Bennett critically raised was that many rapidly formed collective actions in this era do not possess clear collective frame to mobilize individuals, rather, individuals were more often to be offered a rainbow of reasons to act (p.29). This is an inspirational suggestion to my study so that I do not stop my analysis of the very online event at any single reasoning.

5.3.2 Chinese Media Censorship

The Chinese society is recognized by academia and public for the regulating and censoring existing in news media and public information productions (Fu, Chan & Chau, 2013). There have also been studies conducted to assess which particular contents are most susceptible under surveillance. From a governmental perspective, scholars have worked on the political and economic consequences of nationalist protest in China (Foley, Wallace & Weiss, 2018), from their study, we can see that a Chinese political system is constructed to the multi-level assigned responsibility to secure and maintain “harmony” (also “stability”). Differed from the Western political system where debates and political discourses are continually carried out and altered to capture the public attention and win the support, politicians are to certain degree relieved from the duty of making public speeches in the aim of winning over people’s support. However, large responsibility for local politicians are lodged in their commitment and ability to preserve the stability of the local society, and in which case, the online “harmony” is also included.

The study result which observed the Chinese authorities’ prioritizing of and laying massive importance on social security has been echoed in other studies as well. Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret Roberts’s thorough study of censored forum and blog posts in 2011 observed that Chinese authorities could tolerate posts with a wide
range of critique of the Chinese government and its policies, however, they tend to react more sensitively and censor the spreading of posts which are deemed to have a possibility to induce collective action (King, Pan & Roberts, 2013).

Although it would be beyond the scope of this paper to closely examine the actual process of implementation of China’s internet censorship policies and public’s responses to them, it is of great importance for us to notice the background of China’s extensive Internet-filtering environment, hence the oddness for such a large-scale intensive critique targeted at UN and state media to happen on the Chinese internet.

Several scholars based in the West have investigated public arenas with particular focus on politics involving minorities. These studies examine the discourses around minorities in a Western context. Before I start assessing the political discourses in China with references to the political discourses about refugees, I acknowledge again the different natures these political discourses carry. As has been discussed earlier in this paper, China’s agenda discussion procedures differ from the Western “public arenas”, therein, procedures such as parliamentary discourses, election campaigns, public speeches conducted by individual politicians are not as prioritized in China as in the West. However, utilizing social media be more efficiently approaching to the public is given high priority and importance in current Chinese government’s agenda, as will be discussed further in the analysis of this study. Another contextual factor we need to pay attention to when doing comparing study between China and the West is China’s unique media industry ecology. With the domestic debate of ‘liberal vs. radical-critical’ rivalry, it seems possible that China has not a fully-fledged privatization of media industry, despite China’s media sector has gone through an extensive commercialization process after Deng Xiaoping’s call for further reform in 1992 (Huang, 2007). It has been acknowledged by many that the commercialization has induced a positive transition of Chinese media system from a propaganda-oriented orthodox Communist model to a market-oriented nonauthoritarian model (Huang, 2017 referring to Huang, 2003). Beyond the difference in political participation forms, the aims and goals that different discursive productions serve are also distinct to those
produced in a Western political culture. For example, news reports and political comments published by certain official news agencies serve mostly the aim of passing on policy or information from the political center to others, or to show a political attitude ‘from the above’.

To sum up, it is of great importance for scholars to notice these variations of China’s political expressive ecology which might have played a role in determining the appearance of contemporary internet discussion about refugees. These factors will be carefully taken into consideration in the further analysis of the collected material in this study.

6 Methodology

This study based on a critical discourse analysis approach, focusing on the analysis of the public mass sentiment expressed online targeted at "refugee" or "asylum seeker" on the Chinese social media platforms. By wielding a critical discourse analytical approach to social media, I will include a close observation and analyses from three perspectives, namely, (a) the social media institution (e.g., communicative resources such as language, image, sharing, likes and views); (b) social media users acts in producing and consuming related content; and (c) the corporate, political and social institutions. Discussion of international geopolitical factors will be included in the discussion of the structural impacts on the production and dissemination of certain discursive framings. The social context in Chinese social media will also be investigated. In this study, the social context consists of China’s current commitment to the global refugee protection career as well as the development of Islamophobia and nationalism in China, the activities of internet expressing on social media, and the interpretations of the producers and distributor of these discourses in the specific conditions of contemporary China. More specifically, I aim to comparatively explore Chinese discursive practices about foreign refugee with the wealth of studies from the “West” and see how the digitalized information era could have any impacts in this case, as well as how it works in the production and reproduction of the related discourses.
Critical discourse analysis practitioners observed and concluded three functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Fowler (1991) and Fairclough (1995) interpret the ideational function as the speaker's experience of the outside world and events, the interpersonal role as the speaker's insertion of his/her attitude and evaluations on the circumstances and the speaker's construction of a relationship with the listeners, lastly, they see the textual functions to be an instrument to achieve the former two purposes.

Both critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistics agree on the "strong and pervasive" connections between linguistic structure and social structure (Fowler et al., 1979), the difference between them is that sociolinguistics view concepts "language" and "society" as two separate ends, while critical discourse analysis see langue as "an integral part of social process" (Fowler et al., 1979: 189).

This research is based on Van Dijk's theory in critical discourse analysis. Van Dijk argues for and has performed in his works the analysis framework where text production (structure, production and comprehension processes) and the wider social context are integrated. He carries out analysis at two levels: microstructure and macrostructure. Analysis at the microstructure level is the study of the textual factors: syntax, lexicon, rhetoric and so on, while the analysis of macrostructure is the thematic/topic structure of the news stories and their overall schemata (Sheyholislami, 2001).

To deploy CDA in this research on social media will need us to balance the analysis focus between the micro/descriptive approach and the macro approach on society. For social media, with the specific media ecology it has formed, presents us with a unique communication system as well as user communities. To associate criticality in deploying the method of CDA under this circumstance, we need to be reflexive both on the level of research methods but also with respect to the
contextualization of the research results of descriptive discourse analysis (Wodak, 2001:9).

As already marked by Khosravinik and W. Unger, the mix of genre constitutes a central characteristic of the new media ecology (2016: 209). Differed from traditional mass media, which usually hold specific genre form and have unidirectionality of their textual practices, current social media breaks the clear-cut separation between formal engagement with institutions and informal individual “peer-to-peer” communication. Massively popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Weibo provides content sharing and communication engagement platforms with mixed communication forms. Besides, social media are by their nature interactive, inherently and substantially multimodal and user-centered, as opposed to the unidirectional nature of message flows in traditional media (Khosravinik & W. Unger, 2016), which also needs particular attention in this study.

6.1.1 The Discourse-Cognition-Society Triangle

Van Dijk's approach for analyzing ideologies has three parts: social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis. For van Dijk, it is the socio-cognition / social cognition and personal cognition - that mediates between society and discourse. He defines social cognition as "the system of mental representations and processes of group members". In this sense, for van Dijk, "ideologies … are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize … socially shared attitudes". (Van Dijk, 1995: 18)

According to van Dijk, mental representations "are often articulated along Us versus Them dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms" (p.22).

6.1.2 “Us” versus “Them” Discourses Analysis

According to Van Dijk, critical discourses analysis of discourses juxtaposing the Others with Us to exclude certain groups of people should follow these steps:

a) Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background
of a conflict and its main participants

b) Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved
c) Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them
d) Making explicit the presupposed and the implied
e) Examining all formal structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasize polarized group opinions

I aim at conducting a close assessment of relevant Weibo materials by using Van Dijk’s critical discourse analysis model. With respect to the practical work of discourse analysis, Wodak (2008) stressed the concept of *topoi* serving as “the content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim” (p.63) to examine the discursive strategies adopted to justify and legitimate the positive-self and negative-other. A number of studies have investigated *topoi* applied in various textual practices, such as election campaigns (e.g., Pelinka and Wodak, 2002), parliamentary debates (e.g., Wodak and Van Dijk, 2000), policy papers (e.g., Reisignl and Wodak, 2006) or news media (Wodak, 2008). Comparatively few have studied the discursive practices with the exclusionary aim of dividing people into “us” and “them” on the social media context.

6.2 Method and the Operationalization of the Study

Through an approach of critical discourse analysis, this research aims at an encompassing assessment of the Chinese social media response to the UNHCR campaign on the world refugee day 2017. During the assessing process, by examining the language usage and discursive practices, I firstly identify the actively exhibited attitudes on Chinese social media to foreign asylum seekers. Secondly, I deploy a CDA approach to study several discourses which have gained immense attention among the Chinese netizens collected from the event. Thirdly, through the analysis of the discourses, the discursive patterns and structures from this refugee-related sentiment and the co-relations between these discursive practices and the societal reality in current China are researched.
Terms as “discrimination”, “racism” and “race” are heavily contested terms in the social science, as a result of specific historical, linguistic and social developments (Wodak, 2008). As Wodak has illustrated, the concept of “racism” is understood differently in Central Europe than in the US or UK. Correspondingly, different interpretations of terminologies could also occur when we attempt to a cross-cultural comparison of these terms and related issues from the Chinese context. Therefore, we must take into account the possible differences in language usage to prevent potential misinterpretations or misanalyses.

6.3 Material

Sina Weibo is a Chinese prominent social media platform. Up to September 2017, the monthly active users on Weibo have reached 376 million and daily active users have reached 165 million. Until June 2017, Chinese internet users have reached 751 million. Sina Weibo users constituted 50% of Chinese internet users group in 2017. Besides the growth in general users, the so-called “head user”, users that could attract more than 100 thousand views to their microblogging contents have also expanded through the years, from 253 thousand in 2015 to 418 thousand in 2017. In August 2014, Sina Weibo launched the service which allows all users to reward generators of content with tips. In December 2016, Sina Weibo started another paid value-added service by which “big Vs” (non-anonymous and verified users, their account name follows with a V) could be paid for answering questions (Sina Weibo, 2017).

According to statistics from 2017, 56.3% of Sina Weibo users are male, while 43.7% of the users are female. Among the “big Vs” that have started the service for being paid to answer questions on Sina Weibo in 2017, 68% are male, and 32% are female. The biggest user group of the total Sina Weibo user distinguished by age is the 23-year-old to 30-year-old group (38.6%), followed by the 18-22 age group (27.6%) (Weibo, 2017). Users ages from 20 to 35 account for 82% of Sina Weibo users, which is equal to 72.7 million.
Above are the statistics from Sina Weibo’s own data analysis report. With the vast user base and information flow, Sina Weibo advertises its effect and efficiency in brand marketing and profit-generating for individuals, companies, and institutions from various industries and domains (Sina Weibo, 2017).

6.3.1 Selection of Material

In this study, I made use of the screenshot function to capture and collect public Weibo posts. The data I have collected from are mainly comments under the UNHCR post on June 20th, 2017, while I also included some original articles and posts made by State and Party media outlets and other Weibo users which have caught large attention and dissemination. The collection of the data was conducted from February to March 2019. The choice of Weibo data (i.e., Weibo posts and commentaries) is based on the “popularity” of the texts”. “Popularity” of the Weibo comments is a quantification evaluated by the ranking of the comments. For Sina Weibo has its self-developed comment-displaying system for comments toward Weibo post – “raking by popularity”9, through this algorithm, all comments to a Weibo post are displayed in the form of list under the original post, where comments with higher number of replies and likes (videlicet, interactions with other users) are displayed at higher place in the comment list (Sina Weibo, 2016). And the “popularity” of certain Weibo original posts is evaluated by the number of likes, comments and reposts as well as by the number of readings they have received. The term “popularity” reflects majorly the interactions one Weibo post or comment has aroused on the Weibo platform; nevertheless, it will be problematic to equalize this calculation of “popularity” on Weibo to a well-acceptance or wide-acknowledgment among all Chinese citizens.

I went through the top 200 commentaries toward the UNHCR Weibo post through the ranking system by “popularity”, and the secondary commentaries to these 200 comments. I combed through the themes and framings deployed in these contents. For showcase of these reoccurring themes and framings deployed in these discourses,
I demonstrate the commentaries which I consider to be most representative rhetorically and more fluent linguistically with lesser curses and grammatical errors. The original Chinese texts are presented in footnotes and their English translation in text.

The translation of the collected data from Chinese to English is made by the author. Due to the massive variations of linguistic characteristics from one commentator to another, the translation of the Weibo material strictly follows a literal approach, i.e., slangs are translated by following the original words verbatim.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

Involving a degree of interdisciplinarity as well as disciplines outside of those traditionally involving human subjects (Jones, 2011), online research requires the clarification and examination of following ethical considerations: privacy and public availability, anonymity and confidentiality, and informed consent.

Firstly, as has pointed out by Chris Jones (2011), the boundaries between activities that can be considered private and those are public have been altered with the Internet and Web. Weibo is a public site; once a user has made a post public, the contents are accessible by any other Weibo user. Given to this contextual nature of sharing, I see the study subject – posts and commentaries published on Weibo platform as publicly shared contents. The ethical approach to publicly available information also includes the consideration of users’ understandings of privacy. Although Weibo users may have the awareness that the information they have posted is widely accessible by other users, their intention for this information to be captured, collected and demonstrated by researchers is not clear. For this ethical consideration, in showcasing the screenshots of the studied Weibo posts and commentaries, the nickname, profile photo and other irrelevant information of the non-institutional Weibo users have all been mosaic processed. Nevertheless, due to the persistence, searchability and replicability features of the Internet (boyd, 2010), it is difficult to achieve anonymity for my study subject fully. Lastly, regarding the informed consent, which is an idea central to traditional notions of ethical conduct in research (Jones, 2011), given to the
context of the transient and ephemeral online environment, and the mediated relationship between the researcher and the participants which largely differed from the mediated face-to-face research condition, particularly, given to the research strategy I deploy in this study and due to the large amounts and overlapping of the contents of the study material where similar discourses have been voiced by many different users, I consider the informed consent to be not conducted in this study.

All collected screenshots of Weibo posts, comments, and secondary comments are compiled in the appendix part of the paper. The collected data is being stored securely and privately. For future studies, there will be the chance for the author to re-employ these data. However, that will also only be achieved through strictly following the ethical and legislative requirements claimed for researchers, with enough attention given to moves from general ethical principles to localized ethical requirements.

For ethical considerations of the researcher, I identify myself as a student majoring in ethnic and migration studies at the master’s level in a study and research environment located in Sweden. Former educational and personal background in China has helped me to better understand the study subject - the online sentiment occurred on the Chinese social media, linguistically and culturally. Theoretical perspectives acquired from the Swedish educational experiences, particularly from REMESO, have provided me critical viewpoints in reading this event.

I identify this research as a work out of my exploration and self-reflection of my Chinese identity in contests of daily confrontations with social media contents, real-life experience as a migrant, as well as the EMS study works.
6.5 Delimitations and Challenges

6.5.1 The Representability of the Collected Material

According to the opinion of van Dijk (2016) on critical discourse studies (CDS), CDS scholars and their research are socio-politically committed to social equality and justice, and their goals, theories, methods and data and other scholarly practices are chosen as academic contributions to a resistance against the discursive (re-)productions of power abuse. From the perspectives of methodology and researching aim, this study does not deploy a quantitative or large-scale survey approach, and does not intend to examine the accurate public attitude of the whole Chinese people toward the foreign asylum seeker, namely, this study does not aim at calculating the percentage of the Chinese people who support and oppose the acceptance of foreign asylum seeker in China. Instead, this study observes discourses that were expressed on the internet, on social media platforms, which have possessed a certain degree of popularity (the criteria for the term “popularity” is introduced in the part of Selection of Material). This study is an analysis work that observes the text and the context of the selected material and tries to discuss the possible reason of the (re-)production of these discourses in relation to structural power dominance.

The focus of this paper is put on analyzing the language used in expressing refugee-related claims by the public, works of further profiling of these social media users (e.g., collecting information of these users’ class, gender, age, education level and so on) in relation to their participation in this online sentiment, as well as studying the possible civil, political networking, are not further conducted in this study due to the limit of resources.

6.5.2 The Loss of Certain Original Material

This research is conducted in 2019, around one and a half years after the event. During the data collection for this study, some material has been found to be deleted. For example, by the time of writing (Spring - Summer 2019), one post by an official news media account Voice of China 中国之声 can be read in a screenshot taken by an
internet user and posted on another website page in June 21, 2017, but in the original Weibo page of Voice of China, this post cannot be found. Another example is the Weibo account who launched the online voting of “do you want China to receive refugees”. This voting offered a later largely used material to support the “real” public attitude with a result of more than 97% of voters voting “no”. But this original voting, together with the account cannot be found on Weibo anymore.

Similar examples can also be found with other accounts and the relevant Weibo posts under this event.

6.6 Terminological Clarification

For this article, China refers to the mainland of the People’s Republic of China, excluding Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Macau Special Administrative Region, and Taiwan, unless otherwise indicated.

For the use of “refugee” and “asylum seekers”, this paper takes the definition as a widely accepted concept in the discourse of transnational institutions, e.g., UNHCR and EU.

Sina Weibo will be referred to as Weibo.

CCCYL: The Central Committee of the Communist Youth League

CCTV: China Central Television

CPC: Communist Party of China

CYL: The Communist Youth League

GOCPC: The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist party of China

MFA: Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China
7 Social Media Discourse Analysis

7.1 Timeline of the Event

Based on the chronological order for extensive negative comments to appear, I infer the occasion that aroused the huge public sentiment to be the 20th June UNHCR “World Refugee Day” campaign, along with Chinese state media’s posts on this theme. Other than state media’s reports on World Refugee Week and World Refugee Day, there were also voices from Weibo accounts with many followers, which could have had a catalyzer-function to the large-scale public emotions. The targets of public criticism were not only Chinese state media, the UNHCR and its Weibo accounts, standing together with these institutions under fierce public critique was a female figure - Yao Chen. Yao Chen is a famous and popular Chinese actress and has been working for UNHCR China in raising awareness of refugee groups as “the UNHCR Good Will Ambassador”.

7.1.1 State Media Reporting on Foreign Refugees

According to Merriden Varrall’s (2017) observation, Chinese official media had started reporting on China's positive role in international humanitarian issues several months before World Refugee Day. Prominent Chinese state media outlet Xinhua covered World Refugee Week with evocative images of refugees in need of help (Xinhua, June 20, 2017), China Central Television News had provided consistent reporting of the situation of refugees since April (CCTV News, April 25, 2017). The People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, had a combined article including reports of China's ongoing humanitarian aids to Kenya and global refugees’ need for reception and integration on their website (People's Daily, June 22, 2017). While this coverage represents both refugees as needing help and China as a responsible global actor on international humanitarian issues, there was no direct suggestion made by these official media that China should accept more foreign refugees.

As to refugee-related Weibo posts by state media, I have conducted an observation of the Weibo accounts of the following three state media outlets: Xinhua
During June 2017, no posts with keyword “refugee” could be tracked by the research time of this study, Spring - Summer 2019. I noticed the involvement of state media in this event on Weibo from other Internet users’ comments which were formulated to criticize the alleged move of the state media to create an atmosphere for accepting refugees (as will be further discussed in my analysis), as well as from reporting and commenting on other websites. For example, several most-popular comments under one post of UNHCR mentioned that the official media was taking a stance and paving the way for China accepting refugees: “CCTV, do not create the atmosphere for receiving refugees anymore, it is very disgusting, [I] strongly condemn that…”

Besides Weibo, I also found the description that “domestic state media intensively reporting on refugees in association with UNHCR on June 20th ‘World Refugee Day’” on other news platforms, for example, Guancha (Guancha, June 22, 2017). From the question-and-answer website Zhihu (June 21, 2017), in the discussions around China receiving refugee, at the same time of the Weibo event fermenting, I encountered one Weibo post captured by internet user of the state media the Voice of China Weibo account by screenshot (Image 1, Appendix I). The Weibo was posted on 20th June and the post content was a video and a short text “World Refugee Day, we stand together with refugees”.

However, this post can no longer be found on the Weibo page of the Voice of China.

The reports made by state media about the plight of refugees as well as their participation in the World Refugee Day campaign (i.e., posting refugee-related posts or posts with the unified slogan “stand together with refugees) were read by some internet users (as will be presented next) as a signal sent out by the state that China was about to accept refugees. Arguments claiming that the coverage was meant to set the agenda to prepare the Chinese public for taking in more refugees soon started its dissemination on the internet. As I have observed from the collected material, there were several Weibo users with many followers (“influencers” in the two-step communication model)

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10 央视不要营造接受难民的氛围了，非常恶心，强烈谴责

11 世界难民日，我们与难民站在一起！
participating in the heated online sentiment against refugees. The accusation of state media (for “creating the atmosphere for receiving refugees”) along with exhortation/appeal to the government (to listen to the public’s opinion against receiving refugees”) constituted the main part of these users’ discursive productions on Weibo in the event.

7.1.2 Opinion Leaders Making Accusations

Among the top-listed commentaries under the UNHCR post, which were observed to be loaded with negative anti-refugee emotions, I observed a screenshot of one long Weibo post (Image 2, Appendix I). The writer of the long Weibo post (I refer it as Weibo account A for ethic consideration) is a non-verified micro-blogger with more than 18,000 followers by the time of the study. This long Weibo post mainly conclude the following contents: (a) denouncing state media CCTV for “creating the atmosphere for receiving refugees”; (b) denouncing Chinese foreign ministry and diplomats for giving up to the international community; (c) denouncing researchers and scholars supporting receiving refugees; (d) denouncing European and American governments for causing the refugees and making China to receive these refugees.

This original post can no longer be found from this user’s Weibo page, but I tracked down the screenshot of the full text of this long Weibo from another Weibo user’s page (I refer to it as account B), in a post posted on 22nd June 2017. Account B is a Weibo account with over 49,000 followers, and is previously verified as the official Weibo account of a civil political news review website, but the verification has not been renewed since 2013. B posted the screenshot of A’s long Weibo and claimed that the post written by account A was passively deleted when it had attracted much attention and support from the public. B criticized the alleged censoring of account A’s post and exhorted the government to “respect the public opinion” (Image 4, Appendix I).

Beside the repost of A’s article, account B also published an article with a heading “explosive! UNHCR has established refugee camps in more than 20 cities in China” at the midnight of 22nd June. This is an article in the form of an on-the-spot
interview of a Muslim refugee family in China and was published three years previously on another website. Account B edited the original article with several sentences highlighted and published with B’s perspectivation in the introduction section. For example, “read Qur’an, perform worships five times a day, and watch Indian and Pakistan TV programs through illegal satellite TV” in the description of the family’s daily life were red-marked, possibly in intention to suggest and emphasize the Muslim identity of the refugee. One sentence in the article “we are very thankful for the supports given by UNHCR, however, we receive only less than CNY 3000 each month, so we have to live economically” was broken down by red-marks applied on hand-picked parts “UNHCR” and “however, we receive only less than CNY 3000 each month, so we have to live economically”. Account B’s conclusion based on this was, as literally translated: “Chinese rural elders have the pension of CNY 60 each month, in China refugees have monthly remittance of CNY 3000 and they complained it is too little”\(^\text{12}\). This article has reached 2.2 million readings by the time of writing this paper, and the article has been marked by Sina Weibo as “disinformation” (Image 5, Appendix I).

I now translate and present several representative arguments in the posts made by these two Weibo accounts:

Without that national strength, do not receive refugees indiscriminately. The family planning policy you have been conducted for 30 years is not to vacate for others. If you receive refugees, can you be at peace with the people of the whole nation? Can you be at peace with the families who have lost their only child? Can you be at peace with the women and families who have been forced to abortion by the Family Planning Bureau?\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^\text{12}\) 中国农村老人每月养老金 60 元，在中国难民每月补贴 3000 人民币嫌少

\(^\text{13}\) 没有那样的国力，就不要胡乱接受难民，你们三十年搞的计划生育政策，不是为了给别人腾空地方的。你们接受难民，对得起全国人民吗？你们对得起失独家庭吗？对得起怀胎十月被计划生育局拉去堕胎的妇女和家庭吗？
Warfare produced by European and American countries, cause Middle East people losing their homeland, European and American countries should take the responsibility.¹⁴

European and American countries, on the one hand are compressing China’s economic status and contribution, while on the other hand let China receive refugees, they don't even recognize the status of China's market economy, but now they are letting China to receive refugees, shameless to the extreme.¹⁵

Don’t want to see the Chinese people being hurt because of receiving refugees. Don’t want to see the whole society’s law and order fall into unease because the government receives refugees. Don’t want China, this big family with nearly 1.4 billion people, to fall into chaos. Don't want to see the scene where terrorist attacks appear in China from time to time.¹⁶

These discourses will be further studied to explore whether these framings could be found among other Weibo commentaries made by ordinary users for corroboration of the previously discussed theories on opinion leader and the two-step communication model between state, media, opinion leader and the public.

7.1.3 World Refugee Day, 20th June 2017

From the monitoring of several Weibo accounts (although several Weibo accounts involved in this event have deleted relevant posts by the time of this study), recorded adverse reaction is observed to start rapidly growing linked to one Weibo post by UNHCR. The post was published on the World Refugee Day, 20th June 2017, and the

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¹⁴ 欧美搞出来的战争，让中东人民流离失所，家破人亡，就让欧美国家负责。

¹⁵ 欧美国家一边压缩中国的经济地位和贡献，一边却让中国接收难民，连一个市场经济的地位都不承认，现在却让中国接收难民，无耻到极点。

¹⁶ 不想看到中国人民因为接受难民被伤害的情形，不想看到因为政府接受难民而让整个社会治安陷入不安的局面。不想让中国这个接近十四亿人口的大家庭而陷入混乱的状态。不想看到中国时不时出现被恐怖袭击的局面出现。
content is a short report briefing that day’s pro-bono campaign held in Beijing, with content translated in English as follow:

“June 20th is World Refugee Day, UNHCR held a pro bono filming event in Beijing, sending salute to the 65.6 million people who were forcibly displaced around the world, and sending salute to all those who support and concern the refugees.”17

This post has until July 11, 2019, collected 29769 comments, 30397 reposts, and 2372 likes altogether. I compare the reactions received by UNHCR Weibo account during World Refugee Week with the reactions it has received from other periods (April, May, June and July of 2017) by collecting the quantified statistics I could find on its Weibo Timeline. Based on the numbers of repost, comments, and likes (as illustrated by Chart 1), I assess the reactions that UNHCR Weibo account has received from the social media users during the World Refugee Week, especially on the very day of June 20, as massive.

![Chart 1](chart1.png)

Chart 1 Reactions to UNHCR Weibo Original Posts from April 2017 to July 2017
Chart produced on July 11th, 2019

17 6月20日是世界难民日，联合国难民署在北京举办公益观影活动，向全球6560万被迫流离失所的人们致敬，同时也向所有支持和关注难民的人们致敬。 (Image 6, Appendix I)
I have read through 200 top comments (comments that rank top according to Sina Weibo’s algorithm which calculates commentaries’ popularity and automatically rank them) under the Weibo posted by UNHCR on June 20th. In these 200 top comments, apart from one comment made by World Bank with content “send salute to the 65.6 millions forced moving people around the world and all who concern and support refugees”\textsuperscript{18} and one made by Yao Chen’s fan with content “best Yao Chen of the world”\textsuperscript{19}, all other commentaries illustrated adverse reactions to refugees to various degrees (nevertheless, these two non-negative comments also received numerous negative replies from other users). From close observation of these 200 comments and second-level replies to these comments, six key themes and frames repeatedly deployed in expressing negative attitudes toward refugees and UNHCR are discerned. These six themes can be concluded as the following: (1) charging “the West” as the cause of the “Refugee Crisis” as well as the ringleader of the conspiracy to overturn China by their appeal for China to receive refugees; (2) referring to certain European countries to imply the disastrous effect of receiving refugees; (3) commenting on refugees with their various alleged characteristics; (4) nostalgic recall to China’s anti-colonial history and the glorified Chinese ancestor; (5) appealing on the protection of Chinese women from refugee men; (6) seeing refugees as demographical threat to China with reference to China’s former one-child family plan policy. The analysis of these frames will continue in the coming part of this thesis.

7.1.4 Party Media, Government and Minister Joining the Event

On June 22, 2017. Party media of The Central Committee of the Communist Youth League joined the debate by an article titled “the UN is urging China to receive refugees, do you agree?”\textsuperscript{20} The article was initially published on WeChat official platform and got largely reposted on the Internet.

\textsuperscript{18} 向全球 6,560 万被迫流离失所的人们致敬，同时也向所有支持和关注难民的人们致敬。 (Image 7, Appendix I)

\textsuperscript{19} 全世界最好的姚晨 (Image 8, Appendix I)

\textsuperscript{20} 联合国来催中国接受难民，你同意吗？
To have a more contextual image of the role of CCCYL in the current Chinese Internet, I shortly present the background about it. The official account of the Communist Youth League (along with its numerous branches at local levels) is an active figure in current Chinese cyberspace. On the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of August 2016, a reform program for the Communist Youth League was published by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. In this reform program, points as “strengthening the connection with ordinary youth, making friends with ordinary youth, being intimate with the ordinary youth”\textsuperscript{21} and “keeping path with the new media’s fast development”\textsuperscript{22} were stressed (GOCPC, 2016). It was also in this reform plan that a structure of “internet + CYL”\textsuperscript{23}, where the interactions of the CYL and ordinary youth are implemented both online and offline, was brought up (\textit{CPC News}, August 3, 2016). The establishment of the Communist Youth League’s official accounts at various cyber platforms could be seen as one of the results of this reform program.

The article posted by the official account of CCCYL 共青团中央 on WeChat platform during the event in the title “the UN is urging China to receive refugee, are we supposed to agree?” This article was posted on June 22, 2017, and was widely reposted by other media on the internet, all referencing news-source as CCCYL (e.g., \textit{JRJ}, June 22, 2017; \textit{China.com}, June 22, 2017; \textit{Tencent}, June 23, 2017).

On June 22, 2017, the official media Global Times 环球时报 posted an article as a direct reaction to the strong public sentiment, and the article was also presented with an alarm-arousing title “China is about to receive refugees in huge number? These three things you need to know about right away!”\textsuperscript{24} similar to CCCYL’s rhetorical style used in the title. This article defined the online sentiment as “panic sentiment”\textsuperscript{25} and

\textsuperscript{21} 强化与普通青年的直接联系, 与普通青年交朋友, 做广大青年的贴心人

\textsuperscript{22} 适应网络新媒体迅速发展

\textsuperscript{23} “互联网 + 共青团”格局

\textsuperscript{24} 中国要大规模接受难民? 这 3 件事你需要马上知道

\textsuperscript{25} 恐慌情绪
addressed “the three most explosive rumors”\textsuperscript{26} around refugee reception of China. It pointed out the post made by account A and defined it to ignite the stark panic sentiment on the internet. The article then assessed “several claimed statements on China receiving refugees from the Middle East occurring after account A’s Weibo post”\textsuperscript{27}, including the arguments posed in the article of account B, and claimed them “further accentuated the panic emotions”\textsuperscript{28}. The Global Times article then refuted these “explosive” “rumors” to conciliate the public. The listed facts in the article including, firstly, that the current refugees temporarily stayed in China were only 138 individuals, and the UNHCR was fully responsible for their accommodation and medical care, and secondly, that the major refugee groups received by China were the Chinese emigrant groups fleeing from Vietnam after 1979 who have now stably integrated to the local communities, and thirdly, refugees from Myanmar fleeing to China from warfare would be given basic life guarantees by China, and “generally would be sent back to Myanmar after the war winded down” \textit{(Global Times, June 22, 2017)}. The robust, unitary and large-scale public reaction in resistance to “China receiving foreign refugees” also got the attention of the State. On June 23\textsuperscript{th}, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi representing the State addressed the global refugee problem in response. One sentence from this reply was soon widely reposted: “Refugees are not migrants; the internationally displaced refugees will eventually return to their country and reconstruct their homeland” \textsuperscript{29} (MFA, 2017).
The discussion of this part will start with the official discourses in the very event of World Refugee Day on June 2017 in chronological order. I start with CCCYL’s article, which is the first voice that came from the official side. By the time of this study, I can no longer find the original article posted on CCCYL’s WeChat official account. However, the content of this article from reposts can still be read on other websites. To briefly summarize, the article first briefly reported the heated discussion on Weibo, presented the strong public sentiment against refugees by showing several internet users’ negative commentaries and picked up the survey initiated by one internet user (also presented in the background part of this paper) with its overwhelming voting result against China receiving refugees. It then raised two questions, i.e., “who has caused the death of refugees?” and “should China receive refugees or not?”. The article then used quotes from several Chinese officials and reports to answer the two raised questions.

To summarize the content, the article presented the following points. Firstly, China did not cause the Syrian war or the refugees from the Syrian war. The article referred to Fu Ying’s reply to an American reporter during a press conference of the 5th National People’s Congress:

Looking at the past ten years or so, there have been so many conflicts and even wars in the world, causing a serious number of casualties and property losses. So many refugees have been displaced. Which one is caused by China? China has never brought any harm to any country.

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30 难民之殇到底是谁的问题
31 中国应不应该接受难民
32 Fu Ying 傅莹 is a Chinese politician and diplomat, former ambassador to the United Kingdom and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs.
33 看看过去这十多年，世界上发生了那么多的冲突，甚至是战争，造成了严重的大量的人员伤亡、财产的损失，那么多难民流离失所，哪个是中国造成的？中国从来没有给任何国家带来任何伤害。
Secondly, straight followed by the disclaimer that China was never to blame of the current refugees was the adversative conjunction “but”: “War refugees’ deaths in Syria was not caused by China, but in fact, China has always been offering humanitarian supports to refugees.”\(^{34}\) The supportive fact for this argument was the promise made by Chinese president Xi Jinping on January 18, 2017 in a meeting with the UN that China would allocate 29.2 million dollars to support Syrian refugees. This paragraph ended with a similar phrase in bold text “China has supplied more than once humanitarian support to Syrian refugees” \(^{35}\). The association of the adversative conjunction “but” and the repetition of the argument that China has supported refugees not only fortifies the statement with an evaluative legitimizing claim but also implied that the support that China’s support was already outside its duty zone.

Thirdly, after introducing the extra work done by China in helping refugees, a further argument was presented – “The root of solving the refugee problem is to solve the region’s development and stability”\(^{36}\). Echoed with opinions observed to be held by many politicians, officials and the public in the West and that has been criticized as being incorrect by scholars (Castles, 2009), this discourse was framed within the development-migration dichotomy (i.e., international migration could be reduced by actively tackling the “root causes” of development). The European refugee crisis here has been reduced to a blurred concept wrapped in one word “refugee problem”, passing on a pseudo-common-sense message that “refugees” were something negative in need to be “solved”.

In the end, the article answered the self-posted question of “whether China should receive refugees” with a seemingly firm answer which once again shifted the language to the diplomat. The original phrase is as follows: “On ‘should China receive refugees or not’, to this question, the [Chinese] Foreign Ministry has actually already

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\(^{34}\) 叙利亚的战争难民之殇并不是由中国造成。但是事实上，中国一直在向难民提供人道主义援助。

\(^{35}\) 中国已经不止一次向叙利亚难民提供人道主义援助。

\(^{36}\) 解决难民问题的根本是解决地区的发展和稳定
given an answer." Following this phrase was a complete quote from Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei’s former reply in a regular press conference on 11th September 2015, with similar diplomatic framings once again addressing the root-cause of refugees:

China has noticed recently happened migration-related problems, it has also noticed that relevant EU nations are taking actions. Resolving the humanitarian crisis is the common aspiration of the international community, it is necessary to solve the root the problems of development and stability in certain regions. We believe that the EU and relevant nations can unite together to deal with this major challenge, and properly handle related issues and maintain regional stability. China is willing to maintain communication and coordination with the EU and member states on migration issues through international and bilateral channels. 3839

Above presented are mainly my analysis of the voices coming from the State’s spokespersons quoted in the article, which were more linguistically and rhetorically designed to suit a diplomat occasion, particularly compared to the CCCYL’s own discourses in the article. As has been presented, this article constituted large parts of quotes from users and State spokespersons speeches. However, in the small number of original texts written in this article, small toning twists can still be found with implications expressed through the organization of materials, the self-posed questions as well as the language. With the attention-seeking heading “UN is urging China to receive refugees, are we supposed to agree?”, this article geared the blame of the online sentiment to the United Nations barely, although no supportive facts were presented in the article to prove the argument that the UN was urging China to receive refugees –
the evidence used in this article was a post of UN on the day of World Refugee Day, with nothing more than a video and a slogan “we stand together with refugees”. This article deployed an informal and unserious writing style. For example, the article demonstrated a comment made by an Internet user which claimed that China should catch up with the number of Middle East refugees received by U.S. – zero. The article even included the reply of CCCYL to this comment: “bro, you have an original strategy to solve the issue here” (Image 3, Appendix I). However, this “solution” praised and demonstrated by CCCYL did not meet the fact. According to the statistic from the U.S. Department’s Refugee Processing Center, 12587 refugees received by the U.S. in the year of 2016 was from Syria, 9880 was from Iraq, and 3750 was from Iran (Igielnik & Krogstad, 2017).

In the agenda-setting theory, mass media functions as the gear to tell the public what is vital in the current society. Moreover, in the discussion of two-step communication model, influencers, or opinion leaders work as the “early recognizer” of contents in mass media, and deliver it to its peers, influencing the opinions of the people around them. From my observation, I deduce from this article’s informal language usage, perspectivated writing, and non-evidence-based argumentation that CCCYL did not position itself as a formal party media outlet following the official format for information announcements. What I would suggest from reviewing this article is a self-positioning as opinion leader (which to certain degree accorded with the reform suggestion raised by GOCPC to CCCYL – to make friends with the ordinary), or more than “opinion leader”, for its political attribute to the CPC and its nature of being a member of the official agencies have embedded an authority in its figure.

Coming back to the analysis of the Weibo event, what I have observed in the voicing from the official outputs are: (a) state media outputs’ reporting on the plight of refugees in the Middle East area in association with UNHCR’s campaign of World Refugee Day, in these reports, no clear and direct pledges or stance for China to receive foreign refugees can be observed; (b) government spokespersons addressing refugee issues, neither to be observed of having stances or pledges for China to receive refugees;
(c) a party outlet with hybrid self-position communicating with the public about refugees, picking up and showcasing negative attitudes among the public toward refugees, and equalizing the UNHCR campaign to “UN urging China to receive refugees; and (d) official media Global Times publishing article to appease the massive public sentiment through acknowledging the massive public reaction and addressing the rumors disseminated on the Internet about China and foreign refugees.

7.3 Weibo Theme One: “the United States is to Blame”

What gave this event its unique particularity is the outnumbered comments fully loaded with intense emotions targeted at the alleged fact that China was about to receive refugees, alleged to be Muslims from the Middle East. They constituted a distinct contrast to the fact that there was no evidence or official announcement of China planning on receiving refugees from the Middle East. And one common strategy to achieve this framing was the reference to the U.S. as the source of the Middle East refugees.

Where did these refugees come from, shouldn’t you be clear? Why did you come to China talking about that? Do you want to steer the trouble into China? ⁴⁰

Yes, these “greens”⁴¹ should all be taken by the U.S.! Nothing wrong with that! ⁴²

The idea of (China) accepting refugee, I guess it’s the idea from the U.S, after all, it has always been coveting various resources of China, once China gets destroyed, the next step would probably be Russia. ⁴³

To fully understand the appearances and spread of the discourse pattern which saw the U.S. as the chief “troublemaker” figure and claimed that the US should take

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⁴⁰ 这难民哪来的，你们不清楚吗？跑中国来瞎BB个鬼啊，想把这祸水引到中国来吗？(Image 9, Appendix I)

⁴¹ The word “Green” (绿, lǜ) is often used in reference to Muslims in a derogatory meaning.

⁴² 是啊 这些绿绿全部都应该美国接受！没毛病！(Image 9, Appendix I)

⁴³ 接受难民这个主意，我估计是美国出的主意，毕竟它一直盯着中国的各种资源，中国被搞垮了，它下一目标可能是俄罗斯了。(Image 10, Appendix I)
the primary responsibility for accepting refugees, the historical geopolitical relationship between China and the U.S. in Asia-Pacific region requires to be observed. Many Chinese internet users wrote that the U.S. was to blame for the warfare and sufferings in the Middle East region, thus, given to this consideration, China should under no condition pay for U.S.’s cost. There were also other discourses with the similar pattern, but claims of the “true cause” of the refugee lied in a wider, loosely-demarcated “West”. The inner logic of these discursive patterns was that China had not caused any trouble in other countries (especially in the Middle East), thus had no responsibility of receiving any refugee from the Middle East region. Beyond framings of this logic, there were also comments going further, suspecting that UNHCR’s act of raising awareness of refugees in China and the possible consequence of China receiving refugee was the plan by the U.S., in the purpose to destroy China. Therein, a UNHCR humanitarian campaign was pictured as a Western conspiracy targeted at China.

The leading discourse on Chinese social media that the U.S. was to blame omitted the fact that many other factors had also contributed to the warfare and the massive displacement in the Middle East. For example, in the case of massive displacement in Syrian, countries other than the U.S., including Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran have all played powerful rolls. Their contribution in complicating the situation in Syria included, but were not limited to, supporting different sides in the Syrian warfare by direct military strikes, providing weapons and military training. Besides the multiple forces played by several nations, the United Nation also had a hand in the massive displacement by imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Syria (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). Aside from Syria, many other countries and regions have experienced large scale displacements, and similarly, answerable factors also lie in many other places beyond these nations’ borders.

These discourses, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution, because although the appeal of the U.S. to take more responsibility in engaging in the ethics of hospitality also appears in the Western academia (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016) as well as civil society, the discursive procedures in Chinese social media context, however,
deployed a comparatively more homogeneous reasoning. Previously, I have reviewed the perspective to read Chinese nationalism as a fluctuating relationship (Duara, 1996). In the anti-colonial era of Chinese history, nationalism was constructed to unite the people under framings against the colonial power invading China. Also, in contemporary Chinese history, Western capitalist powers led by imperialist America coveting new-born Communist China constituted the widely adopted refrain deployed to unify the population and motivate productivity since the establishment of the P.R.C.

Fan (2010) in his research of Chinese public perception of Japan and the U.S. suggested a way of interpreting Chinese public understanding of other nations - the event-driven perceptive process. He suggested that in the fluctuation of public opinion about certain countries were largely influenced by events, by which he referred to the historical and contemporary incidents or prominent events (p.279). Although events or incidents may take place capriciously, the event-driven perceptions are not transient. For events can activate interrelated memories and underlying emotions, as well as arouse new emotions, and these memories and feelings in return influence the formation of perceptions. The discourse which speculated Russia to be the next victim after China allegedly falling for the Western conspiracy, to read in the perspective of the event-driven process of Chines public’s perception of the U.S., reflected the events (history relating to the Sino-Soviet comradeship and Soviet-US Cold War) underlying in the memory of the Chinese public and influencing the contemporary public perception of certain related nations (e.g., Western countries led by the U.S.).

Apart from the “events”, Fan further suggested a “5-E” formula to interpret the sources of Chinese public attitudes toward US and Japan, including Egocentrism, Event, Emotion, Education and Experience (Fan, 2010: 278). Fan’s theory could be deployed to understand one of the often-observed discourses of blaming the U.S. as the “source of trouble” for the refugee crisis. Events such as the Korean War, the American bombing to the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia, the US invasion into Iraq and so forth are included in the public “memories” of the U.S.. Hereby I would like to pose my analysis that, the turbulence of European refugee crisis reported in China could possibly
had activated the memories among the Chinese public regarding certain international geopolitical movements (or “intervention of other nations’ domestic issues”, an often-deployed charge of the U.S. and other Western countries in the diplomatic language) led by the U.S. such as, inter alia, events of the U.S. invasion into Iraq, the American military deployment in East Asia, the arms sales to Taiwan. Taken into consideration the historical and current Sino-American geopolitical and economic relations, it is possible that the presentation and demonstration of the European refugee crisis in public spaces triggered the above-mentioned "memories" that were connected to the negative images of the U.S., thus actuated and intensified the negative emotion targeted at the U.S. during this very event.

7.4 Weibo Theme Two: “Look What Has Happened in Europe”

Echoing with Trump’s notorious “look what happened last night in Sweden”, the mentioning of Europe, along with several figures of European nations (e.g., Germany, Sweden) which had active engagements in the refugee reception work, constitutes another key framing in the online discussion around refugees.

UN is now a camp for left bitches, leave us out of your collective orgasm please? Accept whomever you want, but never let in these backbite wolf refugee.44

… Look what Europe has become after receiving refugees, bombings, rapes, do Chinese really want our own homeland to become terrifying?45

… In Germany I have never seen refugees especially male refugees to work as labor force, instead, rape crimes were multiplied several times.46

The first comment referred to the UN as “a camp for left bitches” and viewed the acts of the left-leaning politics as “collective orgasm”. I try to understand the usage
of “collective orgasm” and suggest an understanding of this usage as “collective euphoria”, addressing the humanitarian political pursuits ascribed to European left-wing politics. In this comment, the rhetorical figure of “backbite wolves” was a usage of metonymy adopted to describe refugees, implying an ungrateful nature with the ascribed group of people who render evil for good.

A theme reappearing in several discourses was the sneer at the “hypocritical humanitarian” “white left” ascribed to “advocate for peace and equality only to satisfy their own feeling of moral superiority”. Various expressions with the term “left” were often deployed and received great acknowledgments. Alongside with the ascription to “white left”, another term was often mentioned in the comments and that was “shengmu” (literal translation: the holy mother). Both terms were derogatory terms referring to the Western humanitarians, sometimes liberal elites (with the often referred example, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel) who care about immigrants, minorities, LGBTQ+ groups, environment and so on, but who in fact are euro-centric, weak, naive and ignorant of how the real-life conditions of the rest of the world is (Zhang, 2017; Qu, 2017). The discourses mocking on the political correctness were nevertheless not new. The discursive strategy of defining and ridiculing public discourse and statements as political correctness exercised in the populist strategy has been observed and studied in the Western contexts already (Ekman, 2015: 1996). On Chinese Weibo, terms mocking on the West failing its 'hypocritical' or 'naive' humanitarian pursuits went widespread in the shadow of the European “refugee crisis”, and formed an identification and self-assurance of the “China way” - the comparatively tighter border management and immigration control as well as a more ethnically and culturally unitary society compared to certain Western countries reported to suffer from migration and refugee “problems”. This reflected the Chinese audience’s cognition of the domestically portrayed image of the West under the test of global migration, asylum seekers, and other critical issues at the current time.

47 圣母
Chechen Zhang (2016) interprets the prevailing of the word “baizuo” from the perspective of international relations and sees the criticisms of the “white left” as a trend that fits with the ‘rising China’ versus ‘Europe in decline’ narrative, especially with the background of the European refugee crisis. The negation and demonization of the Western Others are seen to be a part of the construction of the Self.

The event-driven characteristics of public perception of other countries as discussed before might also have played a part in the impugning attitude to certain Western countries’ migration policy. According to my observation, when it comes to the discussions involving European countries with refugee issues, social media public perceptions in China often rested on several criminal incidents that had been drawn in relations with refugee groups. For example, the 2015-16 New Year’s Eve alleged massive sexual assaults in Germany (Kosnick, 2019) were a case deployed in the discussion of Europe’s acceptance of refugees from the Middle East to make conjunction between refugees and rape crimes.

Previously presented in the part of Weibo opinion leaders’ discourses, which could have influenced public sentiment development in this event:

Don’t want to see the Chinese people being hurt because of receiving refugees. Don’t want to see the whole society’s law and order fall into unease because the government receives refugees. Don’t want China, this big family with nearly 1.4 billion people, to fall into chaos. Don't want to see the scene where terrorist attacks appear in China from time to time. (Account A)

In this framing, the rhetorical device of parallelism was employed so much so that it made the language elaborate, the rhythm steady, the tones convincing, and most importantly, touching and stimulating in emotions. The repeated usage of “don’t want to see” helped to position the writer as a Chinese eagerly concerning the nation and its people’s well-being. Read it from Bridget Anderson’s “community of values” , by

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48 See footnote no.18
listing the scenes postulated to describe a future of China worried by the author, e.g., “the whole society’s law and order fall into unease”, “fall into chaos”, and “terrorist attacks appear in China from time to time” in a supposed future if China receives refugees, the refugee Others with an image of law-breaker, trouble-stirrer and terrorists was implicitly intensified. Juxtaposed with the negative presentation of the refugee Others in expressing concerns and worries about China was a self-presentation of Chinese people acknowledged being law-abiding, socially-disciplined, opposed to the destructive natures suggested to be held by the refugees. Read it from Benedict Anderson’s imagined community, the “big family with 1.4 billion population” in this expression is the conceived image, representing all possible positive natures possessed by Chinese nationals, which media users defined within the “1.4 billion” could self-relate to. Through the panic-arousing expressions suggesting a threat and a negative future caused by the refugees, a binary oppositional relation between us Chinese and them refugee, were constructed. Therein, all imagined positive natures of the Chinese in the “big family” could be turned into charges against the refugee group whose members in turn, as assumed, do not possess these natures.

7.5 Weibo Theme Three: “They Don’t Deserve it”

Ardent sentiments against UNHCR’s campaign were expressed in challenging the expression in UNHCR’s language “sending salute to the refugees”, and further assailing refugees’ various alleged characteristics.

Any mental problem? Forget about giving refugees respect, why do we send them salute? Do they have any contribution to technology development for human beings or peace of the world? They have no merits or virtues, sending them salute, are your brains rusted?50

50脑子有问题？尊重难民也就算了，为什么要对他们致敬呢？他们对人类科技发展、世界和平有贡献？对中国社会发展有贡献？无功无德，向他们致敬，脑子锈逗了吧？(Image 14, Appendix I)
In Chinese people’s values, people abandoning the land and fleeing without single action of resistance or improvement are those who are most spineless and least worthy of sympathy.51

I am lazy and greedy, I run away from my responsibility, now I can’t afford my food, anybody paying salute to me?5253

Sending salute to rapists and terrorists? UN, you are really amusing.54

There are barely women and kids among refugees, they have all died in the journey of fleeing, those who are still alive were mainly young and strong males.55

Numerous of commentaries were formulated out of the assumption that refugees from Middle East war-torn region were Muslims, which led to many adoptions of several stereotypes and discriminative terms targeted explicitly at Muslims and Islam in these discourses. From the observation of these comments, I deduce that the region of “Middle East” was a loosely demarcated cognitive geographical concept for most of the Weibo users in this event. Distinctions between different nations within the region were largely diminished, so was the human agency inside the refugee groups treated. In these discourses, a refugee was a fact-blurred, nevertheless commonly shared and agreed image of people coming from the Middle East region, being religiously Muslim (mu, or lü56 (“green”)). “Refugees” in this image were plainly passive carriers of the assumed past of actively abandoning motherland in pursuits for better living conditions. The latter part of the assumption (i.e., refugees left for a better life quality) was usually

51 在中国人的价值观里，抛弃土地毫无反抗和改善动作的人是最没有骨气最不值得同情的（Image 15, Appendix I）
52 我好吃懒做，我逃避责任，现在我吃不起饭了，有没有人向我致敬一下的？（Image 16, Appendix I）
53 This comment was mocking on “paying salute to the 65.6 million people who were forcibly displaced around the world” written in the original Weibo post by UNHCR, implying that UNHCR was appealing salute to people who were “lazy and greedy” and “run away from responsibility”.
54 向强奸犯和恐怖分子致敬？联合国你们真会玩啊（Image 17, Appendix I）
55 难民哪还有妇女小孩，都死在逃亡路上了，现在活下来大多是年轻力壮的男子（Image 18, Appendix I）
56 绿
constructed by accusing of refugees’ omission in trying to make the situation better at home, e.g., “fleeing without single action of resistance or improvement” in the comment demonstrated above.

Distinctions between different sects within the Islam religion were not addressed; neither were the factors playing in the warfare in the Middle East. Refugees became reduced to several negative figures, e.g., traitors fleeing from the responsibility for the mother country; benefit scroungers taking advantage of the host society’s social welfare system; rapists; suicide-bomb carriers; criminals.

From my observations, I suggest that the discursive practices around the “deservingness” of refugees in the Chinese internet context took both a pragmatic and a social Darwinist stance. On the practical side, refugees were deemed to be “undeserving” of China’s help because China had its own poor people who need help – reflected in the unilateral description on Chinese rural elder populations, which could trace to the arguments presented by accounts A and B - “Chinese rural elders have the pension of CNY 60 each month”. I consider this description to be unilateral for “the pension of CNY 60 each month” ascribed to the rural elders equalized wrongly the central government subsidies for people over 60 years old with the concept of pension. In 2009, the Chinese government issues “Guidance regarding the development of the new rural social pension insurance pilot”\textsuperscript{57}, the new rural social pension system include two parts: government subsidies (basic pension\textsuperscript{58}) and individual contributions (individual account annuities\textsuperscript{59}). The basic standard of government subsidies was set at CNY 55 per month for people over 60. In July 2014, the standard was raised to CNY 70 (OECD, 2018: 117; Yan, 2018). The number of 60 was juxtaposed with the 3000 (for a whole family for refugees) to form an imagined “unfairness”, although it has been later clarified that the “CNY 3000” was the subsidy provided for the refugee family by

\textsuperscript{57}新型农村社会养老保险 (“新农保”)

\textsuperscript{58}统筹养老金

\textsuperscript{59}个人账户养老金
the UNHCR, the contrast in number was enough to reach the effect of panic-arousing, which further enhanced the hostile emotions toward refugees.

On the social Darwinism side, refugees ascribed “undeservingness” lies in their weakness to defend their homeland and cowardness in fleeing, which also could be understood from the pragmatic perspective – that refugees were seen to provide no values for the Chinese society. Besides, another framing reflecting social Darwinist reading of refugees was that after the plight of fleeing (which represents the process of natural selection), the real weak “women and kids” have mostly died, and those who managed to the host countries were mainly young and strong males, implying that they did not need help and they could pose a threat to the Chinese.

Researchers like Yarris and Castañeda (2015) have observed the legitimacy on claims of social rights, services, and responsibility to protect host states transmitted by the discursive use of “refugee”. The discussions on the “deservingness” in the West stemmed from the debates over demarcations of the worthy, involuntary “refugee” versus the unworthy, voluntary “migrant”. Holmes and Castaneda (2016) then examined the contentions in the German context around the elements determining the state of “refugee” or the “deservingness” of some people. For example, the legitimacy of asylum administration by nationality or race, the heterogeneity of the displaced people, and the ambiguity and inaccessibility of the historical, social, economic, or even political determinants of immigration and refugees.

See the discursive practices from the authority. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi made the statement that “refugees are not migrants”, “the internationally displaced refugees will still return to their country and reconstruct their homeland”. The statement of Minister Wang Yi was expeditiously taken as the official clarification and was shared by both the state media accounts, who were formerly denounced to “set the agenda” to prepare Chinese people for taking in more refugees, and the UNHCR as well as its good-will ambassador Yao Chen, both of whom were situated in the whirlpool of public outcry. The rhetoric of “refugees are not migrants” became widely accepted and frequently cited by internet users in online discussions around whether China should receive foreign asylum seekers.
In this rhetoric, the distinction between “refugee” and “migrants” was indicated to be the possibility of “returning home” in the future, differing moderately from discussions around the demarcation of “deservingness” in the Western context. With this, I attempt to explore the different meanings embedded in these two words from a linguistic perspective. I base my analysis on the definition given by Modern Chinese Dictionary (the sixth edition), where the definition of the noun “refugee” (nàn mín 难民) is “people who have been displaced due to war, natural disasters, etc.” (p.934), while the noun “migrant” (yí mín 移民) is defined as “people who have moved to another place of a foreign country to settle down” (p.1536).

The word “refugee” (nàn mín) in Chinese, shares the same ending “mín” (defined to mean “certain types of people”, p.903) with the word “migrant” (yí mín), but differs in the first character. “nàn” in “refugee” represents natural or human-made catastrophe, bears a nuance of provisionally, while “yí” bears an active willingness to move to another place and settle down. Underlying within this differentiation between “passive” and “active” movement is a potential consciousness concerning the constancy of the movement – an understanding which sees refugees as temporal: since refugees were forced to move, they must all share the wish to come back to their previous location – the only place to be addressed as “home”. This formed the different connotations of “possibility to move back” or not, movement in “temporality” or “permanency” between the words “refugees” and “migrants” in the Chinese language.

7.6 Weibo Theme Four: “We’ve Fought Our War"

One essential commentary criticizing the refugee group was framed with reference to glorified China’s past sufferings, especially during Chinese people’s anti-colonial history. Discourse by this theme often located their subjectivity in the Chinese nation / our ancestors / China’s history. For example, “China has experienced broken mountains and rivers (a metaphor used to refer to the war-torn landscape)” or “whoever sets the policy of receiving refugees must be hung on the infamy pedestal of history”. These discourses were formulated from the viewpoint of the Chinese nation and its members with a historical heritage of suffering, fighting against its enemies with “blood and
“lives”, a frequently deployed metonymy. Experiences from the past granted to the imagined collective *us*, achieved through the nominal positions “national ancestor” and “national history”, were highly intensified in these discourses, especially the plight and sufferings from the warfare China had experienced in the turning of the twentieth century.

Don't say that your home is not suitable for survival. From the Opium War to the Eight-year War of Resistance, China has also experienced broken mountains and rivers, and the people of China have not thought of fleeing to any country, but instead they fought against the invaders with their life to keep the land for the children. You look at the cowards who simply ran away when there is war, garbage with no bones, do they even dare to talk about them for people of the world?! There were many overseas Chinese travelling back to home country, to go to the national disaster together!

… Roving bandits cannot protect their home and nation as the Chinese people, they therefore do not deserve the peace as China!

I really want to cry by reading this! Our ancestors have paid incalculable blood and lives for current peace! If it were us! We would have made the same decision! The peace earned by blood and lives shall never be sabotaged!
Agree, the Syrian government forces have long been in lack of soldier, there have been slow advance in the warfare, I may ask where are the refugees now? Those who abandoned their nation are deserved to be abandoned by the nation.64

As Balibar revealed, the modern nation-state system has developed the ability to have territorial boundaries acquire a salience and have citizens of the nation-states to develop powerful attachments to these boundaries (1990). As also been discussed above in previous studies, one major theme in China’s nationalist ideologies was constructed under the divided territory (Wang, 1996:8). In my observation of the material, what has been eulogized most in the impassioned expressions about China’s past was the history to preserve the territorially identified “homeland”, wherein the nationhood of Chinese was distilled. And through referring to the collective Chinese “we”, these following-up commentaries continue the personal authority logic with a number of self-evaluative declarations (e.g., “we would have made the same decisions (as our ancestors”) and evaluative assertions of the “other” (e.g., “roving bandits”, “those who abandoned their nation”). Contrasts were made by the comparing of behavior during and attitude toward warfare, to legitimize the evaluation of refugees’ “undeservingness” to be accepted in China and receive help.

Although, this evaluative assessment and comparing of “us” and “them” were not made under identical spatiotemporal conditions. Synecdoche was deployed by referring to the fighters in the war to represent the collective us, and a reference to the result of our victory and survival to make a positive evaluation of the nation’s glory. The history of Chinese emigrants emigrating from war-torn China to other countries (e.g., Zong & Batalova, 2017; Daniels, 1988: 12) was neglected in these discourses. For the construction of the “community of value” (Anderson, 2013) where the alleged value “fight for our motherland” was achieved through the exclusion of the internationally-postulated outsiders (e.g., “foreign refugees who fled from their home

64 赞层主，叙利亚政府军一直兵员不足，战事推进缓慢，请问难民们此时何在？抛弃国家的人活该被国家抛弃（Image 23, Appendix I)
countries”) on the one hand, and the removal of domestic “failed citizens” from the historical narrating on the other hand.

Whoever sets the policy of receiving refugees must be hung on the infamy pedestal of history, and there won’t be a second one [coming after].

In this commentary, the “infamy pedestal of history” was a usage of synecdoche to equalize the act of receiving foreign refugees to all other treason crimes consumed to the nation in history. It reflected the norm and the value of a legitimated imagined community – the Chinese nation, and the value attached to it was regarded to be powerful enough to be associated as a threatening tool to discourage any willingness among the member of the community to behave against it.

This recalling and honoring of Chinese people “have fought for our land” can also be interpreted from the perspective of the “homeland” concept in the Chinese tradition and history. Chinese scholar Wang Gungwu (1996: 8) in his reading of the revival of Chinese nationalism has pointed out that the theme of “the unification of divided territory” had long been one of the major faces in Chinese nationalist constructions. Although the fixation of location to belonging, the linkage between territory and nationhood, could be found in other cultural contexts as well. In the U.S., the department taking responsibilities in domestic public security is under the name of “Homeland Security”. Within the bounded “homeland” in here, language, norms, culture are supposed to be ours, thus accordingly, cultures, beliefs, and norms from geographically elsewhere, are all considered to belong to the foreign others. Locations, nationhood, and their conflation can be reflected from many discourses from historical movements. Chinese modern age’s nationalistic movement led by Sun Yat-sen held the slogan of “Expel the northern barbarians and revive Zhonghua (China)”66. The word “expel” used in this phrase, carries the act of chasing against and force the object to disappear.

65 谁敢制定接受难民的政策必被挂上历史的耻辱台，没有之二。（Image 24, Appendix I)
66 驱除鞑虏，恢复中华。
Ann McClintock (1995) challenged some of the most credited academic discussions on nationalism by bringing in inspiring feministic perspectives. She saw the gendered discussion around nationalism among theorists even with Fanon (and his well-known claim “The colonized man is an envious man” (Fanon, 1963: 30)). McClintock came up with the critique that for Fanon, “both colonizer and colonized are here unthinkingly male, and the Manichean agon of decolonization is waged over the territoriality of female, domestic space”. “Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency.” (McClintock, 1995: 354)

McClintock supposed, when Fanon discussed the anti-colonial nationalism, what he referred to as “the native” or “the negro” were actually concepts ripped off their humane generality but confined with the male gender. Women have more often been seen as an appendage to men, be it the settler or the native. McClintock argued that the construction of all nations could not be independent of earlier institutionalization of gender difference.

To avoid the bias of ignoring the gendered power in nationalism, I consider it of great importance for us to take a look at one of the most harshly criticized figure of the online sentiment in China through the lens of gender and nationalism. I have noted the anger expressed toward Yao Chen, a female actress, well-known to most Chinese audience. The wrath at her represents a speech reached out from the language of resentment towards the rich (one of the commentaries was framed comparatively restrainedly by pointing out her upper-class identity and criticizing her lack of empathy with the ordinary (proletariat) people, as followingly demonstrated) and continued its journey in the form of patriotism. As the five major ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism indicated by Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989), women carry the function as the reproducers of the boundaries of national groups. Women are “bearers of the collective” within boundaries of nations defined by various cultural, legal and political discourses in an aim to divide people into ‘us’ and ‘them’
(Yuval-Davis, 1997). From this point, we might find a way to read why Yao’s act of standing out and appealing for attention to foreign refugees incurred the accusation of her betrayal to the nation from the internet users. Her assumed betrayal of the nation lies in her deviation of the innate function as being a woman, a Chinese woman, a mom who bears the Chinese kid, a woman who carries the national dignity. For some users, even if Yao could be forgiven for being a member of the upper-class elite club, her failure to fulfill her innate female function as the carrier and symbol of the property of the nation and its men, could (and should) never be left in peace. For examples:

How about Yao Chen adopts some refugee kids growing up together with her son and her daughter?! Does she even dare?67

Yao Chen, a shengmu bitch, how about you live in the refugee camp for two months, if you had not been raped into pieces, I would not even believe in Jesus but you!68

Yao Chen is the new type of traitor, enjoying the peace exchanged by national ancestors’ blood, taking money from Chinese people under the skin of an artist, she herself lives in villa house, she has security whenever she goes, now she flatter the China-overturning power, she couldn’t wait for China to end up in chaos, her motivation is execrable, she should die!69

Yao Chen, you have the superior conditions from your class, you cannot share the difficulty of ordinary people fighting for a life!70

In the critique targeting at Yao, what I first observed is a blurred boundary between private life and public activity. That Yao expressed her attention and care for

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67 能不能让姚晨收养几个难民小孩跟她家的 XX 和女儿一块成长？！她敢？(Image 25, Appendix I)
68 姚晨这只圣母婊，有本事就去难民营住上俩月，要是没被强奸个稀巴烂，我耶稣都不信了，就信你！(Image 26, Appendix I)
69 姚晨就是新型卖国贼，享受着国家先烈用命换来的太平，以艺人的皮搜刮着中国人民的民脂民膏，自己住别墅坐豪车出门带保镖进门有安保，却跑去舔倒华势力的嘴脸，巴不得把中国陷入动乱，其心可诛，其人该死！(Image 27, Appendix I)
70 姚晨，你有你那个阶级的优越条件，不能体会平民百姓为生计打拼的艰难！(Image 28, Appendix I)
refugees was not regarded as an appeal in the public domain, somewhat, the act of expressing her supportive attitude towards refugees was directly connected on the nation’s level as a behavior of treason. Many critiques toward her supportive attitude to refugees were also constructed from a personal life’s level – to suggest her to take refugees in her home, to have refugees living with her daughter and her son (the comment even referred to Yao’s kid by nickname, which I chose not to show in this paper). These posed suggestions, regarded and applauded by Weibo users as a harsh enough attack to Yao (reflected from the number of likes these commentaries received and the frequency for commentaries under this framing to appear), also on the other hand, reflected the widely acknowledged image for refugees to be dangerous and devastating. These allegations of refugees were even reflected with the rhetorical question “does she even dare [to have refugees live in her home and grow together with her son and her daughter]?” More intrusive attacks towards Yao’s personal life involved the curses for deaths of herself and her family members, justified by the argument that Yao had committed the crime of treason, which I regard to be alarming.

Among the critiques toward Yao Chen, I have observed discursive framings that were specifically targeted to her identity as female. These include: (a) the stress of her identity as two kids’ mom by challenging her to receive refugees to her household and let refugee kids grow up with her kids; (b) suggesting her to be raped by refugee males; (c) largely used derogatory terms of “bitch”, “xizi” (a derogatory address for actor and actress), “shengmu”.

It could benefit my discussion to consider the current status of feministic development and women emancipation movement in China. McClintock (1995) described African women’s skeptical attitude toward middle-class feminism sprung up in the white society, while women in Africa still stood in a precarious position within the nationalist movement, “ill afford to antagonize men so embattled, who were already reluctant to surrender whatever patriarchal power they still enjoyed” (p.383). Although the status in current China is largely different from McClintock’s Africa then, I found McClintock’s perspective relating nationalism to the gender perspective still relevant.
for us to better understand the contemporary Chinese nationalist sentiment. At the war line to defend the nation, Chinese men were so war-loaded and easy on trigger, that they hardly realized the patriarchal position they held while they were giving their patriotic lecture to a woman. Feminism may not yet have gained its validity in China, though Yao herself saw Angelina Jolie (her American equivalent in the pro-bono work for UNHCR) as her “role model” (Keenlyside, 2014), the domestic reactions and judgment Yao had received regarding her works at UNHCR might be widely divergent compared to Jolie. There is this mismatch of Yao’s positioning between her personal (ideological or occupational) pursuits and the one that the social media opinion field located her as a female celebrity.

Our future girlfriends and wives are not allowed to be disgraced, sexual harassed by those brutes who have genitals growing on their faces.71

Even if we are going to receive [refugees], we only receive young female with clean family background, other than these we receive nobody.72

The male-dominant gaze at the European refugee crisis and foreign refugees took a more brutal, unhidden appearance. Historically in China, the purity of the women’s body has served both as metaphor and metonymy of the purity of the nation (Duara, 1996: 167). Taking the stance of “defending” “our women”, the image of ‘refugees’ in these discourses were intrinsically formed as sexually unconstrained male, who constituted a threat to ‘us’ by among others violating ‘our women’ both semantically and metaphorically – the specific woman who will become ‘my’ future girlfriend / wife, as well as the women whose bodies carry the collective boundaries and body of the nation. Yet, until here, certain similarities can still be observed between the discourses framed under the theme of “gender” produced in China and West. Although, from my observation of the top commentaries under the UNHCR Weibo, in contrast to the feminist anti-immigrant (sometimes particularly targeted at Muslim)

71 我们未来的女朋友，老婆，不允许被那些生殖器长脸上的畜生玷污，性骚扰 (Image 29, Appendix I)
72 要收也只接受家底清白的年轻女性，除此之外一概不收 (Image 30, Appendix I)
discourses which often claim a domestic reality of Western cultural norms and values (e.g., gender equality) superior to the Muslim Others, which were often portrayed as homogeneous and universal in the European language (Abdou, 2017), few Chinese commentators on Weibo framed the gender-related anti-refugee discourse in the same direction as in the West. The wrath targeted at refugees expressed went furthest at the critique to the framed argument that Muslims threaten Chinese women and did not go further to an alarm over foreign refugees possible “contamination” to a “universal Chinese civilization/culture which allegedly protects gender equality, which is different from ‘their’ inferior culture”, as culture-related right-wing populist discourses have reached in the West. For example, Right-wing populist parties in the West have been observed to have initiated a correlation between feminism and exclusionary anti-refugee claims in their political languages (Kosnick, 2019). Connotative meanings have been constructed between the refugee crisis, Muslim masculinity, and public sexual violence against women. Muslim migrants in the Western societies, who were assumed to be “lagging behind” compared to West’s achievement (civilization) in gender relations, particularly in the treatment of women and girls, constitute the opponent to the Western “reality”. It is this constructed juxtaposing of “orientalist backward gender inequality” which were considered to be incompatible with “Western advanced gender equality” that served to legitimize exclusionary claims in the European discursive practices.

Nevertheless, the conflict I would like to assess is, when it comes to borrowing feminist/culture perspective to legitimize exclusionary claims at foreigners, where do the Chinese public locate themselves in this cultural comparison of the “lagging others” and “advancing us”. From my observation of the material collected from Weibo, I do not observe a self-presenting as the advanced “self” through claiming a superior gender-equal ideology. Discourses in China with framed under the theme of gender were more constructed on the defense of our women (and the purity of our nation represented by our women’s purity), rather than the defense of “our superior civilized ideology”, differing from the situation in the European context.
7.8 Weibo Theme Six: “One-Child Policy is Not for Making Space for Others”

Another recalling to Chinese history deployed in the discourses was the ‘one-child’ family planning policy introduced in China in 1979. Many of the reactions used this reference as a starting point, declared that the Chinese population had been strictly controlled and many people and families had suffered a lot, by no means should these sufferings be taken for granted and considered as making room for refugees.

Without that national strength, don’t receive refugees randomly. The family planning policy you have been conducted for 30 years is not to vacate for others. If you receive refugees, can you be at peace with the people of the whole nation? Can you be at peace with the families who have lost their only child? Can you be at peace with the women and families who have been forced to abortion by the Family Planning Bureau?73

The above presented is an argument initially posed by account A in the article, but I noticed several re-uses of this argument among the most comments toward the UNHCR post. The recall of China’s former family planning policy aroused a lot of users’ self-relating as the sufferer of the policy or the witness of the suffering of the policy.

My neighbors are the painful lesson of family planning. They gave birth to their first child in their 30s. They wanted the second child, however, became painfully aborted because of the family planning. It turned out that their son died at the age of 27, and the old couple who are almost 60 have a subsidy with just more than

73 没有那样的国力，就不要胡乱接受难民，你们三十年搞计划生育政策，不是为了给别人腾空地方的，如果你们接受难民，对得起全国人民吗？你们对得起失独家庭吗？对得起怀胎十月被计划生育局拉去堕胎的妇女和家庭吗？（Image 31, Appendix I)
CNY 100 a month, with nobody to take care of them. What about the pledge with family plan that the State would take care of the elderly?\textsuperscript{74}

I was almost killed because of family planning.\textsuperscript{75}

Such presentations had a primary function of forming a contrast of having and not having to pay the “cost” to be on the territory between Chinese nationals and the imagined “refugees”. In this framing, “we” in the Chinese community were presented as the sufferer of the policy, and part of whose members did not enjoy the right to be born to the land. Compared to this past, that foreigners (be it asylum seekers or other types of “outsiders”) could travel into the country without paying any “price” thus became reviewed as unfair to the unborn Chinese people and the families who had suffered. By self-defining as the sufferers of demographical policies, the discourses base their standpoint on the affiliation of nationals and the welfare deserved to enjoy to the very concept of territory and aimed at legitimating the negation of opening national borders for any foreigners.

The intensifying of the suffering of the people from national policy in this online discussion from another perspective reflected the nature of social media, where it decentralized former mass-mediated processes and offered certain participatory role to the individual communicator, as suggested by KhosraviNIK and W. Unger (2016). For many commentaries with this theme moved away from the critique targeted towards UNHCR or foreign refugees, but became instead a bottom-up expression in terms of recalling to emotional experiences toward the State, the policies, as well as the impacts these factors had winded on the people.

Nira Yuval-Davis has early in 1989 discussed the ‘demographic race’. The concept of “race” was read to not limit itself to the juxtaposition of territory and demography in the context of international conflicts, but also entail the domestic

\textsuperscript{74} 邻居就是计划生育的惨痛教训，他们三十岁生个第一胎儿子，想要二胎因为计划生育惨痛被流产，结果儿子二十六七岁出了意外去世了，他们老俩口都要六十岁了，每个月只有一百多块钱的补贴，身边孤无一人，说好的计划生育好国家给养老呢。（Image 32, Appendix I）

\textsuperscript{75} 我就因为计划生育差点被堕掉了（Image 33, Appendix I）
concern where the ethnic majority was concerned about its hegemonic collectivity being threatened (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Though none circumstances similar to the historical events in the West where ethnic majority in a nation was confronted with a demographical “threat” has yet appeared in China in its contemporary history (the last census in 2010 has shown that 91.51% of the population was Han Chinese, still making up an absolute majority (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011)), attacks raised toward the fertility of Muslim people, often holding the argument that Muslims were of “robust reproduction ability”, which was in itself holding a discriminative and stereotyped image.

Nira Yuva-Davis, in her writing, also included the discussion on family planning policy in China. In Yuval-Davis opinion, China’s one-child family planning policy started was a product influenced by the Western Malthusian discourse about the earth’s ability to bear human being, and its effect and result were to be tilted to be gender imbalanced. Although there could still be some limitations of this argument’s grounding, for instance, in presenting her analysis that ‘the effect of Malthusian policies is often highly gendered’ in the third world countries, the demonstrated examples were solely ‘rumours about villages in China and India...born after Malthusian policies were enacted, are 100 percent male’ (p.34).The grounds deployed to support this argument that Malthusian population control could have led to a gender imbalanced result in nations with patriarchal traditions were still in lack of more in-depth examination and reasoning of the specific context. Still, through my readings of the discourses framed under the theme of viewing refugees as a demographical threat on Chinese social media, I have observed the gender bias which could possibly be read as a result of patriarchal social traditions, where women were seen as a resource owned by the male. Women’s capability to bear children (whom are also seen as men’s assets) was seen as an asset, reflected in the discourse “even if we are going to receive (refugees), we only receive young female with clean family background, other than these we receive nobody”. Represented by “young female with clean family background” was the assets considered to be valuable perceived by only part of the refugees. The stressing of the
adjective “young” embodies both the capability to carry children (since childbearing was acknowledged to hold certain requirement for age) and the physical attractiveness but only to the Chinese male. The “clean family background” was a loosely-defined requirement, leaving enough leeway to the considered subjective in accepting the refugees, namely, the (male) Chinese. He could, if he wants, legitimate the act of accepting a refugee once the she refugee became his property, with claims that she has a clean family background. He could also negate her, abandon her, with claims that she had a dirty family background. Whether clean or not is never to be defined by the refugee her. With this, the tailor-made “values of the community” which decide over exclusion or not were altered to suits the need of the members of the community, where only some refugees possessing the right value could be allowed into the community.

8 Discussion and Conclusion

In the research questions initially presented in this paper, I raised the study aims to explore, firstly, Chinese Weibo users’ explanations and perceptions of international refugees; secondly, Weibo discussions around actors supporting refugees; and last, similarities and differences in Chinese social media accounts on refugees compared to the more researched responses in the European context.

From my works of tracking, observing and cross-checking of data, I have come to the first observation, namely, the massive, negative sentiment attached to the term “refugee” on Chinese social media Weibo, expressed in discourses responding to UNHCR during the campaign with the theme World Refugee Day, 2017. Therein, through close observation of the top comments responding to one UNHCR Weibo post, and several other discourses from government officials, state media and party media outlets, as well as Weibo opinion leaders, I consider this Weibo anti-refugee sentiment against UNHCR and its humanitarian pursuits for global refugees as well as the imagined “refugees” to be a synergistic result of many factors. I have assessed discursive practices in official statements and state media’s reporting on refugees, observed a diplomatic ambiguity in expressing China’s political agenda regarding foreign refugees, and have observed several topoi such as “regional development” and
“regional security” deployed to address the “root reasons of refugees”, in avoidance of directly answering the concerns regarding China receiving foreign refugees. Among Weibo accounts of the government and Party bodies, I found a particular voice by the CCCYL, where the communicative natures of authority (e.g., answering public concerns) and the natures of opinion leader (e.g., gearing public concerns) were conflated, and the quality of formality and creditability of its textual productions were reduced. I then observed some overlapping in discursive framings and themes deployed by non-institutional opinion leaders and ordinary social media users. With reference to the theories of two-step communication model, I recognized a critical role that opinion leaders played in first recognizing and forming personalized perceptions from their readings of mass media reporting on foreign refugees, then transmitting the (mis-)recognitions of political agenda allegedly from the “above” to the public, effectively gearing the Internet user’ attention to the very political issue of China receiving foreign refugees. In the analysis of this case, I have also observed the tremendous speed and scale of public attitude fermenting on the platform of social media and tried to understand it through the unique natures of social media - the embedded duality of users’ participation online both as content consumer and as content producer.

In my observation of Chinese social media accounts on refugees in this event, I have discerned six key framings deployed in discourses to legitimate the anti-refugee attitude, several of which echoed with anti-refugee courses studied in the European context, such as, the demographic threat and the undeserved refugees. Our analysis of these framings involved perspectives of Chinese geopolitical history and currency, event and memory-driven public perception of certain countries such as the U.S., as well as critical analysis of discursive strategies in constructing the “we Chinese” vis-à-vis the “refugee others”, for example, the positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. I have also read several discursive framings from gender and nationalism perspective, discovered an underlying patriarchal ideology which saw women as an asset of men, whereupon the entrance tickets were selectively given to parts of the refugee members due to their ability to produce next generation for the Chinese male.
Concerning the detected uniqueness in expressions regarding foreign refugees in China which differed from the European refugee-related discourses, the observation can be summarized as the following three: (1) the delineation of the U.S. and a blurred image of the “West” to be responsible for the refugee crisis, and possibly to be behind the UNHCR event, which was understood as part of a bigger conspiracy to destroy China; (2) the deployment of China’s previous “one-child policy” to suggest an underservingness and unfairness for foreign refugees to be accepted in the territory of China, compared to the domestic suffering; these two faces of the expressive strategies adopted in the anti-refugee discourses are comparatively unique in the Chinese context in comparison with the Europe. One discursive framing differed from its European equivalent is (3) the involvement of gender in the nationalist narrative on foreign refugees. Unlike the European anti-refugee, anti-immigrant discourses under the name of “feminism”, where an essentialized inferior other culture which disrespects women was constructed in opponent with the superior civilized our culture that respects women; the Chinese gender-related anti-refugee discourses in this event put their discursive focus more on “protecting our women from their men”, while reflections over the feministic development between different nations, or cultures, were not observed in this event in China.

As early as 1997, there were articles addressing the issue of misinformation on the internet, and experiences of online misinformation produced with deliberate attempts to mislead readers could date back to 1995 (Fitzgerald, 1997). Study result from computational social science has shown that the spreading of online disinformation of conspiracy rumors contents be of positive relation between its lifetime and size. Moreover, due to users’ tendency of aggregating in communities of interests; bias, segregation, and polarization would easily get repeated and reinforced (Del Vicario et al., 2016). Seeing from the quality of the information during circulation and the characteristics of internet circulation, the situation of online nationalism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia is not positive.

Anti-Muslim attitudes have since long ago been observed to be inserted in the Western discourse and narratives (Gardell, 2012; Said, 1978). In recent years, political
parties with far-right nationalist or xenophobic rhetoric have been gaining increasing attention and supports (Culik, 2015). An image of “Europe under attack” was constructed (Ekman, 2015), nurtured by various fear of being “replaced”, fueling the wide dissemination of misinformation about migrants, more specifically, non-white migrants with other religious belief or cultural backgrounds. What gave the discourses observed here on Chinese cyberspace their particularity was that they were loaded with emotions of similar kinds as observed in the West, despite the lack of identical triggers in real life. The circulation of certain disinformation about refugee groups and political conspiracies is observed to have the possibility to surpass barriers of political, cultural, and language circumstances.

During the writing of this paper, a new incident occurred. From the material collected and examined in this study, what I have observed are the Chinese reapprication of anti-refugee discourses and exclusionary strategies which had been discerned in the Western context. The newly-occurring incident, however, showed us a reverse turning, where a video which had aroused huge reaction and public anger in China, with a content of a Chinese man violently attacking a Chinese woman on the street of Dalian, a city in North-east China, was misused by racist far-right groups who released the video on Twitter and falsely claimed the violence was happening in the Netherlands with a male refugee attacking a Dutch woman (Image 34, Appendix I), to nurture even more hatred against refugees in Europe, with “fueling material” – panic-arousing video clip “imported” from China. So, when we are hailing for digitalization, information era, social media and the capitalized globalization process they represent, to which extent can we cheer for them? Reversely, when we put our critique target toward social media and the negative circulation it carries, can we be sure that without social media itself, we can avoid the worldwide circulation of venous speeches and thoughts? We have probably already heard the phrase that extremism will only foster extremism, how can we fight against extremism, hatred, and inequality with the “soft” weapon - Internet, in the so-called digitalized era? The Internet grassroots voicing studied in this research are mainly analyzed on the side of their contents. However, more in-depth studies could be made to research on the user groups and possible online
networking behind these online expressive behaviors in non-Western contexts. Besides, in the pursuit of promoting humanitarian goals worldwide, how can online opinion-sharing spaces be used more as a tool by international institutions such as UNHCR, rather than a risky zone; to realize common ground between nationals with different historical and cultural luggage, rather than to reify segregations and constraints that already existed? I hope, by presenting this study, I can inspire more in-depth studies that could address these issues.
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10 Appendix I

Image 1-3 are screenshot images collected from the Internet, we mosaic processed the user names and profile photos included in these images.

Image 4-32 are screenshots made by the author for this study, user names, profile photos and private individual’s name have been mosaic processed.
央视不要营造接收难民的氛围。非常恶心，强烈谴责，政府也不要想着当冤大头了，没有那样的国力，就不胡乱接收难民，你们三十年搞的计划生育政策，不是为了给别人腾空地方的，如果你们接收难民，对得起全国人民吗？你们对得起失独家庭吗？对得起怀孕被计划生育局拉去堕胎的妇女和家庭吗？对得起每个月只给5元的福利待遇的失独子女政策吗？对得起一个月才给60元的农村老人吗？5元和60元在现在能够买什么吗？5元的独生子女相信没有几个人领。不要官逼民反，自己管辖的民众没有一点福利待遇，还想着接收难民。

人民手中的那点钱拼命地逼迫人民拿出来，中国所有城市的房子这么贵，甚至超出人民的极限，政府没有责任吗？很多房地产都是国企央企，中国的青年为什么买得起房子，就是因为独生子女政策，一家三代的存款都拿出来给下一代买房子了，所以才有报道说中国青年拥有房子比例最高。中国人民勤勤恳恳，不等于就让你们为所欲为，我们的政府必须考虑清楚，你们的政权是因为人民的拥护才得以延续，外交官作为一线的人员，必须向世界各国游说，中国不适合接收难民。你们接收难民，起码得为你们三十年的计划生育政策道歉，为你们拉去堕胎的妇女道歉和给予赔偿，为全国的失独家庭道歉并且赔偿相关的损失，退还全国因为超生而被罚款的家庭。

我希望政府看到人民的反对声浪，强烈谴责一些支持接收难民的专家学者，强烈谴责政府出这种馊主意的智囊团队，强烈谴责政府准备接收这个政策，中国几十年的计划生育政策不是为了腾龙换鸟，不是为了腾空地方接收难民的，希望政府不要硬干，否则激起人民的愤慨，你们的政权就很难维系，全国人民的一片反对呼声，希望这些呼吁就是中国外交官和政府去倔强力的后盾和理由，人民拥护你们，希望你们为人民做事，不是为难民做事。欧美搞出来的战争，让中东人民流离失所，家破人亡，就让欧美国家负责。欧美一边压缩中国的经济地位和贡献，一边却让中国接收难民，连一个市场经济的地位都不承认，现在却让中国接收难民，无耻到极点。

因为不想看到中国人民因为接收难民被伤害的情形，不想看到因为政府接收难民而让整个社会治安陷入不安的局面，不想让中国这个接近十四亿人口的大家庭而陷入混乱的状态，不想看到中国时不时出现被恐怖袭击的局面出现。我们的政府应该有立场和理由去说服国际社会，从中国搞的计划生育政策说起，从中国的福利待遇政策说起，从中国的杨改兰这样的家庭说起，当年搞这样的政策的时候，被说没有人权，而现在欧美却让被他们说没有人权的中国去接收难民，说得过去吗？我们的政府外交政策不要再妥协。强烈要求外交部长下台，因为我们都不想接收难民，外交部如果没有能力去说服国际社会，负责人就下台，换人上去。
中国当然应该接收难民，而且应该跟美国人接收的一样多，美国接收中东难民数量高达80人，这个数目之大让人震惊，虽然我们跟美国相比还有很大差距，不过我相信，只要努力总会迎来光明的一天。

46分钟前

作者回复

兄弟，你这个解题思路很独到

44分钟前

不应该让难民背井离乡远到中国，应就地建设，化解矛盾，重建家园。

52分钟前

送给西方国家一句俗语，自己的屁股自己擦

51分钟前
【中国拒绝接纳难民是大众的民意】这个微博20日下午3点发布，到21日下午4点，25小时转发量超过七万。这位博主不是大V，博主的呼声反映出大众的心声！坚决反对中国接纳难民！否则，愧对中国无数独生子女家庭，更愧对失独家庭，中国人少生不是为难民腾地方的！通常微博阅读量暴涨的管制措施，就是屏蔽或者直接删除！编写一个微博声援，备份原博，通常微博的阅读量暴增时，管制措施就是屏蔽或者删除！希望有关等尊重民意！博主的言辞激烈！良药苦口利于病！大众的呼声应当是政府制定政策的基础。

Image 4
劲爆！联合国难民署已在中国20多城市建立难民营

中国农村老人每月养老金60元。在中国难民每月补助3000人民币较少，认为中国制造意味着廉价低劣

联合国难民署
2017-6-20 20:15 来自 微博 weibo.com
6月20日是#世界难民日#，联合国难民署在北京举办公益观影活动，向全球8,560万被迫逃离失所的人们致敬，同时也向所有支持和关注难民的人们致敬。
@NicholasRosellini @联合国开发计划署 @姚晨 #和难民在一起#
世界銀行：向全球6,580万被迫流离失所的人们致敬，同时也向所有支持和关注难民的人们致敬。We Stand Together！

2017-6-21 08:20

你不问问这难民哪来的？干了什么？恐怖分子游手好闲的你也致敬？
2017-6-21 12:30

中国没有这么没血性的垃圾人种，自己国家被侵略了，扭头就跑别人家踏
吃蹭喝、杀人放火，致敬你麻痹，一群垃圾。
2017-6-21 12:53

别恶心了，不接受
2017-6-21 15:21

因为流离失所所以致敬是什么逻辑。
2017-6-21 15:59

连共赴国难都不敢配让我们致敬。
2017-6-21 16:38
2017-6-20 22:07
我支持难民来了往姚晨和你家，为你致敬
2017-6-21 12:57
回复 | 207
我支持楼上所说，来了任你和姚晨家
2017-6-21 13:31
回复 | 153
我也支持难民来了往姚晨和你家，为你致敬
2017-6-21 13:11
回复 | 146
谢谢你也难民来了你记着伺候啊😊😊
2017-6-21 14:10
回复 | 124
全世界最好的姚晨把难民接收着吧😄
2017-6-21 15:09
回复 | 95
难民送她家住。
2017-6-21 15:13
回复 | 81
联合国圣母婊
2017-6-21 15:38
回复 | 79
有爱心没有错，可是我也同意他们说的。难民来了请住你和你觉得全世界最好的姚晨的家😊
2017-6-21 15:28
回复 | 78

2017-6-20 22:57
这难民哪来的，你们不清楚吗？跑中国来瞎BB，个鬼啊，想把这祸水引到中国来吗？
@联合国难民署
回复 | 20599
是啊，这些绿绿全部都应该美国接收，没毛病！
2017-6-22 05:02
回复 | 188

2017-6-23 01:02
接收难民这个主意，我估计是美国出的主意，毕竟它一直盯着中国的各种资源。中国被搞垮了，它下一目标可能是俄罗斯了。
回复 | 32

2017-6-21 15:02
联合国现在就是左婊集中营，你们的集体高潮不要带上我们好不？爱JB谁接谁接，坚决不能收这帮白眼狼难民。
回复 | 835


Image 12

作为难民亲善大使 她去了全球最大的难民收容国 她敢现在去叙利亚 北非吗？ 明星都只是作秀，真正有爱心 搞几个可怜的难民在家啊 她敢吗？ 真正的解决办法是停止战争 重建家园，把难民分配到各个国家 混吃混福利 永远没有尽头！在德国我未见到难民尤其是男性难民 当起劳动力 倒是强奸案翻了好几倍
2017-6-26 15:05

回复 | 👍 172

Image 13

脑子有问题？尊重难民也就算了，为什么要对他们致敬呢？？？ 他们对人类科技发展、世界和平有贡献？对中国社会发展有贡献？无功无德，向他们致敬，脑子锈掉了吧？？？
2017-6-21 12:18

回复 | 👍 3597

Image 14

在中国人的价值观里，抛弃土地逃亡毫无反抗和改善动作的人的是没有骨气最不值得同情的
2017-6-21 12:19

回复 | 👍 12011

Image 15

我好吃懒做，我逃避责任，现在我吃不起饭了，有没有人向我致敬一下的?
2017-6-21 14:55

回复 | 👍 731

Image 16

向强奸犯和恐怖分子致敬？联合国你们真会玩啊
2017-6-21 19:32

回复 | 👍 265

Image 17

难民哪还有妇女小孩，都死在逃亡路上了，现在活下来大多是年轻力壮的男子。
2017-6-24 02:46

回复 | 👍 14

Image 18
### Image 19

用户：别让你家里打仗不适合生存，从鸦片战争到8年抗战，中国也曾山河破碎、生灵涂炭，可四万万五千万中国人民没想着逃到任何国家去，而是拿起去和侵略者拼，这才为子孙保住了脚下的这片土地。你个打一仗撒腿就跑的怕死鬼，一点骨气都没有的垃圾，还敢冒充世界人民坚强？！
2017-6-21 17:07

### Image 20

用户：还有很多华人华侨返回祖国，共赴国难！
2017-6-21 13:21

### Image 21

用户：朱抄大哥的文章，我也转了，原文好像是一点都不说的特别好。流寇做不到像中国人一样保家卫国，就没资格享受如中国一样的和平！
2017-6-21 14:21

### Image 22

用户：赞层主，叙利亚政府军一直兵员不足，战事推进缓慢，请问难民们何时何在？抛弃国家的人活该被国家抛弃
2017-6-22 02:16

### Image 23

用户：谁敢制定接受难民的政策必被挂上历史的耻辱台，没有之二。
2017-6-21 18:28

### Image 24

用户：能不能让姚晨收养几个难民小孩跟她家的和女儿一块成长？！！姚大嘴，你敢？
2017-6-21 13:44

### Image 25

用户：姚晨这只圣母婊，有本事就去难民营住上俩月，要是没被强奸个稀巴烂，我耶稣都不信了，就信你！@姚晨
2017-6-22 08:03
姚晨就是新型卖国贼，享受着国家先烈用命换来的太平，以艺人的皮囊割着中国人民的脂粉膏，自己住别墅坐豪车出门带保镖进门有安保，却跑去舔倒华势力的嘴脸，巴不得把中国陷入动乱，其心可诛，其人该死！
2017-6-22 20:38

@姚晨 你有你的阶层的优越条件，不能体会平民百姓的生计打拼的艰难！
2017-6-22 12:56

我们未来的女朋友、老婆，不允许被那些生殖器长脸上的chu生玷污、性骚扰😊
2017-6-21 23:25

要收也只接受家底清白的年轻女性，除此之外一概不收
2017-6-21 23:17

不要营造接收难民的氛围了，非常恶心，强烈谴责，政府也不要想着当冤大头了，没有那样的国力，就不要胡乱接收难民，你们三十年搞的计划生育政策，不是为了给别人腾空地方的，你们如果接收难民，对得起全国人民吗？你们对得起失独家庭吗？对得起怀胎被计划生育局拉去堕胎的妇女和家庭吗？对得起每个月只
2017-6-21 10:34

计划生育太tm恐怖。邻居就是计划生育的惨痛教训，他们三十岁生个第一胎儿子，想要二胎因为计划生育惨痛被流产，结果儿子二十七岁了意外去世了，他们俩口子就都六十岁了，每个月只有一百多块钱的补贴，身边孤身一人，说好的计划生育好国家给养老呢😭
2017-6-23 10:49

我就因为计划生育差点被割掉了😢
2017-6-22 09:10
What the fuck can you say about this savage attack?

Warning violent content. This is horrific. Netherlands immigrant brutally attacks white female then drags her away to rape her. Catch this bastard.

It happened in China not the Netherlands

Chinese man detained after horror attack on woman spark...
Local police say accused did not know his victim, had been drinking after argument with his girlfriend.

9:39 AM - 27 Jun 2019

2 Retweets