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ABSTRACT

In order to discover whether there were any differences in negative attitude intensity between the Soviets and Chinese toward United States involvement in the Vietnam war, the Soviet and Chinese English language media broadcasts concerning United States war participation were subjected to a content analysis. The focus of the study was on two contrasting periods of the war: during its height in 1968 and during 1973, a year of unprecedented change in relations between the United States and China. Contents of broadcasts on 80 days, 20 each from the first and last quarters of the two years, were coded and analyzed. Results showed that the intensity of negative assertions was greater during 1968 and that those from China were more intense. While both countries relied on news events as sources, Russian propaganda used argumentative logic as well as emotional appeals, and Chinese propaganda relied on a more vehement, emotional name-calling tactic. (Tables of findings are included.) (JM)

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AN ANALYSIS OF SOVIET AND CHINESE MEDIA BROADCASTS
CONCERNING U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN
THE VIETNAM WAR

A Paper Presented
to the
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at the
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AN ANALYSIS OF SOVIET AND CHINESE MEDIA BROADCASTS
CONCERNING U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN
THE VIETNAM WAR

Undoubtedly, the Vietnam War will be regarded by future historians as another international ideological confrontation between Communism and the Free World. Clearly, the war involved more parties than the North and South Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese were given financial and weapon support from both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China while the South Vietnamese were given total military commitments from the United States.

Although the Soviets and the Chinese displayed negative attitudes toward U.S. participation in the Vietnamese problem throughout the conflict, by the end of the war there seemed to be a shift in intensity of negativeness. President Nixon's trip to Peking and Moscow before the resolution of the conflict support this contention.

It is the thesis of this paper that historians should examine written communications of the Soviets and Chinese to determine if there were any clues of a less negative posture toward American involvement in the Vietnam War between these major communist powers. In short, the research reported here was directed to one basic question: Were there any differences

in negative attitude intensity between the Soviets and the Chinese toward U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War? To answer this query, the Soviet and Chinese English language media broadcasts concerning U.S. participation in the war were subjected to a content analysis.

Hypothesis

The major hypothesis investigated by this study was that in monitored English language media broadcasts from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, there is a significant difference in the intensity of the negative assertions made about the American involvement in Vietnam between the periods: 1968, the height of the conflict (HC); and 1973, the resolution period culminating with the signing of the peace agreement (RP). Further, that the degree of negativeness of China is the greater of the two.

To determine what differences, if any, occur, five subsidiary hypotheses about the intensity of negative assertions were tested:

1. There is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity in the English broadcasts from the Soviet Union and China between periods HC and RP, with the assertions being more negative in period HC;
2. There is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity in the English broadcasts

between those of the Soviet Union and of China during period HC, with those of China being more negative;

3. There is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity in the English broadcasts between those of the Soviet Union and of China during period RP, with those of China being more negative;
4. There is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity in the English broadcasts from the Soviet Union between periods HC and RP, with assertions being more negative in period HC;
5. There is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity in the English broadcasts from China between periods HC and RP, with assertions being more negative in period HC.

Method

Transcripts of the Soviet Union and Chinese broadcasts were examined in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report. The media sources were: Radio Moscow, TASS, Radio Peking, and NCNA.

The focus of this study was during two contrasting periods of the war, during its height in 1968 and during 1973, a year of unprecedented change in United States and China

relations and the end of the war. In order to determine if there was any change from the beginning to the end of a specific year in the study, samples were selected from the first and last quarters of each period. Twenty dates were selected randomly from each of the sample periods to comprise a total sample of 80 days.

The sample was divided for coding among three groups of three coders each. The coders were instructed to follow an abbreviated version of the rules for coding and quantifying data as described by Osgood, Saporta and Nunnally.¹

Initially, all broadcasts were translated into the following common thematic structures:

1. Attitude Object/Verbal Connector/Common-meaning Term

2. Attitude Object/Verbal Connector/Attitude Object₂

Attitude Objects are defined as symbols which there could be differences of opinion as to evaluative meaning (for example, Nixon, Ruling Circles, Reactionary Group). These Attitude Objects are related to the variables being investigated:

1. Common-meaning Terms, i.e., verbal symbols in which there is common agreement (liar, criminal, stupid, massacre).

2. Attitude Objects₂, i.e., symbols about which there could be differences of opinion, when placed in the final position of the assertion. For example: Soviet Union/threatens/United States.

In this study, it was found that second attitude objects occurred so infrequently, that only an analysis of the common-meaning terms were made. Perhaps further research is indicated to determine if this is a common characteristic of this type of propaganda.

Scores were computed on the basis of values assigned to Verbal Connectors and Common-meaning Terms. These values ranged from +3 to -3, depending on their direction and intensity. Finally, the computation of values for each Attitude Object was made by dividing the sum of the products by $3N$, N being the number of assertions for each broadcast.

Because this method first reduces a sentence into its component parts and it specifies which elements of the sentence are to be scored, the evaluative assertion analysis can be used with a high degree of reliability.² To further insure coder reliability, the researchers quantified the assertions as a group and decisions regarding the scoring of Verbal Connectors and Common-meaning Terms were reached by group consensus.

For purposes of analysis, frequency of assertions and broadcasts were totaled and mean scores were determined for each of the two countries in both time periods. To determine if significant differences existed between the means, t tests were applied.

The analysis of nearly 3,800 assertions strongly supports the general hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the intensity of negative assertions made about the American involvement in Vietnam between the two periods under study and that the degree of negativity of China was the greater of the two.

Using the t test, significance was reached for four of the five hypotheses. The results are shown in Tables 1-5.

The first hypothesis, regarding negative assertion intensity from both countries between periods HC and RP, was supported at the .05 level. Hypotheses 2 and 3, which were concerned with negative assertion intensity between those of the Soviet Union and of China during each of the two periods, were found significant at the .001 level. The fourth hypothesis, that there is a significant difference in negative assertion intensity from the Soviet Union between the two periods was significant, also, at the .001 level, but the fifth, regarding China between the two periods was not supported.

Discussion

The study indicates that the intensity of negative assertions was greater during 1968, and that those from China were more intense. Interestingly, the comparison of China's assertion intensity in 1968 and 1973 showed only a slight change, while those from the Soviet Union were significantly weaker.

TABLE 1
 COMBINED SOVIET-CHINESE NEGATIVE ASSERTION INTENSITY
 BETWEEN PERIODS HC AND RP

	HC	RP
Assertions	1198	1589
Broadcasts	126	192
Mean	1.90	1.77

t value = 2.17 (significant at .05 level)

TABLE 2
 SOVIET-CHINESE NEGATIVE ASSERTION INTENSITY
 DURING PERIOD HC

	Soviet Union	China
Assertions	682	516
Broadcasts	86	40
Mean	1.69	2.18

t value = 7.78 (significant at .001 level)

TABLE 3
SOVIET-CHINESE NEGATIVE ASSERTION INTENSITY
DURING PERIOD RP

	Soviet Union	China
Assertions	848	741
Broadcasts	118	74
Mean	1.55	2.02

t value = 5.04 (significant at .001 level)

TABLE 4
SOVIET NEGATIVE ASSERTION INTENSITY
BETWEEN PERIODS HC AND RP

	HC	RP
Assertions	682	848
Broadcasts	86	118
Mean	1.69	1.55

t value = 2.38 (significant at .05 level)

TABLE 5
CHINESE NEGATIVE ASSERTION INTENSITY
BETWEEN PERIODS HC AND RP

	HC	RP
Assertions	516	741
Broadcasts	40	74
Mean	2.18	2.02

t value = 1.42 (NSD)

While both countries displayed definite negative attitudes toward American involvement in the Vietnam War throughout the period under study, there was a puzzling shift toward more but weaker negative assertions in 1973. As shown in Table 4, for example, the Soviet Union has 682 total media assertions in 1968 with a mean negative score of -1.69, but in 1973, the number of assertions increased to 848 with the mean negative score becoming less negative at -1.55.

Communist China, while consistently broadcasting considerably fewer but stronger negative assertions than the Soviet Union, increased the number from 516 to 741. The mean negative score varied from -2.18 to -2.02. See Table 5.

A comparison of the recurring assertions broadcast from both countries reveals similarity of the themes. Table 6 shows the most frequent recurring themes in rank order for both countries.

Although the percentages of recurrence are different, the greatest use is made of such themes as "U.S. Is Imperialist" and "U.S. Are Aggressors" by both countries. Interestingly, however, the Russian and Chinese assertion strategies are markedly different. An obvious difference is the language usage in the Chinese assertions, such as the inclusion of "imperialists" as part of the first attitude object. Also, the Chinese assertions label the United States as being "Neo-Colonialist" and "Paper Tigers." The Russian assertions are centered around events

TABLE 6
 RECURRING ASSERTIONS: SOVIET UNION
 AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Assertions	Percentage
<u>Soviet Union</u>	
U.S./Are/Aggressors	7.2
U.S./Escalates/War, Bombing	5.9
U.S./Is/Imperialist	4.6
Americans/Suffer/Defeat	3.5
Washington/Delays/Peace Talks	2.3
U.S./Commits/Crimes	2.1
Other	74.4
Total	100.0
<u>People's Republic of China</u>	
U.S./Is/Imperialist	15.4
U.S. Imperialists/Are/Aggressors	15.1
U.S. Imperialists/Suffer/Defeat	5.8
U.S. Imperialists/Are/Neo-Colonialists	2.3
U.S. Imperialists/Commit/Crimes	1.9
U.S. Imperialists/Are/Paper Tigers	.7
Other	41.2
Total	100.0

such as "escalation of war and bombing" and "delaying peace talks."

Perhaps the large percentage evidenced in the "other" categories can be explained by the nature of propaganda. That is, the recurring assertions would, in most cases, be found within the context of news content. Understandably, then, it would take considerably more to make the propagandistic assertions less obvious.

The primary sources for Russian propaganda messages were news events, i.e., Nixon policy speeches, student riots, statesmen speeches, peace talks, re-escalation of war and bombing. The Russians attempted to attack the United States' position in Vietnam with both argumentative logic as well as emotional appeals. While still relying on news as a source, the Communist Chinese, however, relied on a more vehement name-calling tactic that was predominantly emotional. This difference in propaganda appeals accounts for the more intensive rating of their negative assertions.

This paper has demonstrated that the evaluative assertion analysis technique may be a useful research tool in mass communication. Instead of relying on qualitative judgements, this method enables the researcher to quantify data and thereby reach more precise conclusions. Further, this method could be a valuable tool for the historian and political scientist, particularly in making judgements about expressed attitudes between major world powers because conjecture and interpretation bias would be greatly reduced.

FOOTNOTES

¹ C. E. Osgood, Sol Saporta, and Jum C. Nunnally, "Evaluative Assertion Analysis," Littera, Vol. 3, 1956, 47-102. For a brief description of the evaluative assertion analysis technique, see Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 124-126.

² Holsti, Content Analysis, p. 126.