

**TRANSLATION OF CHINESE POLITICAL  
DISCOURSE FOR INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION: A DIPLOMATIC  
NARRATIVE ACCOUNT**

**XU DONG**

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

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**TRANSLATION OF CHINESE POLITICAL  
DISCOURSE FOR INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION: A DIPLOMATIC  
NARRATIVE ACCOUNT**

by

**XU DONG**

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“As we strive to forge our paths, we must be willing to tread the lonely roads that others have left untraveled.”—Anon

This statement distils the essence of my PhD journey—an odyssey of solitude, discovery, and self-reliance that has profoundly shaped me. Before embarking on my PhD journey in 2021, I spent nearly seven years working in a non-research capacity at a university, a role that, immersed in a stable and respected academic environment, deepened my resolve to pursue further education and fulfil my scholarly aspirations.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text
CST	Chinese Source Text
ETT	English Target Text
CPC	Communist Party of China
PRC	People's Republic of China

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**TERJEMAHAN WACANA POLITIK CINA BAGI KOMUNIKASI  
ANTARABANGSA: SATU PENERANGAN NARATIF DIPLOMATIK**

**ABSTRAK**

Peningkatan penglibatan global dan kekuatan nasional China yang semakin bertambah telah meningkatkan minat antarabangsa terhadap negara tersebut, sekaligus menekankan kepentingan membina imej antarabangsa China. Kunci kepada ini adalah terjemahan wacana politik China, yang memainkan peranan penting dalam komunikasi antarabangsa dan dalam menggambarkan naratif serta budaya China. Buku *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* merupakan elemen utama dalam konteks ini, mencerminkan ideologi sosialisme dengan ciri-ciri China pada era baharu, serta mewakili kesusasteraan Marxis abad ke-21 yang signifikan dan wacana politik penting China. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti ciri-ciri naratif teras dalam terjemahan wacana politik, menerangkan strategi pemingkaian dalam terjemahan, menentukan kaedah terjemahan yang digunakan oleh penterjemah, dan menganalisis paradigma naratif dalam menilai terjemahan wacana politik China. Teori naratif Baker (2018) digunakan bagi menyokong kajian ini, menekankan peranan aktif penterjemah dalam membina naratif yang bukan sahaja mencerminkan tetapi juga membentuk realiti. Menggunakan *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* sebagai korpus, kajian ini menggunakan analisis tekstual dari perspektif teori naratif. Penemuan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa integrasi teori naratif dengan terjemahan wacana politik memperkayakan bidang naratologi dan menyediakan pandangan teori serta metodologi baharu untuk penyelidikan terjemahan wacana politik. Pendekatan ini menawarkan laluan baharu untuk mencapai misi terjemahan yang berkesan. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa teori naratif adalah penting untuk menganalisis dan

membimbing terjemahan wacana politik, menunjukkan kesannya yang signifikan terhadap keberkesanan dan ketepatan komunikasi antarabangsa, serta membuka jalan bagi penerokaan ilmiah lanjut dalam bidang ini.



**TRANSLATION OF CHINESE POLITICAL DISCOURSE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION: A DIPLOMATIC NARRATIVE  
ACCOUNT**

**ABSTRACT**

The increasing global engagement and rising comprehensive national strength of China have heightened international interest in the country, emphasising the importance of constructing China's international image. Key to this is the translation of Chinese political discourse, which plays an essential role in international communication and in portraying China's narrative and culture. Central to this context is the book *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, reflecting the ideologies of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era and representing significant 21st-century Marxist literature and essential Chinese political discourse. The objectives of this study are to identify the core narrative features in political discourse translation, describe framing strategies in the translation, specify translation methods used by translators, and analyse the narrative paradigm in assessing Chinese political discourse translation. Baker's (2018) narrative theory supports this research, highlighting the translator's active role in constructing narratives that not only reflect but also shape reality. Using *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* as the corpus, this study applies textual analysis from a narrative theory perspective. The findings reveal that integrating narrative theory with political discourse translation enriches the field of narratology and provides new theoretical insights and methodologies for political discourse translation research. This approach offers novel pathways for achieving effective translation missions. This study concludes that narrative theory is essential for analysing and guiding political discourse translation, demonstrating its significant impact on the

effectiveness and accuracy of international communication, and paving the way for further scholarly exploration in this field.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter sets the stage for the research by detailing the study's background and explicitly defining the problem statement. It then proceeds to establish the scope of the study. Following this, the chapter lays out the research objectives and research questions, highlighting the significance of the study. It also clarifies key terms to ensure a shared understanding of the study's foundational concepts. Finally, the organisation of the study is sketched out before this chapter ends.

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

This section begins with an introduction to the global context and importance of China's international discourse, followed by detailed subsections that outline China's voice for international communication, and the integration of narrative theory and translation studies.

#### **1.2.1 Introduction to the Global Context**

In recent years, China has achieved sustained and vigorous economic growth, securing its position as the world's second-largest economy. This rapid ascent has not only drawn the attention of the public from many countries but also highlighted the importance of effectively communicating Chinese political discourse on the global stage (Costa, 2020; Khan et al., 2018). The development path of China is closely observed by both developing and developed countries, each seeking insights into China's theory and practice of reform, opening up, and governance (Wang & Liu, 2019).

As China's economic strength and international prominence continue to grow, so does the scope of its international communication. Effective international discourse is crucial for China to build a positive national image, enhance its international discursive power, and lay a solid foundation for its engagement in global governance (Danilovich, 2018). Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the vision for a community of shared future for mankind have progressively gained global recognition (Lee, 2022). Therefore, understanding and translating Chinese political discourse accurately and effectively is paramount for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation on the global stage (Akhter, 2022).

China's increasing participation in international affairs and its assumption of various international responsibilities have positioned it as a significant player on the global stage. These responsibilities include contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions, global economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, and commitments to international environmental agreements. These efforts demonstrate China's dedication to being a responsible global actor, enhancing its influence and reputation worldwide (Liang & Zhang, 2019).

According to Si (2020), "the key to whether a country's voice can be heard, its image can be built up, and its influence can be achieved lies in whether its discourse can be understood, listened to, and believed by the international community" (p. 54). Discourse is a powerful tool for shaping and reflecting meaning (Hannabuss, 1996), and it plays a critical role in constructing and communicating a nation's views or ideas (Chu, 2020). As China continues to increase its comprehensive national strength and global prominence, effectively communicating its story becomes increasingly critical. This includes spreading the voice and perspective of China, and presenting a truthful,

multifaceted, and comprehensive portrayal of China to the international community (Xi, 2017; Xi, 2021; Xinhua, 2021).

Moreover, in the context of globalisation, China recognises the importance of cultivating its international image and enhancing its political communication influence (Chang, 2023). The strategic communication of China's political discourse is not only about promoting its national interests but also about contributing to global governance by providing Chinese perspectives and solutions to global challenges (Yang & Pan, 2021). This research aims to uncover the essence of translating Chinese political discourse from a diplomatic narrative account, thereby supporting China's "going global" cultural strategy and enhancing its soft power on the international stage (Xu, 2021).

By integrating narrative theory with translation studies, this study seeks to provide a theoretical foundation for translating Chinese political discourse, thereby offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for effectively telling China's story on the global stage. This integration is crucial for developing a systematic and interdisciplinary framework for "out-going translation"—a practice deeply rooted in Chinese linguistic and cultural contexts. Such a framework will not only enhance the academic discipline of translation studies but also expand the applicability of narrative theory within the field of political discourse translation (Huang & Zhang, 2020; Liu, 2021; Zhang & Zheng, 2022), supporting China's efforts in global communication and international diplomacy (Li & Hu, 2020; Xie & Wang, 2018; Zhang & Fan, 2021).

### **1.2.2 China's International Discourse**

With the rapid ascent of China's economic strength and international prominence, there is a corresponding expansion in the scope of its international communication (Men, 2020). The development path of China has drawn the attention

of the public from many countries. Some developing countries hope to replicate the development experience of China, so as to benefit their own development path (Knoerich et al., 2021; Rayman, 2021; Xu & Carey, 2021). Meanwhile, the developed countries are also closely observing the theory and practice of China's reform, opening up and governance (Wang, 2021; Xu & Liu, 2022).

Discourse is both the means and the end of people's struggle, and it is power as people grant power through it (Foucault, 1998). Discourse is "an important means by which an individual or an organisation constructs and communicates its views or ideas" (Chu, 2020, p. 24). It is generally acknowledged that discourse conveys the attitude and stance of the speaker or the writer. A nation's self-representation to the global community is articulated through international discourse (Zhao, 2016). As China's comprehensive national strength and global prominence increase, moving closer to the forefront of the world stage (Liang & Zhang, 2019), Xi emphasises the critical imperative of effectively communicating China's story, spreading the voice of China and the perspective of China, and presenting a truthful, multifaceted, and comprehensive portrayal of China to the international community (Xinhua, 2021).

In the context of globalisation, China is increasingly recognising the significance of international image cultivating. With its active participation in international affairs and its assumption of international responsibilities, China is building up a good national image, striving for a greater international discursive power and laying the foundation for its engagement in global governance (Sun, 2021). These international responsibilities include contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions (Barelli, 2022; Mazuelos, 2023), participation in global economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (Lorenzo, 2021), and commitments to international environmental agreements like the Paris Agreement (Dong, 2020). Additionally,

China plays a significant role in global health governance, as evidenced by its contributions to the World Health Organization and its active involvement in combating global pandemics (Zhou et al., 2023). The Belt and Road Initiative, alongside China's vision for a community of shared future for mankind, is progressively earning global recognition (Liang & Zhang, 2019), and China's endeavours to reinforce its international discourse system and enhance its international political communication influence have never ceased (Chung, 2023).

The essence of forming an international discursive power that commensurate with China's swiftly growing comprehensive national strength and international stature lies in creating a discourse system with unique Chinese characteristics, understandable and embraced by the international community. The core elements forming China's international discourse system predominantly originate from "speeches or collections by state leaders, official government work reports, and reports at various sessions of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China" (Zhang & Bai, 2022, p. 19).

General Secretary Xi Jinping highly values the establishment of China's international discourse system (Pan, 2021), and has given instructions and made requests on many occasions to improve the work of international publicity and enhance the capacity of international communication (Deepak, 2018). Reflecting the commitment to enhancing China's global communication impact, Xi outlines specific strategies for bolstering China's international presence:

China should strive to improve the international discursive power, strengthen the construction of international communication capacity, build an elaborate international discourse system, give full play to the role of emerging media, enhance the creativity, attraction and credibility of international discourse, tell

the Chinese story well, spread the Chinese voice and explain the Chinese characteristics. (Xi, 2014, p. 162)

At present, however, the voice of China in the international community does not match its stature as a major country on a global scale, and sometimes it is still in a situation where “the voice is relatively faint” and “it is unable to say what is reasonable”, and “it is incapable of spreading what is said” (Xu, 2022, p. 24; Ye, 2021, p. 36). China’s voice at the global level is inadequate, under-interpreted and under-expressed. Over a long period, “China’s international image, which has been primarily shaped by Western perspectives, has been constantly questioned, misinterpreted and misrepresented” (Wu, 2019, p. 72).

In the context of the international public opinion landscape, characterized by a perception of Western nations as powerful and China as comparatively weak, the so-called “China threat statement” is incessantly heard (Xu, 2022, pp. 24-26; Ye, 2021, p. 36). The “China threat statement” refers to a narrative prevalent in some Western media and political discourse, which portrays China’s rise as a potential threat to the global order, economic stability, and security (Ross, 2019). This narrative often emphasizes concerns over China’s military expansion, economic influence, and political ambitions, suggesting that China’s growth poses a significant risk to Western interests and global stability (Jain & Lee, 2021). Over a long period, China’s international image, which has been primarily shaped by Western perspectives, has been constantly questioned, misinterpreted, and misrepresented (Morozov, 2021). In the context of the international public opinion landscape, characterized by a perception of Western nations as powerful and China as comparatively weak, this “China threat statement” is incessantly heard (Song et al., 2021). This has to do with the fact that “the West has long held the power of international discourse and has developed the



hegemony of discourse” (Xu, 2022, p. 24). In such a complex international situation, “China needs to be proactive in speaking out, hedging and defusing the impact of negative public opinion by telling the Chinese story well, correctly and thoroughly” (Fu, 2018, pp. 50-51). Yu (2012) suggests that it is of paramount importance to take the initiative to build a favourable national image on the global stage. China should turn passive into proactive, debunk the so-called “China threat” by the Western countries, break with Sinophobia and make the Chinese model welcomed throughout the world, actively develop a favourable international perception of China and illustrate a truthful and panoramic representation.

### **1.2.3 China’s Voice for International Communication**

The academia sees China’s international discourse system as context specific in a certain socio-cultural sense, as well as a form of international expression of concepts, views and expertise of China (Liu, 2022). This discourse system is a meaningful exercise in the interpretation of China’s distinctive socialist journey. It contributes to telling the Chinese story, shaping national identity and constructing discursive power at the international level. In this sense, “China’s international discourse system is distinctly political” (Liu, 2022. p. 2). According to Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2024), China’s policies and stances on global issues have attracted a lot of attention, and these have been largely embedded in political discourse. Chinese political discourse serves as a crucial witness and vivid illustration of China’s remarkable strides in revolutionary change, infrastructure development, and policy reform. It also forms the cornerstone of Chinese narrative in the realm of international dialogue (Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2024). Chinese political discourse is the most vivid discourse system for interpreting the road and the development of China and for elaborating new concepts, domains and expressions; it most comprehensively reflects

the line, guidelines and policies of the Communist Party of China (Du & Zhang, 2019). Political discourse plays a key role in China's dialogue on the international stage.

“Translating Chinese political discourse is a critical component of the construction of China's international discourse system” (Aina et al., 2022, p. 205). This is because “the translation of political discourse allows China's unique perspectives and policies to be accurately conveyed and understood by the global audience” (Tan & Xiong, 2023, p. 15; Chen & Ruan, 2023, p. 240). Doing well in the translation and translation studies of political literature is “a new expectation and requirement for teachers and researchers engaged in foreign language teaching and research, translation practice and research” (Xiu et al., 2018, p. 1). It is thus evident that advancing political discourse analysis necessitates comprehensive collaboration with translation studies. Constructing a Chinese political discourse system—by translating political discourse for international communication and extending the influence of China's viewpoints—is not only a practical task but also a significant mission for translators (Aina et al., 2022). This represents a novel responsibility given to translators by the demands of the current era.

Effective translation of political literature helps the international community to make sense of China's reform, development, stability, and governance across internal and foreign affairs, defence, and Party leadership (Tan & Xiong, 2023). It plays a fundamental role in telling China's story, shaping its global image and building and enhancing its international discursive power (Sun et al., 2018). As China's overall national strength increases, the international community has begun to intensify the focus on Chinese political discourse, and the international community is more eager to deepen its understanding of the expression of Chinese political discourse (Xi, 2014). China needs more than ever to communicate its own voice, tell its own story and build

its own political discourse system with Chinese characteristics. These characteristics relate to the unique blend of socialism with Chinese attributes, emphasizing the country's historical context, cultural heritage, ideological values of the Communist Party, and the distinctive path of development that China has undertaken (Duan, 2022). In the process of interpretation and construction of an international discourse system, "translation and communication are undoubtedly two core aspects of great significance" (Sun et al., 2018, p. 123). Therefore, Researching the translation of Chinese political discourse for international communication is crucial. It not only aims to enhance China's national image and strengthen its construction of the international discourse system but also seeks to boost its international discursive influence. This endeavour holds significant strategic value and practical urgency.

Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Australia, President of the Asia Society Policy Institute, Co-Chair of Eco Forum Global-International Advisory Council and Chinese generalist, in an interview with *Punch News* in Shanghai on December 3, 2014, said that "the US-China relationship needs to avoid getting lost in translation". As a Western leader with a good command of Chinese and an in-depth knowledge of China, "how to conceptualize such a relationship in language which is meaningful in both languages is a critical task in itself" (Rudd, 2015); this talk on the problems caused by translating in the transformation of the international political discourse system is worthy of our consideration. "Translation is considered to be an intercultural social practice in which the discourse reflects the translator's attitude and stance towards the content and the cultures involved" (Liddicoat, 2016, p. 347; Ma, 2024, p. 3). Accurate and appropriate translations of political discourse not only promote mutual understanding, but also avoid dispensable conflicts. Globalising Chinese political discourse through

translation and communication will enable the world to hear China's official voice and understand its policies in a timely manner (Tan & Xiong, 2023), thus building a favourable global image of China and further enhancing China's voice in international discourse and international influence (Aina et al., 2022).

Political actors around the world may have always relied on narratives for international communication, and in recent years they appear to be growingly acknowledge the role of storytelling in international politics (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2019). The Chinese government, for example, has consistently stressed the necessity of "telling China's story well" (Thibaut, 2022, p. 10). Telling China's story well and spreading the Chinese voice well (Xinhua, 2021; Yan, 2023) are General Secretary Xi Jinping's requirements for enhancing the ability to communicate abroad. Most scholars associate the study of the international value of telling the Chinese story with China's discursive power, national image and international status (Zhang, 2019). Telling China's story as a civilisation instead of a nation-state, and telling the CPC's story as a civilised party rather than a Western party, is a prerequisite for winning the narrative battle between China and the United States. The goal of the Sino-US narrative battle is not to win, not to fight, but ultimately to eliminate misunderstandings and barriers, to bridge the ideological gaps, to launch the dialogue on global governance, to forge new consensus, and to seek empathy between the two sides (Wang, 2021). Storytelling, in this context, refers to the strategic use of narratives by countries to communicate their cultural values, political ideologies, and national identities on the global stage (Zavershinskiy et al., 2022). It has become an important way for countries to spread their culture, strengthen their soft power, and enhance their voice in international discourse (Vasta, 2023).

#### **1.2.4 Combination of Narrative Theory and Translation Studies**

Since the establishment of narratology in the 1960s, it has gone through a process of development from classical narratology to post-classical narratology, and has overlapped with other disciplines, widening and diversifying its research scope and methods (Bal, 2017; Herman, 1997). Experts and scholars applied narrative theory to the analysis and comparative study of Chinese and Western literary works, until in the 1990s, a trend towards a “pan-narrative” view emerged in the study of Western narratology. Currie (1998) declares: “narrative is everywhere in a universal narrative view” (p. 1). In this post-classical context of pan-narrativity, many translation theorists have also joined the field, applying narrative theory to analyse and study the various kinds of phenomena in translation, and have achieved fruitful results. A most prominent of these is the British translation theorist Mona Baker, and her pioneering use of narrative theory to explain the act of translation is a new milestone after the cultural turn in translation. Li (2015) highlights the intrinsic connection between translation and narrative. According to Li, “translation is fundamentally narrative in nature and the translator or interpreter, as the subject of this process, is decisive in shaping this narrative aspect of translation” (p. 127).

The combination of translation and narratology “not only facilitates the extension of the discipline of narratology, but also broadens the dimensions of translation studies” (Liu, 2021, p. 2; Zhang & Zheng, 2022, pp. 105-112). As a major theory of literary criticism, narratology is a powerful interpretive tool for literary works in a broad sense, particularly the systematic tools it provides for the analysis of literary works (Alber & Fludernik, 2010), thus expanding the depth and width of literary criticism. Fu and Fan (2017) claim that “translation is born with narrative characteristics, and translation cannot be detached from the text nor confined to what

constitutes its own narrative function” (p. 163). So the combination of narrative theory and translation can not only enrich narratology, but also improve the system of translation studies (Huang & Zhang, 2020). In addition, narrative theory has been introduced into translation criticism, demonstrating its strong interpretive nature (Fu & Fan, 2017).

There is considerable scope for combining narratology and translation studies, and “many scholars have conducted systematic theoretical studies and practical textual analysis in this field” (Zhang, 2022, p. 95). In *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, Baker (2018) views translation as a process influenced by framing, highlighting its role in shaping and being shaped by conflicts. She sees translation as narrative and as framing, and proposes ideas that have not been explored in the translation discipline. Translation does not only play a role of communication to reduce and ease conflicts, it also plays the role of segregation, provoking conflicts to wage war. Translation is not only involved in politics, but, especially in today’s era of political and economic globalisation, translation itself is an integral part of politics (Baker, 2018). Her new views on the discipline of translation and her different demonstrative methods are enlightening and instructive for the study of translation theory. She endeavours to work with narrative theory in the study of translation, consistently stressing the essential function of translation in the evolution of the whole society. Translation is not an incidental outcome or a simple result of social and political evolutions, not an effect of interactions among texts and individuals; it is rather essentially “an integral element that drives and enables these shifts and activities” (Baker, 2018, pp. 1-2). She introduces narrative theory into translation studies from sociology field and systematically interprets the use of narrative theory in translation, thoroughly manifesting the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Translating Chinese political discourse is a crucial part of making Chinese culture successfully go global (Sun & Subramaniam, 2023; Tan & Xiong, 2023). Despite the significance, some “problems in the translation of Chinese political discourse still exist” (Jia, 2017, p. 96), leading to misunderstandings among foreign media and audiences, thereby impacting the efficacy of Chinese political discourse in international interactions. Misinterpretations, such as those of terms like “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and the cultural context embedded in Chinese political statements, are notable examples (Duan, 2022). Accurate translation of political discourse allows China’s unique perspectives and policies to be properly conveyed and understood globally (Aina et al., 2022; Chen, 2017), thereby shaping the perception of China within the international community.

According to Dou (2016), “Chinese characteristic discourse has not been winning the world’s understanding and recognition”, and this lack of global comprehension is seen as a significant reason for China’s shortage of “international power of discourse” (p. 106). Furthermore, the variety of translations of Chinese political discourse, for example, the “core terms of political discourse in particular, has caused misunderstandings and misinterpretations of China’s development philosophy, development model and development achievements among international audiences” (Dou, 2016, p. 106). Additionally, China currently faces many challenges in its ongoing integration into and influence on the world and in forming its own international discursive power (Sun, 2021). These challenges include overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, addressing biases and misconceptions in foreign media, navigating geopolitical tensions, and ensuring the accurate translation and representation of its political discourse (Lai, 2021). Overcoming these challenges is

crucial for China to effectively communicate its policies and perspectives on the global stage.

As China plays a role of growing significance in international affairs, scholars in China and abroad have become increasingly interested in the research of translating Chinese political discourse and have achieved some results in practice. The practice of Chinese political discourse translation can be traced back to significant historical events. For instance, Mao Zedong's article "Investigation Report on Hunan Peasants Movement", published in March 1927 in *The Guide*, an organ publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, "was translated and reproduced in Russian and English respectively in the Russian and English editions of *Communist International*, the organ publication of the Executive Committee of the Comintern" (Wang, 2006, p. 118). Over the past century, a vast amount of political discourse and political literature have been translated, and there is a rising volume of research literature on the translation of political discourse in the academy, "the vast majority of which belongs to the study of translation practice" (Qiu, 2018, p. 27). Most existing studies are based on translation corpora or specific translation practices and translation experiences, exploring the principles, norms, methods, strategies and effects of political discourse translation (Si & Zeng, 2021).

However, Qiu (2018) asserts that the vast amount of translation practice with unique Chinese characteristics has only been studied sporadically and unsystematically, lacking theoretical guidance. Consequently, the theoretical research of Chinese political discourse translation is relatively weak, with limited practical application. In the contexts of a globalised, technological and information-driven world, Fu and Yu (2021) highlight that the theoretical framework of pragmatic translation studies is incomplete and remains constrained by literary translation studies



and textual studies. Qiu (2018) also points out that “there is a paucity of literature on the exploration of translation theory” and that “theory lacks relevance and coherence” (p. 27). Furthermore, “there is a lack of sufficient awareness about the practicality and necessity of translation and translation studies to serve the national development strategy” (Fu & Yu, 2021, p. 138). Therefore, there is an urgent need for pragmatic translation studies to be explored intensively and systematically and to formulate solutions to meet China’s reality.

### **1.3.1 Rationale for Studying Xi Jinping’s Chinese Political Discourse**

Studying Xi Jinping’s political discourse is particularly important for several reasons. Firstly, as the principal architect and spokesperson of China’s contemporary political ideology, Xi’s speeches, writings, and directives encapsulate the core values and strategic visions of the Chinese government (Peters, 2019). These texts are essential for understanding China’s domestic and international policies (Du & Zhang, 2019). Secondly, Xi’s political discourse emphasises key themes such as socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese Dream, and the Belt and Road Initiative, which are crucial to China’s diplomatic strategies and global interactions (Zhang & Zheng, 2022). Thirdly, given Xi’s significant influence on China’s political direction, his discourse plays a critical role in shaping both national identity and international perception of China (Yang, 2020). This makes the accurate translation of his political discourse crucial for effective global communication (Li & Qing, 2021). Finally, the study of Xi’s political discourse from a translation perspective can reveal how translation practices impact the framing and reception of Chinese political narratives worldwide, providing insights into the broader implications of translation in international relations (Tan & Xiong, 2023; Zhu, 2022).

### **1.3.2 Political Discourse in Focus**

Chinese political discourse under examination in this study specifically pertains to Xi Jinping's discourse as presented in the *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* series. This series includes a collection of Xi's speeches, reports, directives, and writings that cover a range of themes such as socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese Dream, the Belt and Road Initiative, global governance, and building a community with a shared future for mankind (Xi, 2020; Xi, 2022). These themes are central to China's diplomatic strategy and international policy positions (Xinhua, 2022). By focusing on Xi's political discourse, this study aims to explore how these narratives are translated and framed for international audiences, and how they contribute to the shaping of China's international image and discourse power.

### **1.3.3 Novelty of the Study**

This study innovatively merges narrative theory with translation studies to examine how the translations of Chinese political discourse, particularly in volumes of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, construct and project China's image internationally. By applying this unique methodological framework, it offers fresh insights into the strategic framing narratives within translation, enhancing the interpretive depth of translation studies and fostering effective cross-cultural communication.

This urgency for this study arises from several critical factors. First, as China's role on the international stage expands, the need for accurate and effective translation of its political discourse becomes increasingly important (Chen & Ruan, 2023). Misunderstandings due to inadequate translation can lead to geopolitical tensions and misrepresentation of China's policies (Lin, 2023). Second, current translation studies lack a coherent theoretical framework, particularly in the context of Chinese political

discourse (Fu & Yu, 2021). Intensive and systematic research can help bridge this gap, providing a solid theoretical foundation for practical applications (Jia & Zhang, 2021). Third, pragmatic translation studies are essential to support China's national strategy of global integration and influence (Fan, 2018; Yang, 2021). Effective translation can enhance China's international discourse power and improve its global image (Aina et al., 2022; Pan & Guo, 2022; Sun et al., 2018). Finally, incorporating insights from fields such as narratology and communication studies into translation research can offer a more holistic understanding of the translation process and its impact on international relations (Fu & Fan, 2017; Li & Qing, 2021).

#### **1.3.4 Justification of Theory Used**

Confronted with unprecedented greatest global changes in a century, how China's pragmatic translation studies can tell the Chinese story well and make Chinese culture go global and how it can serve the national strategy in helping to establish a Community of Shared Future for Mankind and contribute to the enhancement of China's international discursive power and national image still remain the pressing issues to be addressed. This urgency is highlighted by Jia and Zhang (2021) in "The National Symposium on Pragmatic Translation from 2011 to 2021", where they declare that "there are new problems and questions arising in a new era of great change, and the new era calls for fresh ideas and novel theories" (p. 5). As a disciplinary theory, translation theory provides support in theory and guidance in methodology for translation studies, while translation studies from a narrative perspective are far from adequate (Herman, 2013). "There is still a wide and promising research scope for combining translation studies and narrative theory" (Fu & Fan, 2017, p. 163), and "the combination of translation studies and narratology not only deepens the connotation

of translation studies, but also benefits the extension of narrative theory” (Li, 2015, p. 127; Zhang & Zheng, 2022, pp. 105-112).

The translation of political discourse represents more than a simple process of language conversion, being instead “a process in which the translator reads the source text comprehensively from different dimensions such as political, ideological, theoretical and semantic connotations, and then reinterprets and frames it in the target language” (Li & Qing, 2021, p. 10). This process is quite like the framing of narrative theory, which is “an active process of giving meaning with active strategies” (Baker, 2018, p. 106). Baker’s narrative theory is distinguished by the systematic model of translation analysis based on framing narratives. For scholars, this model enables them to probe the influence of translation on social evolution at a macro level, and it also serves to specifically explore how translation constitutes narratives and how narratives are instituted to influence and construct society through employing narrative features and framing strategies.

Furthermore, existing studies have clarified that what needs to be faithfully conveyed by the translator in international communication is not the textual representation of the original, but the intended purpose of the international communication, i.e., to produce the anticipated effect of interpretive persuasion as the ultimate goal (Xu, 2018). As the target audience is from overseas while the original Chinese political discourse is often delivered or written by Chinese-speaking people, it is obviously not enough for the translator to simply translate the language to make the audience receptive to the views and positions expressed. So it appears that there is a strong fit between narrative theory, with its emphasis on constructive effects, and political discourse translation, which aims at constructing the international image we anticipate (Li & Qing, 2021; Mo & Yuan, 2018). “Framing narratives in translation

can provide a new research method or a new perspective to analyse how translators translate political discourse” (Zhang & Zheng, 2022, p. 106).

More specifically, the definition of narrative in narrative theory, the characteristics of classical narratology and post-classical narratology, and the analytical approach of narratology are all reflected in the translation of political discourse. Firstly, regarding the definition of narrative, narrative is the telling of “the everyday stories by which we live” (Baker, 2018, p. 3), while the translation of Chinese political discourse is the telling of China’s story to the international community in a world-receptive language. Secondly, discourse can be produced, and discourse can be selected, controlled, organised and communicated in this production and discourse is inseparable from power and politics (Wang, 2019). The translation of Chinese political discourse for international communication involves not only texts, but also social and cultural elements. Shen (2010) concludes the evolution of narratology:

Classical narratology is text-centered, isolating the product of the work from its social, historical, and cultural environment, and concerned with the work’s connection to the outside world; post-classical narratology sees narrative works as products of their cultural contexts and is concerned with the connection between the works and their creative and receptive contexts. (Shen, 2010, pp. 5-7)

Thirdly, the structural concepts of classical narratology such as narrative temporality, narrative vision and narrative structure can serve for a micro textual analysis of political discourse translation, and the non-structural concerns of post-classical narratology such as readership, context and ideology (Todorov et al., 1975) can be applied to a macro ideological interpretation of political discourse translation (Hu, 2019). Therefore, when translating political discourse, it is necessary to employ not

only classical narratology for textual considerations, but also post-classical narratology's focus on context, audience, culture and ideology for narrative construction.

As a representative figure of post-classical narratology, Baker (2006; 2018) summarises four core features of narrativity as temporality, relationality, causal emplotment, and selective appropriation. In addition, four remaining features of narrativity, namely particularity, genericness, normativeness and breach, and narrative accrual, are also worthy of attention. These eight narrative features influence each other and they overlap. She considers that translation itself can be seen as framing narratives, whether in a literal or a metaphorical sense and presents four key strategies of framing narratives in the process of translation, namely temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation of textual material, framing by labelling, and repositioning of participants. In the process of translating a text or a discourse, the translator consciously or unconsciously engages in the framing, negotiation or questioning of social reality (Li & Qing, 2021). Focusing more on socio-cultural contexts, especially ideologies, Baker explains the act of translation in terms of "framing", not only in terms of its impact on social development, especially conflict, but also in terms of the types and characteristics of narratives, and how translation frames narratives and how narratives influence and construct society (Mo & Yuan, 2018; Xu, 2018).

Baker is keenly conscious of the critical influence of translation in shaping contemporary globalised international politics and its distinctive contribution (Hu, 2019). Moreover, she highlights the intricate connection between translation and political culture, emphasising that translation extends beyond cultural exchange to actively participate in cultural creation and play a significant role in international politics (Polezzi, 2022). She further argues that "translation is also creating politics,

and translation is an integral part of the international political struggle” (Baker, 2011, p. 6). In this sense, Baker’s narrative theory of translation constitutes an indispensable framework for both the translation and analysis of political literature, calling for extensive academic attention.

To sum up, the study of narrative theory in translation not only provides a reasonable explanation for the new phenomenon of translation, but is a new field for the development of translation theory, which is of “great significance in both theoretical advancements and practical application for the self-enrichment and development of translation theory” (Li, 2015, p. 127). Combining narrative theory with translation of political discourse not only expands the research field of narrative theory, but also enriches the analysis perspective of political discourse translation (Zhang & Zheng, 2022, p. 105). Analysing the translation of Chinese political discourse in a narrative account helps to increase the translator’s attention to framing narratives in the construction of the international image of China, and thus to achieve favourable translation effects. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, studies on the translation of Chinese political discourse are rarely conducted with narrative theory.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Specifically, this study mainly includes the following research objectives:

1. To identify the features of narrativity reflected in the translation of Chinese political discourse.
2. To describe the framing strategies embodied in the translation of Chinese political discourse.
3. To specify the translation methods employed by translators in the process of framing narratives in the translation of Chinese political discourse.

4. To determine the narrative paradigm for assessing the translation of Chinese political discourse for international communication.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study will answer the following questions:

1. What features of narrativity are reflected in the translation of Chinese political discourse?
2. How do framing strategies frame the narratives in the translation of Chinese political discourse?
3. What translation methods are employed by translators to frame narratives in the translation of Chinese political discourse?
4. How does the narrative paradigm assess the translation of Chinese political discourse for international communication?

### **1.6 Limitation of the Study**

This research is conducted in the context of English serving as the *lingua franca*, a status highlighted by Chen et al. (2020) due to its widespread use globally.

Firstly, the theoretical depth is limited. This study is interdisciplinary, involving disciplines such as narratology, translation, communication, linguistics and political science. The researcher's limited expertise across these diverse disciplines results in a less thorough grasp of certain disciplinary theories, leading to a reliance on authoritative statements by scholars in related fields.

Secondly, the scope of the research object is restricted. Expanding the scope of data collection to include other classical translations of Chinese political discourse into the corpus would make the selected materials more representative and enhance the study's generalisability.



Thirdly, the research instruments are limited. The primary sources for the translation of political discourse in this study are texts from *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, which, despite their vast quantity, restrict the research's instrumental diversity. The qualitative research is predominantly based on textual analysis and case study. If a large corpus of political discourse translation could be established and utilised, and if the quantitative and qualitative research could be combined together, it would certainly make the argument more comprehensive and convincing.

Fourthly, this study exhibits certain limitations in terms of the reception research. As a special form of translation with a communicative nature, the narrative reception of political discourse translation merits serious consideration. This study would benefit greatly from investigating Western perceptions of Chinese political discourse translation. However, an in-depth investigation of narrative reception would require a large-scale questionnaire survey with foreign audiences, which is beyond the reach of this study. In view of this, this aspect is analysed and discussed only from the dimension of the narrative paradigm to assess the narratives in political discourse translations.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study is to describe features of narrativity, framing strategies, and translation methods, which are embodied in the process of re-narration from diplomatic narrative account. Political discourse is the most useful channel for the international community to have access to official information. High-quality translation of political discourse determines the practical effect of diplomacy and shows China's image well to the international world (Sun et al., 2018). "Introducing

the terminology of narrative theory into the translation of political discourse can enhance the synergy of multiple disciplines, enlarge the interaction between narrative theory and translation studies” (Liu, 2021, p. 2), and thus draw more and more scholars and experts to apply narrative theory to the analysis of political discourse translation. The analysis in this study will delve into the role of China’s splendid culture in making Chinese stories more accessible for international communication. It is also expected that the analysis of this study will demonstrate the feasibility of employing narrative in the translation of political discourse. Moreover, this study provides references for the translation of Chinese political discourse in the new era and for the construction of a political discourse system with Chinese characteristics understood by Western audiences. It also contributes to telling the Chinese story well and enhancing China’s international discursive power and national image. Specifically, the theoretical and practical significances are as follows.

### **1.7.1 Theoretical Significance**

The theoretical significance of this study is enriching and extending the disciplinary of narrative theory, while deepening the connotation of translation studies and developing the theoretical guidance for translation practice and translation studies (Fu & Fan, 2017; Li, 2015). All this could help to consolidate and extend the basic research fields of translation studies, optimize the discipline framework, and to expand a creative and scientific mode of discipline building (Huang & Zhang, 2020).

Narratology is often employed to the analysis of literary translation, providing an essential instrument for evaluation of literary translation criticism (Chan, 2010; Shao, 2011). From the theoretical point of view, the diplomatic narrative offers a fresh viewpoint on the translation of political discourse, and this study extends the research scope of narratology and broadens the horizon of translation studies. The combination