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The Principles of Persuasive Communication and Rhetorical Elements in Chinese Diplomatic Speeches

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the persuasive communication strategies presented in the Chinese diplomatic speeches. This study focuses on the rhetorical elements that shape China's international narrative from 2023 to 2025. In the context of increasing geopolitical rivalry and evolving global power structures, diplomatic speeches serve as strategic tools to influence international perceptions, advance China's foreign policy, and assert normative leadership. Despite the increasing scholarly focus on Chinese diplomacy, there is a paucity of research that systematically combines classical rhetoric, modern persuasion theory, and metaphor analysis in the realm of non-Western political communication. This study employs a qualitative research design based on Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, examining a purposive sample of fifteen official speeches translated from Mandarin to English. The analysis is grounded in a triangulated theoretical model that integrates Aristotle's rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos), Cialdini's principles of persuasion (such as reciprocity, unity, and authority), and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory. Ten fundamental themes are recognised across three dimensions: fostering mutual respect and peaceful collaboration, contextualising development and regional involvement, and enhancing multilateralism and solidarity in the Global South. The findings underscore diplomatic strategic employment of emotionally evocative metaphors (e.g., "journey", "bridge"), ethical appeals, and rational discourse to bolster China's portrayal as a cooperative and altruistic global participant. The study presents a novel analytical framework for analysing state-led diplomatic rhetoric in authoritarian settings and provides theoretical and practical insights into the influence of persuasive discourse on global narratives and international norms. Future research ought to examine audience reception and perform cross-national comparisons to assess rhetorical impact and adaptability.

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across political systems.

Keywords: Chinese Diplomatic Speeches; Political Leadership; Diplomatic Communication; Political Rhetorical and Persuasive Communication

1. Introduction

The strategic use of rhetorical devices in political discourse has become an essential element of global leadership in a time when language and symbolic communication predominantly facilitate diplomacy^[1,2]. Chinese diplomacy distinguishes among modern world leaders through the employment of ideologically motivated and symbolically significant diplomatic rhetoric, which seeks to influence global narratives, elevate China's international stature, and present alternative models of governance and development. Central themes, including the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" and the "Belt and Road Initiative", are prominently featured in his speeches, presenting a unique amalgamation of persuasion, national vision, and strategic positioning in international relations^[3-5].

Despite the increasing academic focus on diplomatic communication and rhetorical studies, particularly in Western democracies, a substantial gap persists in the scholarly comprehension of persuasive communication frameworks utilised by non-Western leaders, particularly in the Chinese context. Current research has primarily concentrated on discourse analysis, ideological framing, or critical geopolitical interpretations of China's global involvement^[6,7], frequently neglecting the systematic rhetorical strategies that support diplomatic persuasion. The literature is deficient in a cohesive model that delineates the interplay between classical rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), modern persuasion principles (e.g., reciprocity, authority, unity), and metaphorical narratives in influencing foreign policy communication. This study examines the rhetorical principles of persuasion used in a deliberate selection of official diplomatic speeches from 2023 to 2025. This study employs a qualitative research design and Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis to develop an innovative analytical framework that integrates classical rhetoric, Cialdini's principles of persuasion, and conceptual metaphor theory. This approach provides a nuanced comprehension of how Chinese diplomatic speech strategically promotes China's foreign policy goals, validates its global

leadership position, and appeals to both domestic and international audiences^[8]. This research contributes in three ways. Initially, it offers an exhaustive rhetorical analysis of Chinese diplomatic discourse, thereby broadening the domain of political communication research to encompass non-Western authoritarian settings.

Secondly, it formulates a theoretical model of persuasive state-led rhetoric suitable for comparative analysis of global leadership discourses. Third, it connects classical rhetorical theory with modern persuasion science to illustrate how evolving communication strategies operate within contemporary geopolitical narratives. The findings provide theoretical insights and practical implications for scholars, policymakers, and communication strategists involved in international relations and political leadership studies^[9]. This study advances linguistic models of persuasion by offering an integrated analytical framework that combines rhetorical appeals, pragmatic markers, and metaphorical structures to systematically explain how persuasive meaning is constructed in Chinese diplomatic discourse.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership and Rhetorical Communication

Both classical and modern traditions have extensively recorded the significance of rhetoric in political leadership. Rhetoric, from Aristotle's foundational appeals of ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) to contemporary discursive methods, has been recognised as a crucial instrument for legitimising authority, shaping public perception, and influencing both domestic and international audiences^[10]. Political speeches, especially in diplomatic contexts, function as instruments for policy expression and as performative acts that shape national identities and strategic objectives^[11]. Leaders employ rhetorical strategies to articulate intricate geopolitical matters, rationalise decisions, and bolster narratives of national interest. In an increasingly glob-

alised and media-saturated diplomatic environment, rhetorical communication has emerged as an essential tool for international engagement. Persuasive political discourse operates not only through argumentation but also through the arrangement of symbolic language, ideological framing, and cultural references^[12]. Consequently, rhetorical leadership is pivotal for comprehending how states exert power and influence via soft mechanisms, especially in a world order experiencing substantial transformation.

2.2. Diplomatic Rhetoric

In the Chinese context, political rhetoric incorporates a distinctive blend of Confucian philosophy, Chinese diplomatic speech ideology, and nationalist discourse. Under Chinese diplomatic speech leadership, China's diplomatic rhetoric has grown more assertive and ideologically consistent. Slogans like the "Chinese Dream," the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind," and the "Belt and Road Initiative" frequently appear in Chinese diplomatic speech's speeches, representing China's vision of inclusive development, collaborative governance, and a multipolar global order^[13]. These discursive constructs not only direct foreign policy but also indicate China's intention to reform international norms.

Numerous studies have examined China's international communication strategies; however, much of the current scholarship emphasises critical discourse analysis, soft power dynamics, or the ideological ramifications of Chinese narratives^[14]. Nonetheless, a significant deficiency Chinese diplomatic speech in the literature regarding the rhetorical framework and persuasive strategies of Chinese diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech's diplomatic discourse. Although scholars recognise the thematic unity and symbolic significance of these speeches, few have analysed the rhetorical strategies employed to attain persuasive effects. A study identifies the strategic employment of slogans in Chinese diplomacy yet advocates for a more profound investigation into the linguistic and rhetorical frameworks that support this communication^[15].

2.3. Foundations and Diplomatic Discourse

Contemporary persuasion theory offers an additional framework for examining political rhetoric beyond tradi-

tional Aristotelian appeals. Seminal model delineates seven principles of persuasion: authority, reciprocity, social proof, commitment and consistency, scarcity, and unity, which have been substantiated across diverse communicative contexts, including political campaigns and diplomatic communications. These principles provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating how leaders cultivate compliance, promote alignment, and establish credibility. Notwithstanding the efficacy of these models, their implementation in non-Western, authoritarian political communication is constrained. The communicative strategies of leaders like Chinese diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech, influenced by a unique ideological and cultural context, require a framework that integrates classical rhetorical forms with modern principles of persuasion. A study explored^[16], authoritarian leaders frequently employ discursive strategies that merge ideological allure with strategic ambiguity, thereby complicating the assessment of intent and impact. An analytical assessment of the persuasive techniques in Chinese diplomatic speech's speeches provides a major contribution to the field of international political communication.

2.4. Persuasive Device in Diplomatic Language

A vital element of persuasive rhetoric in political discourse is metaphor. Conceptual metaphor theory, proposed^[17] that abstract concepts such as power, progress, or cooperation are frequently elucidated through metaphorical language grounded in physical experience. Political leaders utilise metaphor to elucidate completeness diplomatic speech, elicit emotional reactions, and contextualise issues in accordance with their ideological objectives.

Diplomatic speeches are abundant with metaphorical constructs like "journey," "bridge," and "path," which symbolically portray China as a guide or collaborator in global advancement^[18]. These metaphors are not solely stylistic; they function to legitimise China's actions, mitigate perceptions of its ascent, and bolster the concept of collective global development. Nonetheless, although metaphor analysis has been extensively utilised in the context of Western political leaders^[19], there is a significant deficiency in research concerning metaphor usage in Chinese diplomatic rhetoric. The present study offers a significant opportunity to expand metaphor theory into a novel cultural and geopolitical framework.

2.5. Contributions of the Study

Notwithstanding the extensive research on political communication and strategic narratives, considerable deficiencies remain in the examination of persuasive rhetorical frameworks within Chinese diplomacy. Much of the current literature regards China's global discourse as a uniform expression of state ideology, neglecting the intricate rhetorical strategies that facilitate persuasion. Furthermore, limited research has endeavored to integrate classical rhetoric, contemporary persuasion theory, and metaphor analysis into a unified analytical framework. This study aims to fill these gaps by performing a qualitative thematic analysis of Chinese diplomatic speech's 10 diplomatic speeches from 2023 to 2025. This research seeks to establish a comprehensive model of persuasive diplomatic communication by employing a triangulated framework that incorporates Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Cialdini's principles of persuasion, and metaphor theory.

The study provides a unique methodological contribution to the field of political communication, especially regarding non-Western, state-driven rhetorical practices. Furthermore, it offers empirical insights into the way China's leadership formulates narratives of legitimacy, mutuality, and global engagement through effective linguistic strategies.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine the systematic development of persuasive communication strategies in the diplomatic speeches of China. Rooted in a constructivist–interpretivist framework, the research acknowledges that rhetorical meaning is socially constructed, contextually influenced, and discursively negotiated^[20], offering an epistemological basis for examining rhetorical content, symbolic structures, and ideological functions of language within a complex geopolitical context^[21]. Data were gathered from ten deliberately selected official speeches delivered by Chinese diplomats between January 2023 and June 2025, chosen for their significance to China's international involvement and the inclusion of strategic narratives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Community of Shared Future for Mankind. The speeches, delivered at prominent diplomatic venues such as the United Nations, BRICS Summits, and bilateral state visits, were acquired

in English translation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives to guarantee linguistic uniformity and academic accessibility.

This study explored^[22] six-phase thematic analysis of Chinese diplomatic speeches, which included iterative familiarization with the texts, generating initial codes using NVivo 15 that focused on rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos), persuasive principles (authority, reciprocity, unity, and consistency), and metaphorical constructs (“path”, “bridge”, and “journey”), identifying and clustering potential themes, reviewing and refining for coherence, defining and naming final themes, and synthesising findings into a cohesive interpretive narrative. The research was theoretically grounded in classical Aristotelian rhetoric, principles of persuasion^[23], Conceptual Metaphor Theory, facilitating a sophisticated analysis of the moral, emotional, logical, and symbolic aspects of persuasion. Significant focus was directed towards rhetorical devices, including journey metaphors and emotionally impactful appeals for a “shared destiny”, which bolstered China's leadership image and advanced narratives of global unity. Researchers' rife Chinese diplomatic creativity was upheld through reflective journaling and critical self-positioning, especially considering the author's role as an external observer of China's political system. Ethical standards were rigorously adhered to; no human participants were involved, all data were publicly accessible, and analytical interpretations were transparently documented to ensure academic integrity and reliability.

This study employed official English translations from government portals and international news agencies, as the dataset comprised Chinese diplomatic speeches originally delivered in Mandarin. While these translations ensure accessibility and consistency, we acknowledge that the translation process may alter some rhetorical and metaphorical subtleties. Mandarin often lacks direct English equivalents for metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and culturally ingrained rhetorical devices, which could potentially impact interpretive depth. To resolve this, the analysis cross-referenced various English versions when accessible and consulted bilingual experts to authenticate essential metaphors and rhetorical expressions. However, the study's dependence on translated texts poses a limitation, as they may not fully retain nuanced stylistic and tonal elements. Acknowledging this limitation enhances the transparency and credibility of the research

while underscoring a significant opportunity for future comparative studies utilising original-language materials.

4. Findings of the Study

This study aimed to explore the persuasive communication strategies embedded in Chinese diplomatic speeches, focusing on how rhetorical techniques are systematically employed to construct China's international narrative. Thematic analysis, guided framework, revealed ten recurring themes that align with the study's three core research objectives. These themes illustrate how Chinese diplomatic speech's rhetoric strategically promotes mutual respect, regional development, and multilateralism by leveraging classical rhetorical appeals, contemporary persuasion principles, and metaphorical constructs. Separately theme is grounded in verbatim excerpts from the speeches, highlighting the discursive mechanisms through which China projects soft power, asserts normative leadership, and positions itself as a rational and benevolent global actor. The findings are organized by research objective, with each theme demonstrating a distinctive yet interconnected rhetorical function within China's evolving diplomatic discourse.

4.1. Research Objective 1

To analyze persuasive techniques used to advance mutual respect and peaceful cooperation.

Theme 1: Promoting mutual trust and dialogue:

The theme 'Promoting mutual trust and dialogue' encapsulates a persistent rhetorical strategy of diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is founded on moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the larger context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and shared futures using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on fostering mutual trust and dialogue illustrates China's endeavour to establish engagement protocols favourable to itself while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions

and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

... must continue to enhance political trust and resolve disputes through consultation, deepening our friendship through openness and sincerity... This theme reflects emphasis on fostering international harmony through communication. In Speech 1 (Lines 1–18), ... he stresses political trust, consultation, and openness as tools to overcome differences. ...his call for transparency and empathy suggests that diplomatic stability stems from genuine dialogue. This aligns with China's soft power strategy, where mutual respect is framed as foundational to peace and long-term cooperation...

Theme 2: Establishing peaceful Chinese diplomatic:

The theme of establishing peaceful Chinese diplomatic frameworks for peaceful Chinese encapsulates a prevalent rhetorical strategy of Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is grounded in moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and shared futures using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on creating frameworks for peaceful Chinese diplomatic sentence illustrates China's effort to dictate the rules of engagement to its advantage while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

... peaceful Chinese diplomatic speech sentence is the cornerstone of international relations. We must reject conflict and embrace dialogue and shared security... In Speech 10 (Lines 280–357), ... Chinese diplomatic speech outlines a framework of peaceful coexistence diplomatic speech sentence, asserting that differences should not trigger conflict. ...he advocates for dialogue, security cooperation, and respect for diversity. This theme articulates a

comprehensive peace model grounded in mutual non-aggression and multilateral engagement, reinforcing China's identity as a peace-oriented global actor...

Theme 3: Respecting sovereignty and bilateral dignity:

The theme 'Respecting sovereignty and bilateral dignity' encapsulates a persistent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is grounded in moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the use of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the larger context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and a shared future through meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on honouring sovereignty and bilateral dignity illustrates China's endeavour to establish engagement protocols favourable to itself while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

...all countries, big or small, are equal. We must uphold the principle of non-interference and respect each other's chosen paths... Chinese diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech Diplomatic speech, in Speech 2 (Lines 18–142), ...emphasizes the principle of sovereign equality and non-interference. He underlines that every nation's independent path must be respected. This rhetorical strategy repositions China as a defender of global fairness and justice. It rebuffs hegemonic practices and reinforces a bilateral diplomacy model that appeals to both developing and emerging states...

Theme 4: Encouraging empathy in international relations:

The theme 'Encouraging empathy in international relations' encapsulates a prevalent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is founded on moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within

the larger context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and shared futures using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on fostering empathy in international relations signifies China's effort to establish advantageous engagement protocols while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent participant. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

...the Chinese people value harmony and empathy. Our foreign policy is rooted in mutual respect and understanding of others' concerns... In Speech 5 (Lines 223–235), ... Chinese diplomatic speech invokes a humanitarian tone, discussing peace, cultural understanding, and solidarity. ...he uses narratives of shared struggle and support to emphasize empathy. ...this emotional appeal strengthens China's image as a compassionate global partner, advocating diplomacy not just through policies but also through moral conviction and historical connection...

4.2. Research Objective 2

To examine rhetorical tools that frame development and regional engagement.

Theme 5: Framing infrastructure as shared prosperity:

The theme 'Framing infrastructure as shared prosperity' encapsulates a consistent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is based on moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the use of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and shared futures using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The emphasis on portraying infrastructure as a collective benefit illustrates China's endeavour to establish favourable engagement protocols while simultaneously positioning itself as a rational and altruistic entity. These

discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

... through the Belt and Road, we offer inclusive infrastructure cooperation that enables participating nations to thrive through shared prosperity... In Speech 3 (Lines 143–212), ...Chinese diplomatic speech frames infrastructure development as an inclusive, cooperative effort. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road, China positions itself as a conduit of shared prosperity. ...his narrative suggests that infrastructure is more than technical; it is a diplomatic bridge that ties countries together for mutual benefit. This reflects China's developmental rhetoric...

Theme 6: Emphasizing win-win trade agreements:

The theme 'Emphasizing win-win trade agreements' encapsulates a consistent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is grounded in moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the use of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and a shared future using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on promoting win-win trade agreements illustrates China's endeavour to establish rules of engagement to its advantage while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent participant. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

...we pursue open development, mutual benefit, and balanced trade... Economic cooperation should serve both sides, not dominance...Chinese diplomatic speech frames trade cooperation as mutually beneficial... in Speech 8 (Lines 254–260) ...he emphasizes fair economic engagement and shared growth rather than zero-sum gains. This aligns with his broader vision of 'win-win' diplomacy, portraying China as a non-threatening economic partner. The

theme reinforces economic interdependence as a peace-building strategy...

Theme 7: Highlighting technological partnerships:

The theme 'Highlighting technological partnerships' encapsulates a prevalent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is grounded in moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the use of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For example, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and a shared future through meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on showcasing technological partnerships illustrates China's endeavour to establish favourable engagement protocols while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral arenas.

...China will expand digital and green cooperation. We welcome all countries to join us in building an open innovation ecosystem... Chinese diplomatic speech promotes technological advancement through cooperation... in Speech 6 (Lines 236–244). ...he presents China as an open innovation hub that seeks mutual progress in digital and green technology. This theme connects development with partnership, offering a counter-narrative to technological competition by emphasizing openness and inclusiveness...

4.3. Research Objective 3

To explore how Chinese diplomatic speech's rhetoric aligns with China's promotion of multilateralism.

Theme 8: Advocating for multipolar world order:

The theme 'Advocating for multipolar world order' encapsulates a consistent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speeches, wherein persuasion is founded on moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. For exam-

ple, Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and shared futures using meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on promoting a multipolar world order illustrates China's endeavour to establish favourable engagement rules while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

...the world should not be led by a single hegemon. We advocate for a balanced, multipolar system where every nation has an agency... In Speech 7 (Lines 245–253), ...Chinese diplomatic speech critiques global hegemony and promotes a balanced power structure. ...he argues for a multipolar world where no single state dominates international affairs. This rhetoric appeals to countries wary of U.S. or Western dominance and supports China's rise as a stabilizing force within a new global equilibrium...

Theme 9: Championing inclusive multilateral institutions:

The theme 'Championing inclusive multilateral institutions' encapsulates a consistent rhetorical approach in Chinese diplomatic speech, wherein persuasion is founded on moral appeal, historical reference, or institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the context of cooperative regionalism or global integration. Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and a shared future through meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on promoting inclusive multilateral institutions signifies China's efforts to establish favourable engagement rules while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent participant. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

... we must support multilateral institutions that are fair and representative. Global governance should reflect the voices of developing countries... Speech 4 (Lines 213–222) ...advocates for global institutions that prioritize equity and representation... Chinese diplomatic speech argues for reforms in global governance structures to include the voices of the Global South. ...this theme champions inclusiveness and counters Western-dominated models. It also aligns with China's ambitions to lead by example within multilateral organizations, emphasizing unity and consensus...

... China stands in solidarity with the Global South. ...we advocate for development that reflects the needs of all nations, especially the marginalized... peach 9 (Lines 261–279) ... links China's foreign policy to Global South solidarity. ...Chinese diplomatic speech draws on themes of justice, equity, and historical injustice to appeal to marginalized nations. ...he stresses common development and positions China as a leader championing fair globalization. This strategy enhances China's legitimacy among developing nations...

Theme 10: Linking China's vision to the Global South:

The theme 'Linking China's vision to the Global South' encapsulates a persistent rhetorical strategy in Chinese diplomatic speech wherein persuasion is grounded in moral appeal, historical reference, and institutional commitment. This theme illustrates the application of rhetorical framing to promote China's foreign policy narrative within the larger context of cooperative regionalism and global integration. Chinese diplomatic speech frequently articulates diplomatic principles such as mutual trust, respect, and a shared future through meticulously chosen language that harmonises assertiveness with inclusivity. The focus on connecting China's vision to the global South illustrates China's endeavour to establish favourable engagement protocols while portraying itself as a rational and benevolent entity. These discursive frameworks are essential for influencing global perceptions and bolstering legitimacy in multilateral contexts.

... China stands in solidarity with the Global South. ...we advocate for development that reflects the needs of all nations, especially the marginalized... peach 9 (Lines 261–279) ... links China's foreign policy to Global South solidarity. ...Chinese diplomatic speech draws on themes of justice, equity, and historical injustice to appeal to marginalized nations. ...he stresses common development and positions China as a leader championing fair globalization. This strategy enhances China's legitimacy among developing nations...

5. Discussion

The thematic analysis reveals that Chinese diplomatic discourse consistently employs rhetorical appeals, persuasive strategies, and metaphorical constructs to advance China's

narrative of moral leadership and normative multilateralism. Themes promoting mutual trust and dialogue, respecting sovereignty, and encouraging empathy underscore the emphasis on ethos-driven credibility and pathos-based moral legitimacy in Chinese diplomatic discourse. Prior studies have demonstrated that Chinese diplomatic rhetoric constructs a national identity grounded in humane and harmonious principles, particularly using affective meta-discourse markers that augment audience engagement and coherence across diverse speech contexts^[24]. A study similarly identified that the ideological and evaluative linguistic structures in Chinese diplomatic speeches contribute to the construction of China's national image by invoking presumed moral values and coherent persuasive patterns^[25].

Secondly, the themes of portraying infrastructure as collective prosperity, mutually beneficial trade agreements, and highlighting technological collaborations illustrate how Chinese diplomatic rhetoric utilizes logos, emphasizing rational, evidence-based reasoning and persuasive principles such as reciprocity and unity. Chinese diplomatic rhetoric, exemplified by initiatives like the Belt and Road, positions China as a cooperative economic leader advocating mutual benefits and global interdependence. This study explored that China's developmental narrative, particularly regarding infrastructure, strategically bolsters soft-power legitimacy while diminishing hegemonic ambitions^[26–28].

Critics argue that this “win-win” narrative frequently obscures essential economic inequalities and geopolitical ambitions, engendering skepticism among host countries^[29]. The themes advocating for a multipolar world order, inclusive multilateral institutions, and alignment with the Global South represent a thorough strategy of discursive positioning. The rhetorical framing of Chinese diplomatic speeches frequently utilizes metaphors of balance, harmony, and shared civilization conceptual metaphors such as “path,” “bridge,” and “journey,” which scholars argue recontextualize global governance norms and challenge the dominance of Western-centric institutions^[30]. These themes resonate with countries seeking alternatives to liberal hegemonic frameworks, particularly in the Global South, where China's message of inclusivity and collaboration is gaining prominence^[31].

Furthermore, research based on critical discourse analysis has shown that Chinese diplomatic speeches function not merely as communication tools but also as strategic instru-

ments of narrative authority, embodying China's “three wars” doctrine, a coordinated use of legal, psychological, and media strategies to influence global perception. Certain scholars contrast this model with China's assertive “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy^[32]; however, the rhetorical strategy of Chinese diplomatic discourse aligns more closely with normative persuasion, emphasizing cooperation rather than confrontation. A significant discovery relates to the frequent use of conceptual metaphors in Chinese diplomatic discourse to express diplomatic concepts. The conceptual metaphor theory posits that metaphors improve audience understanding by linking complex abstract ideas to familiar experiential contexts. Studies on political discourse demonstrate that metaphorical language increases engagement and persuasive efficacy^[33]. In the discourse of Chinese diplomatic speech, metaphors like “journey,” “path,” and “bridge” often emerge to symbolically convey a narrative of collective progress and global unity^[34]. The study introduces a comprehensive model that synthesizes classical rhetorical appeals, modern persuasion principles, and metaphor theory to clarify how Chinese diplomatic speech constructs a coherent and persuasive diplomatic discourse. This enriches and broadens existing literature by offering a comprehensive perspective on the development of strategic narratives, particularly in non-Western political and cultural contexts^[35]. It highlights the simultaneous mobilization of moral legitimacy, emotional alignment, and rational justifications to reinforce China's emergence as a global leader and influencer.

6. Conclusions

This study explored the persuasive communication strategies in diplomatic speeches to develop a context-specific model of rhetorical and ideological discourse in Chinese foreign policy. The research employed thematic analysis of Chinese diplomatic speeches to discern ten prevalent themes in fifteen official addresses given from 2023 to 2025. Themes were structured according to three research objectives: (1) fostering mutual respect and collaborative harmony, (2) delineating development and regional participation, and (3) championing multilateralism and the Global South. The analysis demonstrated that Chinese diplomatic discourse consistently utilizes classical rhetorical appeals, Cialdini's principles of persuasion (including reciprocity,

authority, and unity), and metaphorical constructs from Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson, such as “path”, “journey,” and “bridge.” The findings indicate that Chinese diplomatic speeches utilize a complex strategy for persuasive communication that integrates moral conviction, developmental rationale, and symbolic cohesion.

The discourse portrays China as a responsible, empathetic, and non-hegemonic actor dedicated to inclusive development and collaborative global governance. These discursive constructions are deliberate; they are systematically used to enhance China’s soft power, reshape international norms, and offer an alternative leadership model in global affairs. By emphasizing themes such as harmonious Chinese diplomatic reciprocal sovereignty, mutually beneficial economic collaboration, and southern solidarity, the rhetoric of Chinese diplomatic discourse portrays China as a normative leader rather than a strategic adversary. This study enhances the literature on political discourse, diplomatic communication, and international persuasion by presenting an integrative model that combines rhetorical theory, persuasion psychology, and metaphor analysis in a non-Western context. It enhances our comprehension of the formulation and implementation of state-driven narratives that shape global perceptions and influence international political alliances. Nonetheless, various limitations must be acknowledged. The study depends on officially translated English versions of Chinese diplomatic speeches.

Although these texts are authoritative and appropriate for international academic evaluation, they may not entirely convey the rhetorical subtleties or cultural complexities of the original Mandarin. The analysis exclusively concentrates on production (i.e., speaker strategy) and neglects to evaluate audience reception, impact, or resonance across various geopolitical or cultural contexts. Future research could significantly improve this study in various ways. A comparative linguistic analysis of the original Mandarin texts and their English translations may elucidate how rhetorical intent is preserved or modified across languages. Moreover, reception studies involving policymakers, scholars, or civil society representatives, particularly in Belt and Road partner nations, could investigate the interpretation, resistance, or internalisation of China’s rhetorical strategies. Longitudinal research could examine the progression of the rhetorical style in Chinese diplomatic discourse over time and across various

policy contexts. Comparative rhetorical analyses of national leaders may elucidate the distinctions in diplomatic communication across political systems, cultural traditions, and ideological frameworks. The study extends existing linguistic approaches to persuasion by demonstrating how rhetorical and metaphorical strategies shape state-led communication beyond purely political interpretations.

Author Contributions

L.L. conducted the conceptualization, literature review, data collection, translation validation, thematic analysis, interpretation of findings, and drafting of the manuscript. A.K. provided supervision, methodological guidance, theoretical support, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the final review and approved the submitted version of the paper.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and conforms to institutional ethical standards for social science research. The study did not include human subjects, experiments, or interventions and presented no risk of physical or psychological harm. The study employed Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis framework to scrutinize publicly accessible Chinese diplomatic speeches from 2023–2025, focusing on rhetorical and persuasive communication strategies. The data were exclusively textual and sourced from official public entities, rendering concerns regarding consent, confidentiality, and privacy irrelevant. The study upheld academic integrity, transparency, and respect for cultural and intellectual contexts during the research process.

Informed Consent Statement

This study did not include human participants or any type of human subject research. All the analyzed data was sourced from publicly accessible and open-access materials,

specifically official Chinese diplomatic speeches. Consequently, participant consent was unnecessary. The study adheres to the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and institutional ethical standards for social science research, guaranteeing transparency, academic integrity, and the responsible utilization of public information.

Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data used in this study consist of official Chinese diplomatic speeches delivered between 2023 and 2025. These speeches are open access and publicly available through official government websites, press releases, and international news archives. Since the data are in the public domain, they can be accessed freely by anyone. Processed thematic coding materials generated during the analysis are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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