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CULTURAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

A culturalist approach to communication¹

Shi-xu

Introduction

Our world has never been so desolate and desperate as it is today. A few figures speak volumes. The World Bank reports,

by the end of 2022, as many as 685 million people could still be living in extreme poverty. . . . Given current trends, 574 million people—nearly 7 percent of the world’s population—will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day in 2030.²

Global Wealth Report says, “the overall regional disparities . . . are reflected in the fact that North America and Europe together account for 57% of total household wealth, but contain only 17% of the world’s adult population”.³ According to the World Health Organization,

almost all of the global population (99%) breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits and contains high levels of pollutants, with low- and middle-income countries suffering from the highest exposures. . . . The combined effects of ambient air pollution and household air pollution is associated with 7 million premature deaths annually.⁴

The Swedish Thinktank reports,

approximately 90 percent of all nuclear warheads are owned by Russia and the United States, who each have around 4,000 warheads in their military stockpiles; no other nuclear-armed state sees a need for more than a few hundred nuclear weapons for national security.⁵

As the old crises of poverty, climate change and nuclear weapon rivalry are being exacerbated by the new virus of COVID-19, humanity has chosen anything but solidarity and cooperation. At the 76th United Nations (UN) meeting, the Secretary General Guterres summarised it well:

Our world has never been more threatened. Or more divided. We face the greatest cascade of crises in our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has supersized glaring inequalities.

The climate crisis is pummeling the planet. . . . And economic lifelines for the most vulnerable are coming too little and too late—if they come at all. Solidarity is missing in action—just when we need it most.

The communication approach to social reality, it would seem, has not, however, been quite concerned or equipped to help with the existential issues such as these. This may be demonstrated by screening the contents of the field's Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journal publications. For this, 28 communication-related SSCI-indexed journals for the year of 2022 were selected where a total of 1031 articles was found. The key words of poverty, nuclear and environment/climate change were used to identify the number of relevant publications. Results are flabbergasting: on poverty, 1; on nuclear, 3 and on environment/climate change 12. More broadly, as has been observed, communication theory, if there were indeed such a thing, had been divided with disparate interests and foci such that complex communication problems lack comprehensive, integrated approaches (Craig, 1999; García, 2021). In connection with that, more seriously, intellectual West-centricism, or intellectual imperialism as has been called, has served to consolidate Western domination, exploitation and exclusion, which results in the non-Western world being alienated, devalued and marginalised (Asante, 2006, 2008; Gordeon, 2007; Ishii, 2004; McQuail, 2005; Miike, 2006, 2008; Shi-xu, 2009, 2014).

The present chapter sets out to delineate an emerging paradigm in communication studies (CS, including all forms of discourse analysis), alternative to the mainstream: Cultural discourse studies (CDS). It will do so in terms of its scope, assumptions, objectives, tasks and norms of doing CDS. It will be argued that CDS may serve as a culturalist disciplinary antidote in CS; it seeks to facilitate cultural harmony and prosperity on the one hand and achieve communication/discourse research innovation on the other through a locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical, methodology. Further, it will be indicated that, inspired by this metatheoretical blueprint, an accompanying academic movement is on the way, complete with communicative platforms. The chapter will end with an illustration of its practical operation through a study of Chinese and the US national defence discourses.

(Re)Emergence of culture in communication studies

Following the aforementioned inaction and inadequacy of mainstream communication studies, let us look at an exemplar thereof, critical discourse analysis (CDA) (à la Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Wodak, 2001), before expounding CDS. This strand can be regarded as a good case because, to say the least, it is sustained by several SSCI-indexed journals under the rubric of communication in the Web of Science system.

This particular mode of research may itself be seen as a distinct cultural discourse that has significant scholarly and societal implications (cf. Jones, 2007; Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999; Widdowson, 1995). First, the foundational and leading speakers come from a European linguistics background, as is reflected in the topics of interest selected and the approaches adopted. Second, reproduced by Anglo-American corporations, the master text(book)s, as well as associated journal publications, present CDA as culturally neutral or universally applicable, as they are marketed and distributed globally. Third, it follows a binary pattern of thinking and divides up the complex lifeworld into 'text/discourse' on the one side and 'context/society/cognition' on the other side. Here, as may be pointed out, it does so in order to dismiss the latter and focus on the former, whether or not it proclaims a 'dialectic' or 'explanatory' perspective. Coupled with this move, fourth, is the West-accustomed 'container metaphor', namely, the presumption that 'text/discourse' is the vehicle of

meaning. Fifth, CDA uses Western values and stances as universal—without taking into consideration local cultural systems and traditions. As a result of this, its conclusions may more often than not misrepresent culturally variable realities and, not surprisingly, negate them indiscriminately, perpetuating existing stereotypes thereby. Finally, possibilities of intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate then become precluded and non-Western scholarly heritages marginalised (Alatas, 2006; Chakravartty et al., 2018; Demeter, 2020; Scheurich, 1993; Shi-xu, 2009).

Indeed it is high time that communication scholarship pay more attention to common and pressing issues threatening humanity, seek more innovative objectives and reply on more inclusive perspectives and resources (Shi-xu, 2005, 2009, 2012). Of course, that is not to say that there has been no work on the dimension of culture.

In response to the cultural blindness and Westcentrism in the mainstream tradition, there has actually (re)emerged a current of consciousness for culture in CS, in particular through various culture-centred approaches (Baker, 2021; Blue, 2019; Collier, 2000; Durán, 2018; Gavriely-Nuri, 2010, 2012; Gordeon, 2007; Ishii, 2004; McQuail, 2005; Miike, 2006, 2009; Pardo, 2010; Prah, 2010; Shi-xu, 2005, 2009, 2014; Tomlinson, 1997; Wolton, 2001), the field is witnessing a retheorisation of communication. These trends form part of the background to CDS as they provide insights, inspirations and frames of reference. For the purpose of exposition, these approaches may best be characterised as “communication as culture-general”, represented by ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis; “communication as culture-particular”, represented by Asiatic and Afrocentric theories and “communication as culture-incidenta”, represented by intercultural communication theory.

A first, the culture-general approach assumes that culture exists across communication, though variably, such that it is possible to use a general framework to discover the particular forms and meanings of communicative practice of particular communities in question (Boromisza-Habashi & Fang, 2023; Carbaugh, 2005, 2007, 2017; Carey, 2008; Gumperz & Hymes, 1986; Kuo & Chew, 2009; Saville-Troike, 2003; Scollo, 2011). Thus, theory of cultural forms of expression and methods of analysis are created for identifying distinctive cultural codes as well as cross-cultural differences. Although this approach recognises cultural similarities and variations in communication, it fails nonetheless to take into consideration the complex interactive processes between different cultural discourses and consequently the power practice and relations involved, let alone possibly unique aspects of particular cultural discourses.

A second, culture-particular approach proceeds from the notion that different cultures have different ways of thinking, world views, concepts, values, rules, etc. that organise their communication and therefore, formulates culturally specific and unique, for example Afrocentric, Asiatic, theories of communication (Asante, 2006, 2008; Miike, 2008, 2009; Xiao & Chen, 2009). Such a move enables the construction of culturally distinctive models of communication, effectively encouraging the establishment of the identity and authenticity of relevant and especially marginalised scholarly communities, undermining the presumed universality and superiority of Westcentric theory thereby. However, this approach, smoothing over possible convergences of communication, may hamper the chances of intercultural-intellectual dialogue (cf. Wang & Kuo, 2010) and moreover, similar to the approach delineated earlier, gloss over the interaction between different cultural systems of communication and so also the power relations therein.

A third, culture-incidenta approach is predicated on the understanding that questions of culture or cultural background set in when people from different communities come into contact and communicate with one another. Here communication itself is considered neutral and universal and separate from culture whereas the latter, in terms of the native language, knowledge, norms of behaviour, etc., is but an external factor that can engender miscommunication and

misunderstanding (e.g. Spencer-Oatey, Isik-Güler & Stadler, 2012, p. 572). So the task of intercultural communication research is to identify cultural features that cause problems in communication. In such a perspective, not only is culture seen as negative, but also the cultural nature of communication in general is overlooked, whereby the power-saturated character of cultural communication is left out of the picture.

Beyond these, it may be noted that tenets over power and prejudice, as well as values of inclusiveness and harmony, from a diversity of intellectual heritages, movements and currents—such as Chinese and African philosophy (e.g. Tianren Heyi, Umbutu, see Cheng, 1987; Krog, 2008), postmodernism (e.g. social construction of reality, de-centring, see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008), postcolonialism (e.g. resistance to prejudice against and repression of the non-Western world, see Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978, 1993), antiracism (e.g. fight against white supremacy, see Scheurich, 1993; Scheurich & Young, 1997), feminism (e.g. fight against gender inequality, see Spender, 1980; Stanley & Wise, 1983), as well as critical intercultural communication (e.g. power-oriented notion of culture, see Halualani, Mendoza & Drzewiecka, 2009; Holliday, 2011; Nakayama & Halualani, 2011; Neuliep, 2011)—have fertilised CDS, too. But as these currents are more focused on culture than on discourse and communication, we shall discuss no further but go on to a more thoroughly cultural programme in CS.

Cultural discourse studies

It is against the backdrop of the cultural crises and awakening, both societal and scholarly, that cultural discourse studies has emerged (see literature for example in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*). CDS concerns itself with human communication, like CS in general. That is, it takes as its object of study the social interaction in which people use language and other mediums in context, purposefully and consequentially, and seeks to describe, interpret and critique it. In this view, communication is a social process which encompasses multiple elements and dimensions (e.g. language, gesture, technology, channels, time and place).

And yet different from many common forms of CS, CDS considers communication, not as universal or culturally neutral, but as a global system composed of culturally diversified and competing *discourses*. Here discourse refers to the *cultural* form of communication, real or potential, of an ethnically and geopolitically characterised community (say the Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World, American/Western/Developed World). Culture in this context refers to the particular ways of thinking, speaking and acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact that are embodied in the discursive practice of a community. Thus culture is the defining feature of a discourse—hence cultural discourse—and of communication more generally; to study discourse and communication, then, is also to study culture.

CDS is predicated on a number of interlinked assumptions. First and foremost, communication is a global system of verbal interaction in which people use language and other media purposefully and consequentially in particular historical and cultural relations. Secondly, the global system of communication is also at the same time culturally organised in that it consists in diverse and competing discourses (see further), hence cultural discourses. This implies that cultural discourses are sites of contention, cooperation and transformation. Thirdly, communication in general and cultural discourses in particular construct reality, perform action and exercise power, bringing about social cultural change thereby. Fourthly, cultural discourses as social events and practices are enabled, guided and shaped by underlying discourse systems (see further). Finally, the global order of communication is unbalanced, unfair and unjust but, with the perennial awakening of

humanity, is subject to change towards higher levels of civilisation, though over long epochal periods of time. These constitute a culturally conscious and critical—*culturalist*—view of communication that under-girds cultural discourse studies.

In this account, ‘discourse’ refers to a cultural form of communication (real or potential) in which people as cultural members or groups use language and other media (e.g. gesture, technology, channels, time, place) purposefully and consequentially in specific historical relations and in particular (inter)cultural relations (i.e. with other groups’ forms of communication). Discourse, as a cultural communicative practice (event and activity), constructs reality, exercises power and changes society (Burr, 2015).

‘Discourse system’ then is considered as the configuration of (a) *communicative institutions* (community, organisation, platforms, media technology, etc.— ‘motor system’) and (b) *communicative know-how* (concepts, values, theory, information, principles, tactics, etc.— ‘nervous system’) which enable, organise and sustain a group’s discursive practice in a particular field (say economy, diplomacy, health) and are in relation with other such discourse systems. It is the discursive competence of a given community which can have profound impact on the success or failure of their communication.

‘Culture’, in turn, means the system of ways of thinking and ways of acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact, that are embodied in the discursive practice of a community (e.g. Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World, American/Western/Developed World). Culture is a relational notion in that the culture of a discourse (community) exists only *in relation to* other such discourse systems. In this light, it is also saturated with power.

Emphatically, the concept of culture and, for that matter, East, West, Chinese, Asian, the Global South and the like are not to be understood essentialistically, as reified, fixed or homogeneous. Culture is internally fluid and externally open (Pang, 1993; Shi-xu, 2005); parenthetically, it is not considered metaphorically along, say, national, gender, generational, professional or organisational lines. Roughly speaking, a given culture is the discourse system of that cultural community in both *relational* and *functional* sense.

For analytic purposes, discourse, as hybrid social interaction, is categorised, heuristically into six interlocking components: communicators, act, medium, purpose, history and culture (CAM-PHAC). Specifically, **communicators** include cultural groups and members for investigating who is (not) speaking and acting, in what position and capacity and with what characteristics (e.g. world views, ways of thinking, character, past experiences). **Act** is relevant verbal and nonverbal (inter) actions for studying what is (not) said and (not) done and how, how it is responded to and what social representation and relation result. **Medium** is the use of symbols, channels and other tools (e.g. specific languages, conventional and new media, occasion, time, place) for studying what means are (not) used and how (also in relation with language use) and why. **Purpose** is causes, intentions, goals, effects and consequences for studying why the discursive activity in question has taken place, why it has done the way it did and what impact has resulted. **History** is processes involving the earlier discursive categories for studying the nature, change and (ir)regularity of the discourse in question. **Culture** is the sum of features in all the aforementioned categories, but in dialectic, differential and power relations to other relevant discourses, for studying the identity, distinction and intercultural relation and standing of the discourse in question. Depending on the particular research purposes and conditions of the data at hand, these categories may be mobilised either in part or as a whole. It should be remembered that because these categories are dialectically interconnected, a form of synthesis on the basis of their analyses is required in order to reach a comprehensive and practically productive conclusion.

These analytic categories are formulated for describing, analysing, explaining, interpreting and evaluating discursive practice, either in part or as a whole. It should be cautioned, however, that, just like the notion of cultural discourse, these analytic categories must not be used as universal tools, either. They are proffered as starting points for studying specific cultural discourses. For, just as the diverse cultural discourses of the communication system may not have the same nature or shape, so do the analytic categories proposed here. Moreover, the components represented by those categories are interconnected and organised in different ways across different cultural discourses. Therefore, they are to be appropriated in ways that are subject to readjustment and reconfiguration according as the specifics of the particular discourses under investigation. It may be noted, too, that the all-encompassing notion of communication as cultural discourses is different from the classic idea proposed by Lasswell (1948) in terms of the 5W questions in that the latter does not pay attention to historical and (inter)cultural dimensions and relations of communication nor to interrelations of different communication categories.

Profoundly concerned with cultural diversity, dynamic and division of contemporary discourses which have hitherto been much neglected, obscured or explained away in the mainstream scholarship, CDS, as alternative paradigm, aims to enhance cultural innovation and transformation in CS scholarship on the one hand and to facilitate cultural development, harmony and prosperity in society on the other hand. It does by following two broad methodological principles: Performing locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical research. Locally-grounded means drawing on local native perspectives and resources, while globally-minded taking in account of human and long-term interests and the world's wisdom. 'Culturally conscious' means to be attentive to cultural identities and diversity whereas 'culturally critical' is to be supportive of cultural unity and oppositional to cultural hegemony. It is in these senses that CDS is *culturalist* in stance. It is an intellectual form of cultural politics.

To achieve the goals of CDS, practitioners can and should take up a number of interrelated tasks, which may be carried out separately, in tandem, in parallel, or as an ensemble. These are, to name but a few general ones, (a) to expose and deconstruct ethnocentric discourses of domination, prejudice and exclusion, whether global or local, societal or scholarly; (b) to reconstruct locally-grounded and globally-minded frameworks of unfamiliar, mystified or otherwise marginalised cultural discourses; (c) to discover and highlight discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit, as well as repressed cultural experiences; (d) to craft action strategies for disadvantaged communities to reclaim cultural identity, authenticity and freedom and (e) to invent ways for Western and other communities of CS to work together in order to confront the most urgent crises facing humanity. These tasks may be accomplished through researching a large variety of specific questions, such as

- (1) How does the field of CS constitute ethnocentrism (i.e. cultural domination, prejudice and exclusion), e.g. who are the dominant speakers/gate-keepers and who are excluded? Specifically, whose cultural scholarship (theory, concepts, values, methods, topics, questions, etc.) is being universalised, whose marginalised? What is the current order of information flow like? What does scholarly ethnocentrism imply for academic innovation and societal development? How are we to transform the current unbalanced order of CS discourse in favour of cultural-intellectual diversity and creativity for CS?
- (2) How are we to (re)construct culturally conscious and critical frameworks of cultural discourses, such as the Asian, African, Latin American or of the developing world as a whole, which have hitherto been under-theorised and understudied? What should be the agenda for their scholarship in CS? What are the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical assumptions for researching their discourses?

- (3) What are the properties, problems and potentials, not just of the culturally dominant discourses, but especially of those that have hitherto been misunderstood, misrepresented, or else silenced? How have the disadvantaged discourses been evolving? How are they related and compared with their historical past? Similarly, how are they related and compared with their cultural others? How are discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit constructed?
- (4) How can marginalised communities, hence their discourses, be reinvented and empowered, so strategically reorganised, in order to reclaim their identities, reassert their voices, rebuild their images, and regain their positions in the global order of communication?
- (5) How can the culturally diverse communities of CS start to engage in egalitarian and sustainable dialogue and debate with a view to enlivening, enriching and enhancing CS? In particular, how can we work together to reorient CS toward solutions to the most urgent existential problems facing humanity, say poverty, climate change and nuclear threats?

Recognition of cultural properties, aspects or factors of communication has led cultural, cross-cultural and intercultural communication studies to devise a myriad of methods of analysis. And yet owing to differences in views and goals, there exists a myriad of methods of analysis which, if at all explicit, are more often than not incompatible, or even at odds, with one another. To answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives as set out earlier, dissolving the extant methodological fragmentation thereby, CDS formulates a comprehensive and integrated, though still evolving, system of explicit methods to come to terms with the cultural complexity of communication, as follows.

Intracultural Analysis: To search for identity, distinction, particularity or peculiarity of a cultural discourse through description and explanation of the relevant discursive components and their relations in the data at hand (e.g. self image, concepts, values, major themes, strategies of meaning-making); because there is no parallel comparative analysis, the results do not guarantee any cultural uniqueness.

Transcultural Analysis: To search for incursion by, influence from or fusion with aspects of relevant other cultural discourses by discovering borrowings, transfusions or recreations of concepts and ideas, norms and values, topics and expressions or else responses and reactions of some sort in the discourse under study.

Cross-Cultural Analysis: To search for differences, variations, contrasts and contradictions as well as ambivalence between cultural discourses in question through comparison of relevant discursive components or aspects so as to discover differential representations of the 'same' reality, variable attitudes towards the 'same' issue, contrary actions, unique features, etc.

Pancultural Analysis: To search for commonalities, similarities, equivalences and interconnections between different cultural discourses in question by analysing all relevant discursive components or aspects (e.g. types of communicators, ways of thinking, conceptions, values, objectives, shared experiences).

Intercultural Analysis: To search for and make sense of self and other representations by and processes of interaction between different cultural discourses in question and so also the resultant identities, actions performed, penetrations, relations of power (e.g. domination, exclusion, marginalisation, resistance, cooperation, synergy) and changes of situation.

Axiocultural Analysis: To offer cultural-political critique over the properties or aspects of cultural discourse(s) in question, including proposals of new norms and new ways of communication, all for the sake of continued cultural development, unity and prosperity. In this regard, CDS

proceeds from the position that no cultural discourse (community), shaped by internal and external conditions, is perfect and therefore should be open to critique and ready for mutual learning; and yet that no cultural discourse (community) is superior to others and therefore should treat another with respect and compassion. On that basis, CDS adopts twofold criteria for cultural-political evaluation: global and local. Namely, while the global criterion, subject to continuing dialogue within our discipline, is whether and to what extent a discourse is in favour of human flourishing—the world’s development, unity, prosperity—the local standard is whether and to what extent that discourse is congenial to the needs, aspirations and traditions of the discourse community concerned. In other words, both are designed to help identify, characterise and adjudicate practices of cultural deprivation, ethnocentrism, imperialism or otherwise cultural inclusion, cooperation and empowerment.

It should be added that these methods, distinct yet mutually complementary, may be employed selectively or in combination, depending on the goals of research and characteristics of data at hand.

To ensure full attainment of its ideal, proper observation of its principles and satisfactory accomplishment of its tasks, CDS applies a set of specific rules to its practice. These are (a) not to neglect local context (e.g. norms, rules, values, habits, questions and issues of the community under study), (b) not to ignore or exclude native scholarship, (c) not to lose sight of international, intercultural, global and long-term human interests (e.g. to be considerate about the needs and well-being of the wider world community), (d) not to overlook techno-societal change and progress (e.g. to be on alert about technological advancements such as digitalisation, new media, AI, ChatGPT), (e) not to universalise one’s own culture and degrade culturally others and (f) not to be blind to inequality and repression.

By now, it may be realised that CDS as a paradigm is not just a metatheory providing guidelines and tactics for theorising cultural discourses, but also constituted by and sustained through the very practice of those prescriptions. To illustrate the practical workings of that system, especially in terms of the sorts of issues it deals with and the ways it does, let us turn to the discourses of national military strategies (NMS) of China and the United States.

An exemplar of doing CDS

The “China threat” theory, and discourse, is well-known from Western academia as well as Western media, where the Chinese defence policy is continuously accused of being “ambitious”, “aggressive” and “opaque” (Hameiri & Jones, 2018, p. 573). And yet this issue has not been looked at from a cultural discursive perspective, in particular, from a cultural discourse studies viewpoint; a systematic-comparative, discourse based, locally-grounded and globally-minded and culture-centred approach is needed in order to shed new light on international security.

That means, first of all, that China’s defence policy must not be seen as isolated or detached but as relational and interactive, internationally and interculturally, not least with that of the United States. For one thing, the world is increasingly globalising, for another, defence policy is partly utilised by countries concerned with managing their international and global security relations in general and military diplomacy in particular. In that connection, it may be pointed out that China and the United States should be examined not just as two nations but more importantly as presumably two distinct cultures in the globalising world because of the differences in power as well as language, beliefs, wishes, norms, values and other forms of traditions, etc. In that case, a cross-cultural, intercultural as well as pancultural analysis, as outlined earlier, will come in handy.

Secondly, national defence policy is not just a military or security affair in its material and political sense, but at the same time it is also a communicative, cultural-discursive, phenomenon. A certain authoritative institution must formulate and express the policy; certain topics and themes, as well as ways of expressing them, etc., will be involved thereby. Furthermore, certain channels and certain platforms will be employed to announce the policy as national and international statements; certain international and intercultural actions, interaction and relations will then emerge as a result. On account of all this, an analytic and comparative framework based on the shared, common features of the Chinese and US national NMS discourse will be created—in terms of its aspects and properties, viz. (a) the conceptual constituents of the NMS discourse, (b) actions and relations resulting from the NMS discourse and (c) medium use for disseminating NMS.

Thirdly, national defence policy (discourse) in general and that of China and the United States in particular cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the culturally relevant perspectives and traditions. This means on the one side that as default rule of CDS, trust—in place of bias, stereotypes and prejudice—is given to the party's discourse under study and on the other side cultural traits such as worldviews, ways of thinking and ethics in communication and action will be considered as inalienable context. In this regard, it is particularly useful and important to note that China is a nation with a strong tradition that has lasted over two thousand years (Shi-xu, 2012, 2014; Shi-xu & Feng-Bing, 2013; 施旭, 2022 [in Chinese]) and that so it would be a mistake to read the Chinese discourse at its face value and to ignore its deeper and wider cultural baggage. By the same token, it would be equally important to look beyond the 'words' and recall the 'deeds', e.g. the military operations and indeed the wars that the nations in question have carried out. In this case, intracultural analysis will be needed in each case.

Finally, a synthetic and critical assessment will be called for, which provides a comprehensive, ethical judgement drawing on the prior partial analyses. At this stage, the researcher should play a prominent role. For, in CDS, whatever other identities and stances the practitioner may have, s/he is supposed to proceed from the culturalist position, as defined earlier, in the study of local, global or glocal issues of communication, as in the current case. And for this case of national and international security, that comes down to the specific moral stance of supporting sovereignty, peace and mutual respect, even though that stance may still be open to cultural contest and negotiation. In other words, the researcher of CDS takes an in-between, cultural-political position—locally-grounded and globally-minded (Shi-xu, 2005).

Thus, to illuminate the nature and characteristics of the defence policy of China and the United States, two distinct sets of material are chosen as data for analysis. On the one side is the Chinese white paper entitled *China's Military Strategy* published by the Information Office of the State Council on June 26, 2015, as well as the rest of the serial documents and related media activities (from 1998 to 2019 China published ten defence white papers, but the one in 2015 marks the first time that it officially and globally publicises its national military strategy). On the other side is the US counterpart, the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015: The United States Military's Contribution to National Security*, published on July 1, 2015, as well as the others in its serial dossiers (from 1992 to date the United States has published six documents in its series, but in 2018 its suspension was announced). National military strategy can be seen as epitome of national defence policy, which in turn may be seen as that of national security policy.

To start with, at the conceptual level, attention may be drawn to the locus and nature of national security (NS) in the documents which is central and basic to national defence (ND) policies in general and to NMS in particular. This is a significant point of the investigation because whether NS is independent and detached or interlinked between nations will have grave implications for the attitudes and actions that a nation's military takes to ND and NS more generally. Compare

(the numbers at the end of each of the following examples indicate the paragraph of the document in which it appears):

China: China's destiny is vitally interrelated with that of the world as a whole. A prosperous and stable world would provide China with opportunities, while China's peaceful development also offers an opportunity for the whole world. (2)

Countries are increasingly bound together in a community of shared destiny. (4)

America: As detailed in the 2015 National Security Strategy, our enduring national interests are: the security of the United States, its citizens, and US allies and partners; a strong, innovative, and growing US economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and a rules-based international order advanced by US leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges. (25)

Here China conceptualises and constructs its NS as not separable from that of the rest of the world, but rather as inter-meshed with it and, moreover, as potentially mutually beneficial. Therefore, its conception is inclusive, mutual and cooperative in nature. This notion, it may be argued, is consistent with the Chinese traditional worldview of holism: The universe is a whole in which everything is connected with everything else.

The US conception of NS, in contrast, is marked as bound and independent of the rest of the world. Moreover, the United States defines a number of world dimensions and qualities as part of its own defense strategy. Therefore, its conception of NS is, comparatively speaking, exclusionary, divisive and hegemonic.

Next, let us move to the level of actions of the NMS discourses, viz. what they do to each other as well as to the rest of the international community, paying special attention to the speech acts deployed:

China: In their endeavor to realize the Chinese Dream of great national rejuvenation, the Chinese people aspire to join hands with the rest of the world to maintain peace, pursue development and share prosperity. (1)

America: We will press forward with the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, placing our most advanced capabilities and greater capacity in that vital theater. We will strengthen our alliances with Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. We also will deepen our security relationship with India and build upon our partnerships with New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. (41)

Here, as in much of the other serial dossiers, China pronounces and declares willingness to collaborate with the rest of the world for the sake of common good. In this way it shows a cooperative spirit and presents a friendly gesture on the global stage. This act, it could be recalled, is a reflection of China's traditional value of harmony, as well as being consistent with the nation's contemporary socialist system.

The US statements perform, however, quite a different sort of acts: A show of power and force to a given theatre in the world and a declaration and promise of alliances with certain select states—whom they are with and against is then as clear as day. From this perspective, these acts could be read as bloc-minded, world-divisive, confrontational and repressive in international military posture in particular and military diplomacy more generally.

Apart from the conceptual and performative dimensions of the NMS discourses, the media use therein provides still another vantage point from which to understand the NMS of the two countries. The ways in which the media are employed reflect the degree of importance that each attach to the matter at hand and the level of concern that each has with respect to the relevant audiences. Thus, a range of media facts is worthy of note. First, the Chinese NMS document of 2015 is the first of its kind in modern history; it is published amid charges of a lack of transparency from the West. Second, to publicise this NMS as widely as possible, China mobilises all its military's official and authoritative organs of communication, such as National Defence Ministry Press, National Defence Ministry Foreign Office, People's Liberation Army Paper and a diversity of media portals and outlets, such as Weibo, WeChat, People's Net and New Beijing Paper. In addition, the document is published online in both Chinese and English. Third, to explicate this new document for the public, it utilises a variety of semiotic means such as diagrams and enumeration, and it commissions military experts to speak in the media. Given that the United States, by contrast, only publishes the document on the internet, it may be suggested that China particularly wishes to make the publication of its NMS an important global as well as local event and, further, that it is keen to let the public know and understand its NMS.

Finally, a critical synthesis is in order. Here we shall see that when all those findings are taken together then a new image emerges and a culturalist critique is on a firmer ground. To start with, it may be asserted that, given the change from earlier brief and general statements to exclusive and systematic publications of NMS on the one hand and widespread and multifarious use of media on the other hand, China is becoming more open and transparent than ever before on its defence policy. Next, the Chinese NMS in particular and ND policy in general is relatively stable and predictable because all ten documents consistently declare its "defensive policy of national defence" and "active-defensive military strategy", but the United States, in contrast, changes NMS in name and in nature throughout its six documents (by the way, the US defence department announced in 2018 that it would stop the publication). Moreover, the Chinese underlying and controlling conception of NS is broader than that of the United States, or to be more precise, holistic, and therefore world-inclusive, whereas that of the United States is bloc-minded and so world-divisive. Last but not least, the US NMS in particular and its discourse more generally is relatively belligerent and confrontational rather than peaceful and cooperative, in contrast to those of China. Discourse is not everything of NMS or of ND and NS policy and yet it constitutes the latter as an integral and important part, as explained in the beginning. But the nature of the two distinct NMS discourses becomes even clearer if one looked across the globe through the past century to see how many wars have been waged by the United States (Kaldor, 2005; Sharp, 2019). So from a CDS perspective, nations' discourses of NMS, ND and NS need to be systematically studied and critiqued with a view to reforming them in favour of national and international peace and security. This should involve questions about the concept of NS, standards of evaluation (e.g. of transparency), norms of communication and action, techniques of media use and a host of others.

Conclusion: CDS's agenda

For a decade and half or so, CDS has been firming up as distinct paradigm in CS which theoretically provides for the construction of local cultural frameworks on the one hand and practically engages in empirical and strategic research into cultural discourses on the other hand. Furthermore, it may be said that CDS is now more than a dialectic, organic system which both prescribes and practices a mode of research. It also features a community of students and scholars with heightened awareness of cultural diversity and division in both the developed and (under)developing worlds

and an assortment of supporting international platforms such as the International Association of Multicultural Discourses, the biannual International Conference on Multicultural Discourses, the Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies book series and the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* that house them.

In the next decade, CDS ought to strive as its goals for the consolidation of the existing global network of CDS whose model of research continues to guide and sustain collaboration and innovation, the expansion of a sizeable and influential body of work to change the existing order of CS (by advancement of current projects and creation of new projects on still other cultural discourses the world over and in different socio-economic domains) and the rejuvenation and elevation of the non-Western community of CDS.

To achieve those goals, culturally conscious and critical scholars across the globe, especially from the non-Western world, must make efforts to increase international and intercultural communication, mutual learning and collaboration (e.g. between Asian, African, Latin American and any other culturally conscious communities); to explore and develop cultural systems of research by tapping into native realities, experiences and traditions; to search for ways of empowering discourses of especially marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged communities and to continue to confront and undermine discourses of cultural domination or of any kind threatening human survival.

Fortunately, we now have easy access to the internet and new media, an association (International Association of Multicultural Discourses), a biannual forum (international Conference on Multicultural Discourses), a periodical (*Journal of Multicultural Discourses*), a book series (Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies Series) and a website (shixu.hznu.edu.cn) at our disposal, as well as a guidebook (*The Handbook of Cultural Discourse Studies*) in the making. These platforms and channels of communication make continued international dialogue and cooperation possible (Shi-xu, 2016).

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of the chapter was published in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* edited by Michael Handford and James Paul Gee (Routledge, 2023).
- 2 www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 3 www.credit-suisse.com/media/assets/corporate/docs/about-us/research/publications/global-wealth-report-2022-en.pdf, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 4 www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1, accessed March 26, 2023.
- 5 <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>, accessed March 26, 2023.

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