

# Expressing (distorted) dissent against the Party-state out of internalised racism on X

Convergence: The International  
Journal of Research into  
New Media Technologies  
2026, Vol. 0(0) 1–22  
© The Author(s) 2026



Article reuse guidelines:

[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/13548565261447041  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/con](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/con)



Altman Yuzhu Peng<sup>1</sup> , Chunyan Wu<sup>2</sup>  and  
Stephanie Schnurr<sup>1</sup> 

## Abstract

This article critically examines a troubling development in grassroots resistance to authoritarianism, which we term ‘distorted dissent’. Using the Great Translation Movement (GTM) as a case study, we explore how its coordinators mobilise affective claims to substantiate critiques of Chinese people’s national character, whilst leveraging X’s connective affordances to amplify their reach in the transnational digital sphere. Such affective claims shift accountability for China’s structural issues away from the authoritarian regime and onto the perceived moral deficiencies of the populace. As they spread across digital networks, these claims revitalise a long-standing national-character trope that shores up Sinophobia through internalised racism. We argue that this stylised repetition of affective storytelling derives from GTM coordinators’ twofold idealisation of Euro-American democratic systems and white civilisations, a dynamic that distorts their political stakes by aligning aspects of the initiative with Western reactionary causes. These findings complicate simplistic, binary understandings of grassroots resistance, highlighting how distorted dissent against authoritarianism may paradoxically reproduce exclusionary politics, and how the affective logic underpinning its orchestration operates on transnational digital platforms.

## Keywords

affective claim, affective politics, affective storytelling, China, distorted dissent, Great Translation Movement, internalised racism, national character, Russian invasion of Ukraine, self-racialisation, X

I support deporting all pro-CCP immigrants regardless of their immigration status, whether they are illegal aliens, green card holders, or naturalised citizens. As naturalised citizens, when they colluded with [the] CCP, they violated the oath they took in front of [the] American flag.

(X influencer, 11 November 2024).

<sup>1</sup>Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Social Sciences, Northeastern University London, London, UK

## Corresponding author:

Altman Yuzhu Peng, Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, A0.13 Social Sciences Building, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK.  
Email: [altman.peng@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:altman.peng@warwick.ac.uk)

Depicted above is a tweet calling for the US government to deport Chinese immigrants perceived as being pro-CCP (Chinese Communist Party). On the surface, the tweet confronts the Party-state's alleged interference in democratic processes. However, the rhetoric is overtly racialised, reiterating a prominent trajectory of contemporary Euro-American far-/alt-right politics, which exploits the Sino-US rivalry as a pretext for promoting Sinophobia (McInerney, 2024). Posted by a US-based influencer who self-identifies as a Chinese immigrant, this tweet illustrates how expressions of anti-authoritarian dissent may paradoxically manifest as internalised racism.

Racism engineers a social order wherein individuals are treated unevenly based on racial classifications (Pyke, 2010). Differing from orthodox variants wherein hatred is projected onto out-group members, internalised racism delineates 'the "subjection" of the victims of racism' to the illusions perpetuated by the very ideologies that define and oppress them (Hall, 1986: 27). The latter relies on colonised individuals' self-racialisation, informed by their absorption of the negative stereotypes and prejudices imposed by the dominant culture upon them (Seet, 2021). Typical cases of internalised racism are found in Euro-American societies, where minorities' self-racialisation plays into white Caucasians' de facto domination. For instance, Hooks (2003: 78) argues that white supremacy is often perpetuated in the worldviews of Black people through an interlocking process of 'indoctrination' or 'mental colonisation', which shapes their self-awareness within a social order that privileges whiteness. Here, self-racialisation not only primes self-repudiation but also yields an ideological alignment with the broader white nation-building imaginary (Seet, 2021). This alignment has increasingly been instrumentalised by right-wing populism, with the 2024 US presidential election offering a prime example wherein white-supremacist, anti-immigrant rhetoric paradoxically helped Donald Trump secure a record-high share of the African American vote (Sommer and Franco, 2025).

However, while offering insights into internalised racism as a sociopsychological construct, existing scholarly interventions oftentimes do not pay due attention to the broader configuration of self-racialising tropes that unfold in specific instances of real-life power struggles (Pyke, 2010; Seet, 2021). Even though an emerging strand of scholarship has noted how self-racialising tropes are weaponised in political campaigns, it tends to situate minorities' experiences within national borders (Sommer and Franco, 2025), risking methodological nationalism, which marginalises accounts of how such power dynamics unfold in cross-border contexts. In the transnational context of grassroots resistance to authoritarianism, this tendency, in particular, sidelines critical scrutiny of how self-racialising tropes may align diasporic dissent with Western reactionary currents, reproducing global hierarchies of race and power beneath seemingly progressive endeavours (Zhang, 2024).

By treating internalised racism as a heuristic label, this article probes into the weaponisation of self-racialising tropes in grassroots resistance, which produces a distorted form of dissent against authoritarianism. To this end, we foreground the Great Translation Movement (GTM), curated by diasporic Chinese netizens on X in opposition to the CCP (Peng et al., 2026), as a timely case study. The analysis examines how GTM tweets bring self-racialising tropes to the forefront of grassroots resistance to the Party-state in the transnational Sinophone digital sphere. This dynamic is evident in its tweets, which frequently orchestrate affective claims anchored in a national-character trope. While shifting blame for the Party-state's rhetoric and actions onto the populace, such affective claims continue to anchor Chinese people in negative emotions. In this process, the GTM evidently cultivates connections with Euro-American far-/alt-right actors, thereby contributing to the formation of cross-border reactionary alliances. These findings substantiate our diagnosis of 'distorted dissent' in Sinophone power struggles, a formation contingent upon China's distinctive pathway to nation-building and its entanglement with Western right-wing

populism. In light of this, we propose moving beyond reductive regime-versus-dissent frameworks that dominate popular narratives to hold both authoritarianism and resistance to it accountable in tandem.

## Literature review

### *Theorising the affective logic of internalised racism*

Engaging with the affective turn in sociopolitical critique (Berlant, 2011; Cvetkovich, 2012; Lunenburg and Rottger-Rossler, 2023), we draw on notions of affective politics to interpret how self-racialising tropes operate in distorted dissent. To this end, we primarily resort to Ahmed's (2012) definition of affect as an intensity mediated by discourse, sedimented in history, and distributed unevenly across bodies. Ahmed's (2012) readings resist a neat separation of affect and emotion as is common in Spinozian-Deleuzian literature. Instead of treating it as autonomic, pre-subjective, or reducible to individual internal states, she argues that affect is relationally produced to inform such emotions as alignments, attachments, and repulsions under specific sociopolitical conditions (Seigworth and Pedwell, 2023). By drawing on her conceptualisation, we depart from a meta-physical analysis of affectivity, foregrounding the logic behind the rendezvous between racialised affect and distorted dissent against authoritarianism.

At the heart of Ahmed's (2012: 86) analytical framework is 'stickiness', an 'effect of surfacing' that captures a relational process through which affect circulates and attaches itself to bodies. This account emphasises how affective intensities sediment through histories of contact, enabling certain bodies, inclusive of human ones, as well as objects and signs, to 'stick' to specific emotions. With language carrying intensities that produce affective resonance, it has the capacity to shape collective feelings beyond mere representation (Fleig and Von Scheve, 2020). Addressing this phenomenon, Ahmed (2012) notes that certain words may acquire 'stickiness' by accumulating affective values over time, as a result of their embeddedness in histories of power, violence, and exclusion. This dynamic is governed by recursive interactions, enabling certain emotions to adhere to particular bodies and, thus, transforming them into signifiers of affective investment. Informed by Ahmed's (2012) interpretation of stickiness, we foreground how racialised affect perpetuates through language and, by extension, shapes the structuration of a broader milieu that reinforces colonial hierarchies.

Building on accounts of the stickiness of certain words as a discursive-historical property, we further draw on Chouliaraki's (2021) scholarship to unpack how it operates in real-life power struggles of the present. She does not concentrate on internalised racism per se, but her work on vulnerability offers insights by foregrounding affective storytelling as an analytical subject (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2022). In general, affective storytelling is a communicative act, wherein 'affective claims' emerge as affect-laden assertions made by individuals or social groups to position themselves in relation to other actors (Chouliaraki, 2021: 12). Affective claims are not always emotionally charged but can also be emotionally alien, depending on the particular scenario. What is common to all is that they oftentimes resort to sticky signifiers, empty in themselves but privileged in ongoing communication, to tactically modulate how one feels and subsequently engender political or moral outcomes (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2022). By framing subjects as emotionally compelling figures, affective claims prime audiences' emotional responses, insofar as they enable the attribution of responsibility or the problematisation of injustice on one hand, whilst facilitating the attainment of legitimacy and power on the other. With Chouliaraki's (2021) account of affective

storytelling in mind, we examine how the circulation of negative emotions unfolds in specific expressions of anti-authoritarian dissent that animate racial resentment amongst in-group members.

In the Sinophone context, the historical crafting of ‘Chinese people’ as a sticky signifier associated with negative emotions can be traced to affective storytelling popularised before World War II, during which the ‘yellow-peril’ imaginary of the Chinese population not only remained popular across Euro-American societies (Dai, 2025) but was also absorbed into revolutionary endeavours in China (Sun, 2016). Such affective storytelling was built upon the trope of a flawed national character, framing Chineseness as intrinsically deficient, insofar as it prescribed Westernisation as a necessary civilisational trajectory. This national-character trope was temporarily marginalised under early CCP rule, but it has resurged since the 1980s as liberal reformists and radical intellectuals alike reactivated it to justify their nation-rejuvenation projects (Li, 2021). In more recent years, against the backdrop of the Party-state intensifying its reliance on traditional cultural imaginaries and nationalist propaganda to consolidate regime legitimacy (De Kloet et al., 2021; Schneider, 2018), it has been revamped by grassroots actors to critique China’s perceived political stagnation (Guo, 2021). Casting political inertia as symptomatic of a cultural disposition towards deference, the re-popularisation of the national-character trope signals the consolidation of a liberal cohort, whose engagement with the nation’s post-socialist transition is paradoxically grounded in the internalisation of Eurocentric racialism (Li, 2021). In this process, hierarchies are reproduced, aligning with global structures of racialised modernity to sustain a renewed modality of internalised racism cloaked in the affective storytelling orchestrated by anti-authoritarian dissent.

### *Understanding the logic of affective politics on digital platforms*

As noted in existing scholarship, affective politics is not a construct specific to the digital age, with its logic having long been manifested in both social domination and resistance to it across racial, gender, and geopolitical contexts (Berlant, 2011; Cvetkovich, 2012; Dai, 2025; Milani and Richardson, 2023). Yet, given that the instance of distorted dissent under examination primarily unfolds on transnational digital platforms, we argue that a recognition of the digital environment’s particularities remains necessary. Amongst the various factors, digital networks reconfigure how individuals relate to politics and one another. This raises critical questions concerning the pivotal role of platform affordances in mediating affective storytelling, particularly in cases where such mobilisation serves to reproduce and normalise internalised racism.

Affordances, emerging from the interplay between technological materiality and human interaction, refer to the enabling and constraining features of digital platforms that shape user practices (Papacharissi, 2015). Within the context of grassroots resistance, whether progressive or reactionary, platform affordances are integral to its organisational structure (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Here, we propose a heuristic categorisation of platform affordances into two overlapping clusters: those that primarily facilitate affective storytelling, and those that principally support connective action. In developing this typology, we by no means advocate a rigid dichotomy. In other words, affective storytelling may frequently generate connective potentials, just as connective action can elicit affective intensities. Rather, this analytical distinction highlights the specific functionalities of platforms that facilitate different gestures in mediated mobilisation. In doing so, we illustrate how networked affective politics unfolds organically through the infrastructural capacities of digital platforms, which serve not merely as conduits of communication but as contingent organising networks in their own right (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

We refer to affective affordances as the sociotechnological configurations of digital platforms that primarily facilitate affective storytelling. These affordances are embedded in platform designs that

support the projection of affective claims, through such practices as multimodal content sharing, livestreaming, threaded interactions, and intertextual engagements, like quoting, commenting, and remixing (Papacharissi, 2015). It is worth noting that these designs are adjacent to platform materialities, but the modes of mediated communication they structure can arguably be observed in contexts that predate the digital age. As such, the production of affective claims should not be viewed as confined to a single platform but as sustained by an extended ecology comprising supplementary media and digital infrastructures (Mattoni et al., 2020; Uldam, 2018). Accordingly, even if it is primarily curated on a specific digital platform, affective storytelling typically involves mobilising other platforms, media channels, and mobile applications (Papacharissi, 2015).

In the Sinophone context of grassroots resistance, the affective affordances of digital platforms provide a critical foundation for mobilising dissent. Recent scholarship shows that Chinese netizens have become adept at using domestic digital infrastructures to document lived experiences and articulate counter-narratives that contest official rhetoric (Chen and Gao, 2023; Han, 2018; Sun and Wright, 2024). However, the current Party leadership has intensified its grip on civil society by both expanding its propaganda machinery and imposing stricter censorship (Liu, 2024; Miao et al., 2021; Wu, 2020). In response, many regime critics have also sought refuge outside of the Party-state's digital sovereignty. On this note, the A4 Revolution makes a compelling case for such cross-border affective mobilisation. Across platforms operating outside of China, diasporic activists and observers partook in the protests by using posts, reposts, and comments to amplify and recontextualise footage of unprecedented domestic collective actions (Zeng and Cheng, 2025). Their participation transformed blank A4 paper into a symbol of defiance, with its affective value stemming from the absence of visible political slogans that subtextually allude to state crackdowns on freedom of expression (Luo and Fang, 2025). As this symbol circulated across and beyond specific platforms, it catalysed affective solidarities that energised the momentum of dissent, demonstrating the power of affective affordances to animate transnational political imaginaries and challenge the limits of authoritarian control.

Yet, the organisation of grassroots mobilisation is also inextricably tied to the capacity of affective claims to stimulate broader participation (Neyazi and Kuru, 2024), a dynamic that brings connective affordances into the foreground, as they pertain to the features of digital platforms that primarily facilitate the amplification of affect-laden narratives. Specifically, the infrastructures of digital platforms already prioritise affectively intense content (Richardson et al., 2024). As affective intensity becomes a driver of engagement, the logic of platform governance embeds such mechanisms as likes, shares, retweets, and comments that turn mobilisation into a contest for visibility (Papacharissi, 2015). The establishment of connectivity amongst actors is, thus, contingent upon the strategic navigation of certain platform affordances to maximise the reach of politicised narratives, thereby provoking public contention (Kavada and Poell, 2021). Amongst such affordances, hashtags and mentions play a pivotal role, as digital platforms curate content feeds according to user interactions, social networks, and ideological affinities (Papacharissi, 2015). Rather than merely reinforcing echo chambers, the gestures of mobilising such connective affordances enable the participatory co-construction of affective storytelling, extending the connective capacity of affective claims across distributed digital networks.

Today, China's grassroots actors have demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of connective affordances. This is tellingly evidenced by the Chinese MeToo movement, where netizens strategically deploy hashtags to galvanise connective digital protests against sexual harassment (Luqiu and Liao, 2021). However, these connective affordances are open to all, including those aligned with far-right ideologies. Amid regime critics across the board relocating to the transnational digital sphere, the actions of Falun Gong-affiliated media networks offer a salient example of resistance

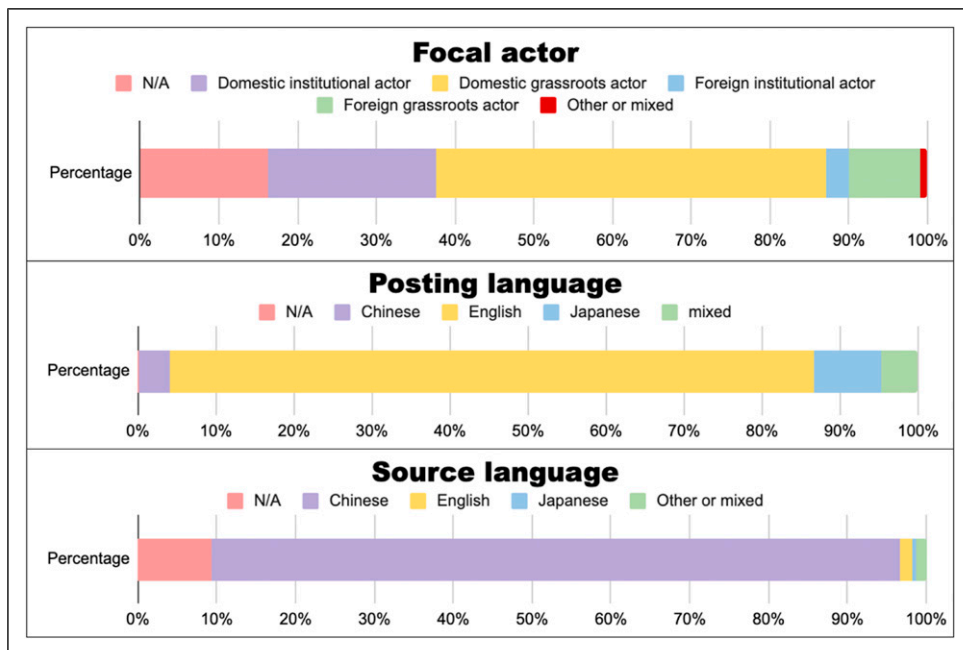
efforts being co-opted by malicious actors on transnational digital platforms (Peng et al., 2025; Qin et al., 2025). These media networks not only openly support Euro-American far-right leaders but also self-voluntarily propagate their conspiracy theories that extend well beyond China-specific concerns (Thornton, 2008). This entanglement reveals a more troubling development, wherein Western right-wing populism has incorporated segments of the Chinese diaspora into its orbit. Ideologically, far-right strongholds from within diasporic communities are often built upon their members' deep-seated belief in Western civilisational superiority, which reiterates the affinities of the national-character trope with white supremacy (Zhang, 2024). Beyond ideological compatibility, pragmatic considerations also rationalise the co-option of some diasporic regime critics by right-wing politicians, as the latter's anti-China rhetoric is perceived to lend the former institutional legitimacy and support for their dissident agendas (Li, 2021). In the process of pursuing their anti-regime endeavours, these grassroots actors become vehicles for reactionary politics, contributing to the global diffusion of right-wing, white supremacy under the banner of resistance.

Attending to these complexities, we propose a dual focus on the affective and connective affordances to examine how diasporic dissidents coordinate a distorted configuration of grassroots resistance within the transnational Sinophone context. To this end, we foreground how GTM coordinators craft affective claims and amplify their reach through digital networks to contest the Party-state's oppressive rule. Furthermore, we explore how such anti-regime gestures reproduce negative affective associations with Chineseness itself, enacting dissent through registers shaped by internalised racism. With such objectives in mind, we prescribe the following questions to guide our empirical inquiry.

- (1) How do GTM coordinators mobilise affective claims to attach 'Chinese people' to negative emotions?
- (2) How do the affordances of X shape their affective storytelling built upon the national-character trope?
- (3) How does such affective politics intersect with Euro-American right-wing populism in the transnational digital sphere?

## **Research methods and the dataset**

In the empirical research, we extrapolated tweets from the GTM's X account. Centred around its X-based coordination on an official account (handle: @TGTM\_Official), the GTM is a campaign spearheaded by members of the Chinese diaspora in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Its orchestration is characterised by the systematic collection of Chinese-language content and the translation and circulation of selected excerpts across multiple languages within the transnational digital sphere. By strategically foregrounding material likely to provoke public contention, GTM coordinators encouraged international scrutiny of the Party-state's pro-Kremlin narratives and their effects on Chinese citizens, insofar as this casts China as accountable for the repercussions of Russia's military actions. Yet evidence suggests that the GTM gradually expanded its scope to cover a wider range of events beyond the context of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war (Peng et al., 2026). In this process, the campaign was repositioned within broader expressions of anti-authoritarian dissent, deliberately staging resistance against the Party-state rather than focussing on its stance in a specific geopolitical event. Against this backdrop, we set the sampling period for approximately ten months, from 7 March to 31 December 2022, capturing the GTM's full operations during the first calendar year following its launch. This strategy enabled us to compile a comprehensive dataset that



**Figure 1.** Tweets by focal actors, posting languages, and source languages.

reflects the full range of residues left by the X account over an extended period. One of the co-authors manually collected the data, resulting in a total of 1,675 tweets sampled.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), the sampled GTM tweets are characterised by their strategic use of graphic content to critique grassroots actors from within China, curated primarily for an English-speaking X audience. Specifically, images and videos together constitute more than nine-tenths of the sampled tweets' main content, nearly fourteen times as many as tweets composed solely of text. Almost half of these tweets address social media postings by grassroots Chinese netizens, which is twice the number of GTM tweets engaging with rhetoric disseminated by domestic media organisations or official apparatuses, and over four times the number featuring foreign actors. While Chinese sources appear in nearly nine-tenths of the cited content, over four-fifths of these tweets present key takeaways in English. As for connective affordances, the hashtag function on X appears to be the most frequently used, followed by the @mention feature. Specifically, while more than four-fifths of the sampled tweets include at least one hashtag, roughly one-third contain at least one @mention of another X account.

In the data analysis, we employed thematic analysis derived from [Saldana's \(2016\)](#) two-step coding process, treating each post as an individual unit of analysis. Nevertheless, instead of implementing the analytical step in a conventional fashion, we adopted a researcher triangulation strategy. First, the sampled tweets were examined by the co-author, who conducted an initial round of coding to identify recurring patterns. The lead author then independently reviewed the same material and produced a second set of codes. These codes were iteratively compared with those generated in the earlier stage in order to refine categories and identify recurring discursive patterns. Following these independent coding phases, the authors collaborated in a theory-informed close reading of the dataset, allowing the identified patterns to be interpreted in relation to their broader

sociopolitical context. Throughout the process, the researchers remained in regular communication to discuss analytical decisions. Any differences in interpretation were addressed through discussion and critical reflection, with alternative readings considered in order to accommodate divergent perspectives.

It emerged from the coding process that ‘Chinese’ (475 hits) and ‘people’ (225 hits) are amongst the most frequent terms, ranking second and fourth. These words often collocate to form the phrase ‘Chinese people’. Following [Chouliaraki’s \(2021\)](#) scholarship, we identified the sampled tweets that constitute affective claims about the ‘national character’ of the Chinese people, highlighting how they contribute to a stylised linguistic shorthand linking the populace to particular emotional registers. We then examine how such affective claims function to target grassroots rather than institutional actors, enhancing the association of the term ‘Chinese people’ with negative emotions in ongoing platform-mediated interactions.

## Data analysis

### *Defining ‘Chinese people’ as objects of ridicule*

As a recurring theme, the logic of affective storytelling embedded in many of the sampled tweets is characterised by attempts to ridicule the Chinese citizenry as a whole, with tweet 1374 ([Figure 2](#)) providing a particularly clear example of this motif.

As shown in [Figure 2](#), the tweet combines film footage sourced from elsewhere with self-styled captions to structure affective storytelling. Visually, it presents a two-minute clip comprising archival footage of street celebrations in China marking the seventieth birthday of former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Textually, the footage is accompanied by a caption framing the event as an imitation of imperial rituals historically reserved for honouring a monarch’s father. By drawing on vivid depictions of these celebrations, the tweet positions the spectacle as evidence of a Soviet-style cult of personality being transplanted into China. In retelling their mediated experience of witnessing the crowd’s supposedly fanatical performance, GTM coordinators adopt a moral vantage point from which to pass swift judgement on the Chinese citizens captured in the footage. Bypassing any scrutiny of the coercive structures that shape public participation in state rituals, the affective claim redirects feelings of disgust and embarrassment towards the bodies of the individuals shown. By nominating them as representatives of the ‘Chinese people’, the claim renders the term a sticky signifier, casting the crowd not as politically subordinated subjects but as emblematic of a culturally ingrained deference to authoritarianism.

The public shaming of past political subjects, as illustrated above, is conducted on X, but the rationale behind such affective storytelling is not particular to platform-mediated communication. Rather, the capacity of affective claims about the Chinese people’s ‘national character’ to engage fellow X-based netizens per se sheds light on [Lunenburg and Rottger-Rossler’s \(2023\)](#) assertion on how affectivity provides the contextual grounds for the very formation and dynamics of political power struggles, which predate the digital age. Yet, in this process, we cannot completely overlook the supportive role played by X’s connective affordances, which maximise its relational impact across digital networks. As seen in tweet 1374, an intertextual reference to the incumbent Russian president, who is evidently idolised by a significant proportion of the Chinese public ([Zhou and Repnikova, 2024](#)), is made via a hashtag that directly names him. This intertextual reference underscores that Chinese admiration for foreign authoritarian leaders is not merely a historical phenomenon, but one that continues to shape the present. Given that the hashtag function also enables affect-laden narratives to reach a broader audience ([Papacharissi, 2015](#)), the hashtagged



Figure 2. Tweet 1374, recounting street celebrations of Stalin's birthday observed in China.

tweet serves to solicit a shared response from the international X community, one that is evidenced by high-level engagement metrics measured through follow-up comments, reposts, likes, and bookmarks. Aimed not at the Russian regime or the Party-state, but at the imagined figure of the Chinese citizenry as backward and irrational, the logic of affective politics behind the scenes opens up opportunities for mass participation in the platform-mediated propagation of Sinophobia.

The motif of ridiculing Chinese people, as exemplified in the example above, is far from incidental but reflects a broader pattern in GTM tweets. The stylised affective storytelling that characterises these tweets (e.g. Figure 3) deliberately mobilises the term 'Chinese people' as a sticky signifier. Anchored in the pre-existing national-character trope that structures its discursive-historical properties, this storytelling opens the bodies of ordinary Chinese people to mockery. On X, this communicative act is further facilitated by the repeated use of hashtags that link these tweets to ongoing conversations. In this way, the circulation of affective claims also exploits the participatory nature of platform-mediated interactions, leveraging connective action to vitalise practices of internalised racism that stylise aspects of the GTM as a dissent mobilisation.

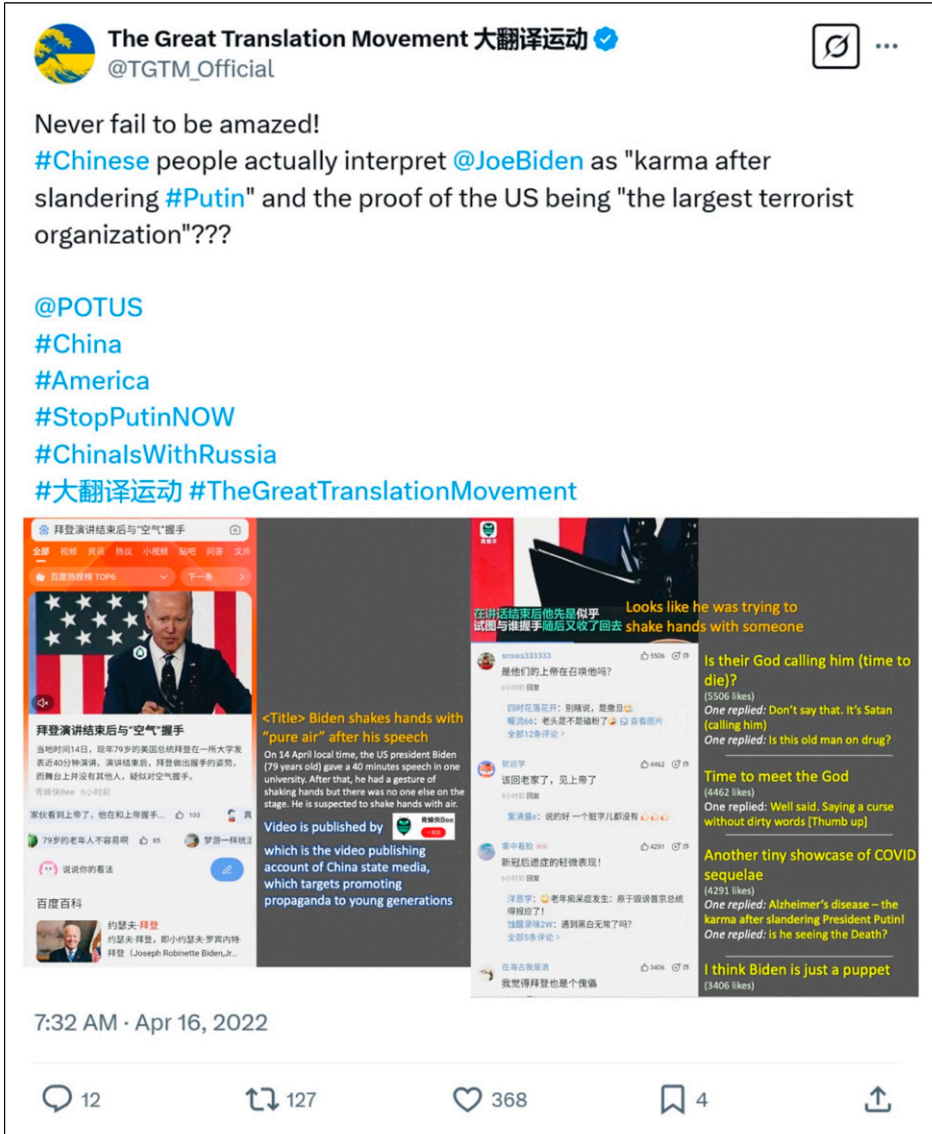


Figure 3. Tweet 432, mocking some Chinese netizens' idolisation of Putin and their subscription to conspiracy theories about Biden.

*Framing 'Chinese people' as emotional aliens*

Within GTM tweets, affective claims about Chinese people's national character are also constructed through an imaginary of them as emotional aliens. This trajectory of affective storytelling frequently foregrounds their emotional reactions as deviating from normative expectations outside of the Sinophone context.

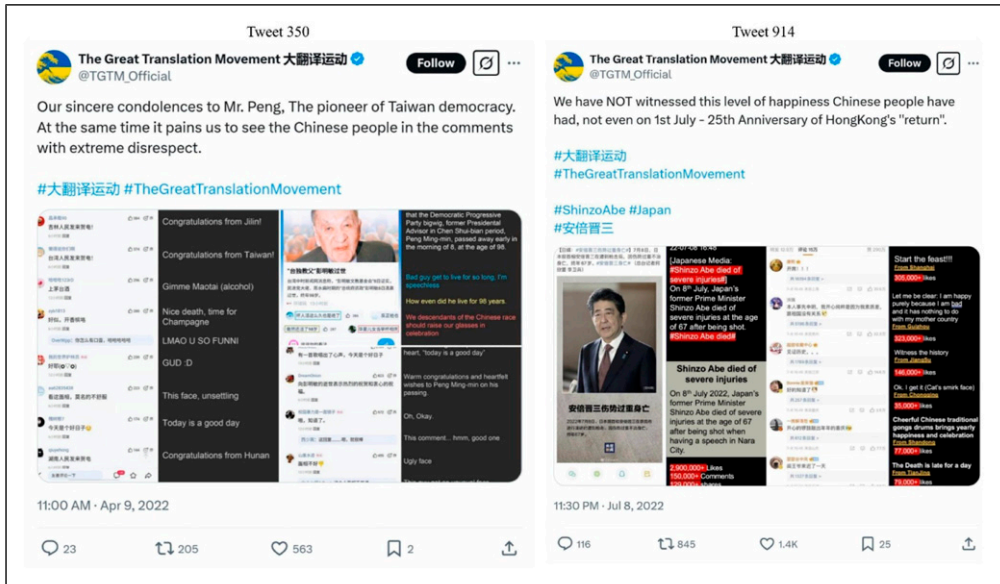


Figure 4. Tweets 350 and 914, exposing Weibo users’ celebrations of the deaths of Peng Ming-min and Shinzo Abe.

To a certain extent, tweets 350 and 914 (Figure 4) exemplify this recurring pattern, characterised by attempts to elicit an emotionally alienated imaginary of the Chinese people in contrast to the wider international community. Featuring screenshots extracted from Weibo, the Chinese-language equivalent of X, these tweets depict Chinese news reports on the deaths of Peng Ming-min, a Taiwanese pro-independence politician, and Shinzo Abe, a former Japanese prime minister, respectively. Highlighted here are ordinary Chinese netizens’ celebratory follow-up comments beneath the original news coverage.

Captured celebratory reactions to the deaths of the two politicians in China are contextualised within the specifics of Asia-Pacific geopolitics, where the nation shares tense, yet entangled, relations with its neighbours, Taiwan and Japan. While Beijing considers the former a breakaway territory awaiting reunification (Zhao, 2023), it frames the latter as a historical, as well as current, adversary due to its past imperial expansion and ongoing close relations with the US in the Sino-Western rivalry (Schneider, 2018). As once high-profile, nationalistic politicians from these two countries, Peng and Abe pursued geopolitical visions incompatible with the CCP’s agendas, leading to the repeated demonisation of their public imaginaries in Chinese media coverage. Given this background, one cannot expect to see widespread expressions of condolences for these politicians in China. Yet, the blatant celebrations of their deaths in the domestic Sinophone digital sphere apparently contradict the mood of mourning on this occasion.

As noted above, affective storytelling that constructs an emotionally alienated imaginary of the Chinese collective is typically achieved through claims of witnessing shared celebratory reactions to geopolitical events within China that would otherwise be considered inappropriate. In the cases examined here, characterised by their juxtaposition with solemn statements condoling the deaths, affective claims enable GTM coordinators to position themselves on a moral high ground, framing the vast majority of the Chinese people not only as complicit in reprehensible collective behaviour but also as a homogenised and inherently objectionable group. While implying a collective moral

failing, the storytelling otherises the Chinese people to elicit confusion or even anger amongst X-based audiences.

Indeed, a significant portion of GTM tweets commenting on international affairs marginalises the intricate sociopolitical realities. While highlighting their seemingly ‘abnormal’ reactions to emotionally intense events, such affective storytelling not only deliberately sidelines scrutiny of diverse public opinion across China’s vast territory (Yang, 2022) but also strategically downplays the significance of free expression on the heavily censored Chinese-language internet (Liu, 2024). In doing so, an oversimplified depiction of the nation’s political landscape is perpetuated. This communicative act once again contributes to the problematisation of ‘Chineseness’ and further revitalises the national-character trope in Sinophone power struggles within the transnational digital sphere.

### *Transforming ‘Chinese people’ into subjects of repulsion*

By highlighting certain reactions of ‘Chinese people’ to current events, the affective storytelling embedded in a subgroup of GTM tweets evidently attempts to attach their bodies to feelings of disgust. Our review suggests that such affective claims are typically made in response to members of the Chinese population’s reactions to events conventionally deemed apolitical.

Tweet 351 (Figure 5), for instance, employs screenshots of Douyin users’ comments to depict Chinese netizens’ reactions to the appearance of the incumbent Russian president’s daughter in state media coverage. At the forefront, the storytelling highlights these netizens’ reiteration of claims, originally made by a relative of the Russian dictator, that distort the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Beneath the surface-level, attempted ridicule of Chinese people, however, the tweet further accentuates the sexual undertones embedded in certain Douyin users’ comments. This affective punch draws upon a skewed interpretation of the war in Sinophone mainstream narratives, one distorted towards sexualisation, which typically manifests in misogynistic netizens expressing ‘sympathy’ towards female foreign nationals, both Russian and Ukrainian, implicated in the Eastern European conflict, based on their perceived sexual value (Zhou and Repnikova, 2024). Indeed, it is worth noting that digital misogyny is not only prominent but also recurrent on the Chinese-language internet, reflecting both the rise of manosphere culture in male-dominated echo chambers and the Party-state’s double-standard approach to censorship, which disproportionately targets feminist rhetoric as a perceived source of instability (Sun and Dai, 2024; Wallis, 2015). Yet, in GTM tweets, the misogynistic actions of specific netizens are overgeneralised to cast a collective moral judgement. This strategic deployment of affective storytelling primes global X audiences to experience disgust and, by extension, moral outrage, emotions that are subsequently projected not onto specific perpetrators but the entire Chinese populace.

As part of the transnational digital infrastructure, X is, in principle, accessible to all. The platform, in particular, enables grassroots actors to use the reply and quote-tweet functions to contest narratives and raise objections against one another. These connective affordances disrupt any singular control over claim-making in platform-mediated interactions. Yet, precisely because of these affordances, the platform also equips netizens to continuously reshape their narratives by responding to challenges in real time. As illustrated in the excerpt (Figure 6), GTM coordinators, in addition to propagating anti-regime critique through coordinated affective storytelling, frequently respond to critical voices directed at them. In this process, they do not reduce their responses to the mere dismissal of criticism but, instead, continually reaffirm their stance. Each interaction beneath an original GTM tweet is, thus, turned into an opportunity to further racialise the Chinese populace as

**The Great Translation Movement 大翻译运动** @TGTM\_Official Follow

Favorite hobby of Chinese: showing "tender, loving care" to women of other countries. Putin's daughters included.

Their logic: the West cannot defeat Putin, so they bully his kids.  
LOL

#TheGreatTranslationMovement  
#大翻译运动  
#StopPutinNOW

**英国宣布对普京和俄罗斯外长女儿发起制裁**  
她们将被限制旅行和冻结资产  
Britain announces sanctions against Putin's daughters and russian foreign minister's daughter. They will have travel restrictions and account freezes

普京女儿  
2k comments  
18k likes

当地时间4月8日, 英国外交部称英国当天发起的新制裁针对俄罗斯总统和俄罗斯外交部长拉夫罗夫的女儿。

**美国宣布新制裁“包括普京两个女儿”**  
The US announces new sanctions "including Putin's two daughters"

80k likes  
10k comments

当地时间4月6日, 美国宣布将对俄罗斯实施新一轮制裁, 制裁对象将首次包括俄罗斯总统普京的两个女儿。

2000 条评论

- 中国人民欢迎热烈欢迎你们 893 likes
- dajiangjun111 这话可不能乱说 24 likes
- 用户6859383241215阳光 中国大门随时为你长开, 欢迎 656 likes
- 我爱TVB 来中国吧, 有美食, 有优美的风景, 最重要的是没有病毒。 296 likes
- 丁班\_董董 欢迎来中国 377 likes

1.0w 条评论

- 美国儿 这不就像无赖打架, 打不过, 我欺负你家小孩。 21k likes
- 一元包在曹曹 这不就像农村人打架, 打不过, 我欺负你家小孩。 424 likes
- 暴走的椰歌 这不就像农村人打架, 打不过, 我欺负你家小孩。 9505 likes
- 美国儿 祸不及妻儿 5307 likes
- Angel 祸不及妻儿, 这就有点格局小了。 3336 likes
- 一针见血 无赖的表现, 打不过大人去欺负小孩 2669 likes

1:16 PM · Apr 9, 2022

37 168 465 4

Figure 5. Tweets 351, foregrounding Douyin users' comments about Putin's daughter.



Figure 6. Tweets 1408 and 1409, GTM coordinators interacting with X users.

emotionally alien, framed through seemingly plausible justifications. This communicative act further reinforces the association of all members of the Chinese citizenry with feelings of disgust, bolstering the affective storytelling grounded in the national-character trope, which extends beyond critique of the Party-state per se.

## Appealing to Euro-American far-/alt-right figures

Within the curation of the GTM, the repeated deployment of hashtags and @mentions characterises how its coordinators capitalise on connective affordances to embed affective claims about the ‘national character’ of the Chinese people within ongoing X-hosted conversations. Compared with hashtags, which are primarily poised to enhance cross-spectrum visibility, @mentions reveal a recurring pattern that latently aligns the initiative with Euro-American far-/alt-right politics.

As seen in [Table 1](#), many of the accounts tagged in GTM tweets appear to belong to far-/alt-right figures from outside China, including not only politicians from mainstream parties but also self-stylised influencers with substantial social media followings. While these public figures differ in the specific causes they campaign for, they share a commitment to promoting exclusionary agendas, both within their home nations and in international geopolitics.

In particular, the @mentions that tag far-/alt-right figures do not function merely as instruments of critical engagement but rather appear designed primarily to draw attention from these actors and, by extension, their followers on X. On this note, tweets 39 and 630 ([Figure 7](#)) offer a good illustration. By selectively foregrounding critiques of the UK’s pro-Ukraine stance or celebratory responses to US Covid-19 deaths on Weibo, these tweets strategically tag such public figures as Boris Johnson, Tucker Carlson, and Marco Rubio, with the textual component explicitly calling for their attention. Although Johnson’s vocal support for Ukraine during his premiership may appear at odds with Carlson’s and Rubio’s ambivalent or sympathetic stances towards Moscow, all three share a common ideological landscape within Western right-wing populism, united by hawkish rhetoric against China and immigration. Amongst the various cases, Carlson, in particular, has been a key amplifier of xenophobic conspiracies, oftentimes framing both the CCP and Chinese nationals as threats to US national security ([Jackson and Brenes, 2025](#)).

Unlike hashtags, @mentions scaffold a mode of directed connectivity rather than indexing thematic aggregation ([Jacobs et al., 2020](#)). By alerting high-profile individuals, whilst performing the act in a public register, the GTM tweets, with @mentions, prime affective engagement with the national-character trope not only from the focal figures but also from their followers within borderless digital networks. Hinged on racialised exclusion and geopolitical antagonism to build a cross-border reactionary alliance, this connectivity-oriented gesture increases the likelihood that

**Table 1.** A list of well-known right-wing actors tagged in GTM tweets.

Name	X handle	Notes	Frequency
Jack Posobiec	@JackPosobiec	US alt-right political activist and media commentator	8
Tucker Carlson	@TuckerCarlson	US conservative media commentator and former Fox News host	5
Kadota Ryusho	@KadotaRyusho	Japanese conservative writer and journalist	5
Boris Johnson	@BorisJohnson	Former UK Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader	4
Marco Rubio	@marcorubio	US Secretary of State and Republican politician	4
Kishi Nobuo	@KishiNobuo	Former Japanese Minister of Defence and conservative politician	4
Gordon G Chang	@GordonGChang	US lawyer, conservative political analyst, and columnist	3
Elon Musk	@elonmusk	US business tycoon and alt-right opinion leader	2
Jesse Kelly	@JesseKellyDC	US conservative media commentator and radio host	2
Takaichi Sanae	@Takaichi_Sanae	Japanese Prime Minister and conservative politician	2

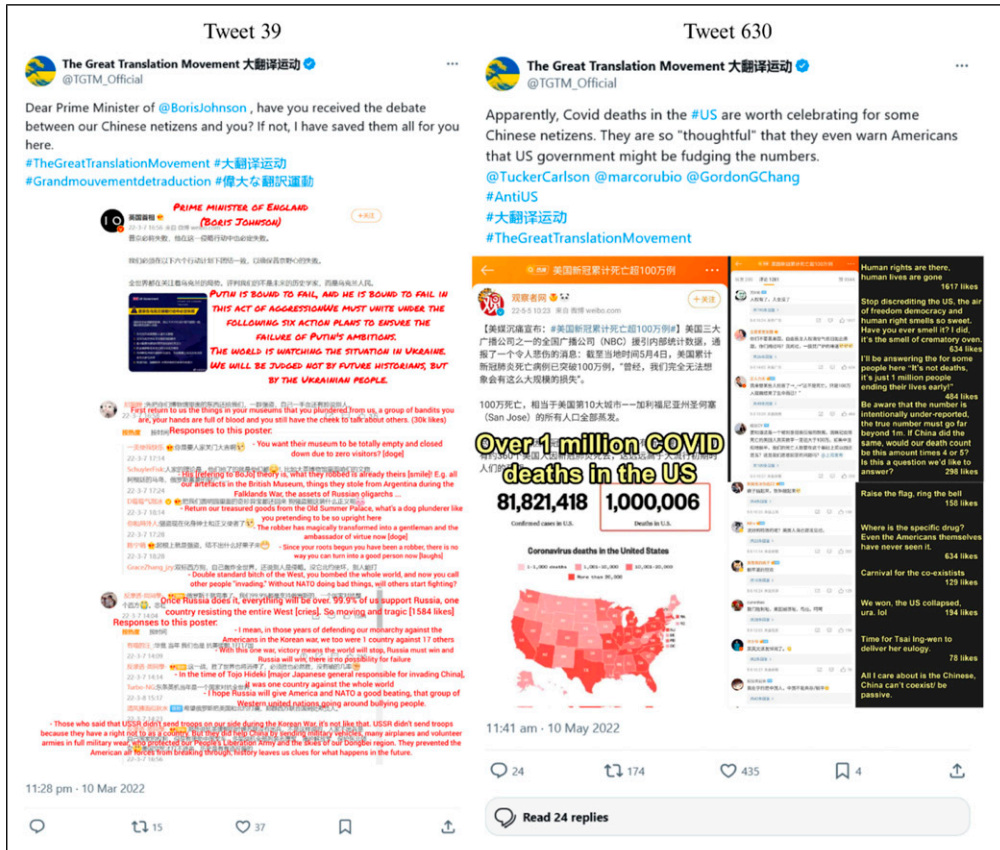


Figure 7. Tweets 39 and 630, forwarding distorted narratives from within China to Western right-wing politicians and influencers.

these GTM tweets will be absorbed into polarised information flows, thereby reinforcing the partisan nature of affective politics in the transnational digital sphere.

While we found no evidence that these tagged far-/alt-right figures responded directly to the GTM, the fact that its tweets are frequently cited in news coverage by far-/alt-right media networks, with the Falun Gong-affiliated *The Epoch Times* playing a particularly prominent role, nevertheless offers a glimpse of a cross-border reactionary alliance in the making. As a high-profile anti-authoritarian initiative, the GTM has indeed attracted media attention beyond the far-/alt-right echo chamber. Yet, unlike such outlets as *The Guardian* and *Deutsche Welle*, which provide balanced accounts of differing views (Peng et al., 2026), *The Epoch Times* tends to uncritically cite GTM tweets as evidential material illuminating the purported nature of China’s domestic political landscape (Table 2). The latent association of the GTM with Euro-American far-/alt-right actors arguably reiterates a broader trend in transnational Sinophone power struggles, wherein aspects of dissent against the Party-state often play into Western exclusionary politics.

The cross-border ideological alliance between Chinese dissidents and Euro-American far-/alt-right actors, as latently manifested in the GTM, is built upon the former’s idealised imaginaries of Western-style democracy as both politically superior and civilisationally exceptional, imaginaries

**Table 2.** Examples of *The Epoch Times* coverage citing GTM tweets.

Year	Title	URL
29 Mar 2022	Movement to Unveil CCP Domestic Propaganda to Western World Faces Crackdown from Beijing	<a href="https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-unveils-ccp-domestic-propaganda-faces-crackdown-from-beijing-4369687">https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-unveils-ccp-domestic-propaganda-faces-crackdown-from-beijing-4369687</a>
1 May 2022	The Great Translation Movement in Historical Perspective	<a href="https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-in-historical-perspective-4437325">https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-in-historical-perspective-4437325</a>
1 Aug 2022	Great Translation Movement Will Continue Exposing the CCP	<a href="https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-will-continue-exposing-the-ccp-manager-4635059">https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/the-great-translation-movement-will-continue-exposing-the-ccp-manager-4635059</a>
2022	CCP's Official Diplomatic Statement Translation Can Be Misleading: Study	<a href="https://www.theepochtimes.com/world/ccps-official-diplomatic-statement-translation-can-be-misleading-study-4756712">https://www.theepochtimes.com/world/ccps-official-diplomatic-statement-translation-can-be-misleading-study-4756712</a>
23 Jul 2024	Hong Kong Dissident Denied Bail While Detained in US	<a href="https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/hong-kong-dissident-denied-bail-while-detained-in-us-5691952">https://www.theepochtimes.com/china/hong-kong-dissident-denied-bail-while-detained-in-us-5691952</a>

that are inextricably linked to the historical evolution of the national-character trope, which has long framed whiteness as the universal referent of modernity (Li, 2021). It has fostered certain camps of Chinese dissidents' ideological affinity with Western right-wing populism, which seeks to restore a mythologised racial and civilisational order (Peng et al., 2025). In this process, the former's resistance to the Party-state has inevitably become embedded within the latter's racialised epistemology that valorises whiteness as the normative horizon of political emancipation.

Beyond ideological convergence, pragmatic considerations also inform some Chinese dissidents' engagement with Euro-American far-/alt-right actors. As China's global influence grows, Western right-wing establishments have instrumentalised anti-China sentiment to justify economic protectionism and nationalist policymaking (McInerney, 2024). Many regime critics are drawn to such China-bashing rhetoric, viewing alignment with far-/alt-right causes as a strategic manoeuvre to advance anti-authoritarian initiatives in their home country. However, this approach does little to serve broader emancipatory agendas, merely reinforcing, rather than dismantling, racialised exclusions and structural injustices (Sun and Yu, 2023). This reflects a troubling development in global reactionary politics, where opposition to authoritarianism in the South may paradoxically legitimise authoritarian-leaning forces elsewhere.

## Concluding remarks

As the analysis demonstrates, while ostensibly opposing the Party-state, the GTM constitutes a distorted paradigm of dissent that reproduces and intensifies Sinophobia within the transnational digital sphere. Central to its coordination is an affective logic. By drawing on discursive-historical entanglements between Chinese bodies and the enduring national-character trope, as well as intertextual references to past memories refracted through present events, GTM tweets strategically reconstitute 'Chinese people' as a sticky signifier within the lexicon of anti-regime dissent. In doing so, they mobilise affective claims that stick the bodies of Chinese people to negative emotions, evoking and amplifying pre-existing currents of Sinophobia within the transnational digital sphere to

stage a distorted metamorphosis of grassroots resistance to the Party-state. In this light, the GTM plays into the affective logic of internalised racism, recasting dissent as transnationally intelligible storytelling of moral pathology that legitimises Eurocentric imaginaries of both China and its people.

The contribution of this research lies in articulating a dual analytical focus on both affective and connective platform affordances, which together illuminate how affective politics specific to the transnational digital sphere reshapes the coordination of distorted dissent in the Chinese context. These affordances enable GTM coordinators to curate affective claims that provoke moral revulsion towards the Chinese populace, extrapolating collective culpability from the rhetoric or actions of select individuals. Building on affectivity-oriented practices, GTM coordinators also capitalise on connective affordances, most notably @mentions, to maximise the visibility and circulation of these claims. By establishing stylised patterns and targeting high-profile figures within digital networks, GTM tweets are calibrated to prime affective engagement with ‘the Chinese people’, particularly from Euro-American far-/alt-right spectrums, through a lens of collective condemnation. Such affective politics collapses distinctions between the Party-state and the citizenry, reifying ‘Chinese people’ as a monolithic and culpable subject, irrespective of individual political positioning or dissenting stance.

The logic of affective politics identified through the GTM case is far from incidental, as it reinscribes the national-character trope long embedded in a Chinese gaze on modernity (Xu, 2025). The fact that GTM coordinators are members of the Chinese diaspora who voluntarily seek alliances with Western far-/alt-right actors further complicates this dynamic. Their positionality reveals a mode of self-racialising dissent, wherein Eurocentric racial hierarchies shape the very terms through which critique of authoritarianism is articulated. What emerges is a diasporic politics of dis-identification, one that paradoxically converges with global structures of internalised racism, surfacing as the other side of the same coin as the nationalist axis within China’s domestic political landscape (Liu et al., 2021).

As a byproduct of the Eurocentric process of modernity, internalised racism generally legitimises racial hierarchies that underpin white hegemony (Pyke, 2010; Seet, 2021). In the Chinese context, distorted dissent largely continues this logic. As analysed, GTM coordinators produce and amplify self-racialising affective storytelling by strategically engaging with Euro-American right-wing populism on X. This dynamic facilitates the appropriation of their anti-regime dissent by broader reactionary formations. It is particularly worth noting that GTM coordinators’ opposition to the CCP’s pro-Kremlin narratives has not at all precluded their sustained engagement with far-/alt-right figures sympathetic to Russian aggressors, as evidenced most tellingly by their stylised use of @mentions to tag them on X. Even when expressing discontent with Trump’s abandonment of Ukraine, as in a recent GTM tweet stating, ‘Trump’s betrayal of Ukraine has increased China’s ambition to annex Taiwan’ (GTM, 2025: n.p.), such selective critique does not constitute a substantive break from Euro-American right-wing populism.

It should be noted that our criticism of distorted dissent in no way aligns our stance with that of the Party-state. Indeed, we have observed how the CCP’s propaganda apparatus mobilises its full capacity to stigmatise the GTM, often by selectively extracting content from its tweets and presenting it out of context (The Paper, 2022), as part of the Party-state’s broader efforts to discredit anti-authoritarian campaigns. Yet, recognising the imperative to challenge authoritarianism should not equate to an unconditional glorification of dissent in any form, either.

The popular framing of liberal-leaning grassroots actors as natural allies of democratisation warrants critical scrutiny within authoritarian contexts. In particular, many Chinese liberals remain committed to market optimism today (Li, 2021). This leads many liberal-leaning regime critics to embrace neoliberal tenets, despite their resentment of the global structural inequalities perpetuated

by neoliberal capitalism (Huang et al., 2019; Pan and Xu, 2018). While adopting anti-globalist postures, contemporary far-/alt-right politicians continue to brand themselves as defenders of libertarian values (Wodak, 2015). Their ideological affinity with neoliberal principles prompts these liberal-leaning regime critics to voluntarily propagate the latter's reactionary causes. Time and again, this exemplifies how grassroots resistance to authoritarianism can be co-opted by ideological formations that ultimately uphold racialised civilisational interests (Zhang, 2024).

Based on a single case study, these research findings cannot be uncritically overgeneralised. Nevertheless, they shed new light on a broader pattern contributing to an informed understanding of cross-border reactionary campaigns. Amid China's challenge to US hegemony (Keane and Yu, 2019), critical inquiries must neither concede to its oppressive rule in the name of anti-colonialism nor uncritically valorise dissent against its oppressive rule (Bolsover and Howard, 2019; Thornton, 2008). As the current research confirms, grassroots resistance is never immune to reactionary tendencies. In the global resurgence of Cold War mentalities, an anti-China consensus has been in the making across Euro-American nations, shaping both their public opinion and policymaking (Sun and Yu, 2023). As right-wing populist momentum accelerates globally, this conjuncture requires critical scholars to move beyond a reductive regime-vs-dissent binary to effectively uncover the dynamics amongst authoritarianism, reactionary politics, and global racial hierarchies so as to scaffold more nuanced and genuinely progressive alternatives (Wallis, 2015; Zhang, 2024). Future research should thus investigate how affective politics unfolds across diverse contexts and digital platforms, particularly in the formation of transnational reactionary alliances.

## Acknowledgements

We thank two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript. The original idea for this article grew out of an invited academic commentary titled *Protesting the Party-state through Self-racialisation* (Available at: <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2025/03/10/protesting-the-party-state-through-self-racialisation/>), and we are grateful to Dr Chenchen Zhang and Dr Ivan Franceschini for encouraging us to pursue this research trajectory.

## ORCID iDs

Altman Yuzhu Peng  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3440-0761>

Chunyan Wu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6531-1219>

Stephanie Schnurr  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4072-0726>

## Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the British Academy; SRG2324/240347.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## References

- Ahmed S (2012) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge.
- Bennett WL and Segerberg A (2013) *The Logic of Connective Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Berlant L (2011) *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press.

- Bolsover G and Howard P (2019) Chinese computational propaganda: automation, algorithms and the manipulation of information about Chinese politics on Twitter and Weibo. *Information, Communication & Society* 22(14): 2063–2080. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1476576>
- Chen D and Gao G (2023) The transgressive rhetoric of standup comedy in China. *Critical Discourse Studies* 20(1): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2021.1968450>
- Chouliaraki L (2021) Victimhood: the affective politics of vulnerability. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 24(1): 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549420979316>
- Chouliaraki L and Georgiou M (2022) *The Digital Border*. New York University Press.
- Cvetkovich A (2012) *Depression*. Duke University Press.
- Dai L (2025) Affective (counter)publics as a critical concept: rethinking affective publics from the history of Chinese Americans in the exclusion era. *Communication Theory* 35(1): 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtac024>
- de Kloet J, Lin J and Hu J (2021) The politics of emotion during COVID-19: turning fear into pride in China's WeChat discourse. *China Information* 35(3): 366–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203x211048290>
- Fleig A and von Scheve C (2020) *Public Spheres of Resonance*. Routledge.
- GTM (2025) @TGTM\_Official. Available at. [https://x.com/TGTM\\_Official/status/1893588308183183736](https://x.com/TGTM_Official/status/1893588308183183736). (accessed 3 April 2025).
- Guo S (2021) *The Evolution of the Chinese Internet*. Stanford University Press.
- Hall S (1986) Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10(2): 5–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000202>
- Han R (2018) *Contesting Cyberspace in China*. Columbia University Press.
- Hooks B (2003) *Rock My Soul*. Atria Books.
- Huang R, Gui Y and Sun X (2019) Beyond the left-right spectrum: a typological analysis of ideologues in China's Weibo space. *Journal of Contemporary China* 28(119): 831–847. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1580423>
- Jackson V and Brenes M (2025) *The Rivalry Peril*. Yale University Press.
- Jacobs K, Sandberg L and Spierings N (2020) Twitter and Facebook: populists' double-barreled gun? *New Media and Society* 22(4): 611–633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819893991>
- Kavada A and Poell T (2021) From counterpublics to contentious publicness. *Communication Theory* 31(2): 190–208. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtaa025>
- Keane M and Yu H (2019) A digital empire in the making: China's outbound digital platforms. *International Journal of Communication* 13: 4624–4641.
- Li P (2021) From the 'Chinese national character' debates of yesterday to the anti-China foreign policy of today. *Made in China Journal* 6(3): 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.22459/mic.06.03.2021.04>
- Liu J (2024) Internet censorship in China: looking through the lens of categorisation. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* (Advance online): 1–16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681026231220948>
- Liu T, Xu M and Chen X (2021) Social media, gendered anxiety, and disease-related misinformation. *Asian Journal of Communication* 31(6): 485–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2021.1941150>
- Lunenburg M and Rottger-Rössler B (2023) *Affective Formation of Publics*. Routledge.
- Luo Y and Fang K (2025) Transnational citizen journalism for resistance and solidarity: the case of a sinophone community on Instagram. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 30(2): 462–483. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241291812>
- Luqiu RL and Liao SX (2021) Rethinking 'the personal is political': enacting agency in the narrative of sexual harassment experiences in China. *Discourse and Society* 32(6): 708–727.
- Mattoni A, Barassi V and Kavada A (2020) Movement cultures and media in grassroots politics. *Information, Communication & Society* 23(12): 1713–1717. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2019.1675739>

- McInerney K (2024) Yellow techno-peril: the ‘clash of civilisations’ and anti-Chinese racial rhetoric in the US-China AI arms race. *Big Data and Society* 11(2): 1–13.
- Miao W, Jiang M and Pang Y (2021) Historicising internet regulation in China: a meta-analysis of Chinese internet policies (1994–2017). *International Journal of Communication* 15: 2003–2026. Available at: <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15944/3426>.
- Milani TM and Richardson JE (2023) Discourses of collective remembering: contestation, politics, affect. *Critical Discourse Studies* 20(5): 459–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2022.2090979>
- Neyazi TA and Kuru O (2024) Motivated mobilisation: the role of emotions in the processing of poll messages. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 29(1): 184–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612221086907>
- Pan J and Xu Y (2018) China’s ideological spectrum. *The Journal of Politics* 80(1): 254–273. <https://doi.org/10.1086/694255>
- Papacharissi Z (2015) *Affective Publics*. Oxford University Press.
- Peng Y, Yang T and Fang K (2025) The dark side of entertainment? How viral entertaining media build an attention base for the far-right politics of the epoch times. *New Media and Society* 27(4): 2087–2108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231205893>
- Peng AY, Wu C and Sun Y (2026) Curating activist journalism to defy China’s ‘mainstream’ narrative on X (twitter). *Critical Discourse Studies* 23(2): 135–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2024.2430519>
- Pyke KD (2010) What is internalised racial oppression and why don’t we study it? Acknowledging racism’s hidden injuries. *Sociological Perspectives* 53(4): 551–572. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.551>
- Qin AY, Xiao F and Dai L (2025) Tell China’s conspiracy well: networks and narratives of anti-CCP YouTube conspiracy theorists. *Convergence* (Advance online): 1–21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565251392612>
- Richardson JE, Giraud EH, Poole E, et al. (2024) Hypocrite!’ affective and argumentative engagement on twitter, following the christchurch terrorist attack. *Media, Culture & Society* 46(6): 1105–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437241229322>
- Saldana J (2016) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage.
- Schneider F (2018) *China’s Digital Nationalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Seet AZ (2021) Serving the white nation: bringing internalised racism within a sociological understanding. *Journal of Sociology* 57(2): 213–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319882087>
- Seigworth GJ and Pedwell C (2023) *The Affect Theory Reader 2*. Duke University Press.
- Sommer U and Franco I (2025) *The Emerging Republican Minorities*. Bloomsbury.
- Sun W (2016) *The Chinese National Character*. Routledge.
- Sun L and Dai L (2024) Welcome to this brave bro’s world: the (re)production of hegemonic masculinity in a Chinese manosphere. *Feminist Media Studies*: 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2024.2400488>
- Sun Y and Wright S (2024) Relay activism and the flows of contentious publicness on WeChat: a case study of COVID-19 in China. *Information, Communication & Society* 27(2016): 1–21.
- Sun W and Yu H (2023) *Digital Transnationalism*. Brill.
- The Paper (2022) Fact check: unpacking the ‘Great Translation Movement’ [明查: 拆解“大翻译运动”]. *The Paper*, 16 February. Shanghai, Available at: [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_17829990](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_17829990). (accessed 17 February 2025).
- Thornton PM (2008) Manufacturing dissent in transnational China. In: O’Brien KJ (ed) *Popular Protest in China*. Harvard University Press, pp. 179–204.
- Uldam J (2018) Social media visibility: challenges to activism. *Media, Culture & Society* 40(1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717704997>
- Wallis C (2015) Gender and China’s online censorship protest culture. *Feminist Media Studies* 15(2): 223–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.928645>
- Wodak R (2015) *The Politics of Fear*. Sage.

- Wu AX (2020) The evolution of regime imaginaries on the Chinese internet. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 25(2): 139–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2020.1750759>
- Xu CL (2025) Epistemic injustice and neo-racism: how zhihu users portray ‘Chinese doctoral supervisors’ working in Western academia. *Higher Education* 89(5): 1275–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01272-4>
- Yang G (2022) *The Wuhan Lockdown*. Columbia University Press.
- Zeng J and Cheng CY (2025) Diasporic citizen journalism: exploring the discussion on the 2022 blank paper protests in the Chinese Twitter community. *Journalism* 26(5): 1047–1066. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241250191>
- Zhang C (2024) Race, gender, and occidentalism in global reactionary discourses. *Review of International Studies* (Advance online): 1–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210524000299>
- Zhao S (2023) Is Beijing’s long game on Taiwan about to end? Peaceful unification, brinkmanship, and military takeover. *Journal of Contemporary China* 32(143): 705–726.
- Zhou WW and Repnikova M (2024) Different shades of nationalism: unpacking Chinese online narratives about the Russia-Ukraine war. *The China Journal* 92(1): 46–70. <https://doi.org/10.1086/730498>

### Author biographies

**Altman Yuzhu Peng**, PhD, is Associate Professor in Intercultural Communication and Director of the MSc in Intercultural Communication programme at the University of Warwick, UK. His research interests lie at the intersections of critical discourse studies, feminism, media and cultural studies, and masculinity studies. Email: [altman.peng@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:altman.peng@warwick.ac.uk).

**Chunyan Wu**, PhD, is Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Northeastern University London, UK. Her research interests focus on social media analysis, digital journalism, political communication, international communication, and media and cultural analysis. Email: [chunyan.wu@nulondon.ac.uk](mailto:chunyan.wu@nulondon.ac.uk).

**Stephanie Schnurr**, PhD, is Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. Her research interests are professional and medical communication. She is particularly interested in leadership and the many advantages of approaching leadership through discourse. Email: [s.schnurr@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:s.schnurr@warwick.ac.uk).