

Intercultural Communication Strategies in Diplomatic Relations: A Case Study of Donald Trump's First Visit to China

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Abstract

This paper explores the intercultural communication strategies adopted respectively by Chinese President Xi Jinping and United States' President Donald Trump during the latter's first state visit to China. Based on Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions and Hall's theory of high-low context, the author makes an analysis of the strategies and concludes that high-low cultures will not constitute the barriers for communications between different countries with different cultures, and further points out that intercultural communication strategies in diplomatic relations, on the one hand, are embodiment of cultural dimensions, and on the other hand, are determined by leader personality, national strength and demand for interest.

Key words: Intercultural communication strategy; Diplomatic relations; Cultural dimension; High-low culture; China (PRC); United States of America (USA)

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INTRODUCTION

From the 8th to 10th November, 2017, Donald Trump, after taking office as the President of the United States in January, paid his first state visit to China and was warmly accommodated on the second day by Chinese President Xi

Jinping in Forbidden City. The visit was a great success for both parties, not only for signing business deals with a total value of more than US\$ 250bn, but reaching agreements on a series of issues.

The visit grabbed world attention with wide coverage. The two countries are typical representatives of their respective social systems, with China a socialist country and the USA a capitalist country; the two countries are the first and second largest economic entities in the world, with China the largest developing country and USA the largest developed country. In particular, they represent two quite different cultures, the oriental and occidental cultures.

Then how did the two governments, especially the two leaders, putting aside cultural differences and political discrepancies, come to terms with each other, at least within their administrative periods? What strategies or attitudes have they adopted in this intercultural communication to strengthen and consolidate the bilateral relationship? This paper will explore the strategies adopted by the two leaders based on Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions and Hall's high/low context theory to find out the deeper reasons for intercultural strategies in practice.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Economic and Trade Relations Between China and USA

As the biggest developing country and the biggest developed country, China and the U.S. enjoy great complementarity, and the bilateral economic and trade relations have been growing rapidly since the establishment of diplomatic ties (China Embassy in the USA), especially with China's Reform and Opening policy and the joining in WTO, making China-US trade and economic cooperation exert an increasingly important

global impact (Ministry of Commerce, PRC).

According to Census Bureau of the United States government, volume of trade in goods with China has increased from \$62,936.9m/\$321,442.9m (Export/Import)

in 2007 to \$115,602.1m/\$462,618.1m in 2016. In 2015, China surpassed Canada to be the largest trading partner of the USA in total trade volume, and has ever since remained on the top of the rank (See Table 1).

Table 1
As of September 2017

Rank	Country	Exports	Imports	Total trade	Percent of total trade
---	Total, All Countries	1,139.0	1,724.2	2,863.3	100.0%
1	China	91.0	364.8	455.8	15.9%

Source: <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/top/top1709yr.html#total>.

On the other hand, due to the fact that China and USA are at different stages of development, there has been a US trade deficit with China for many years, reaching \$347 billion in 2016 (Kimberly, 2017). To change the situation for the sake of American interest, President Donald Trump has threatened to impose duties on Chinese imports, hoping China to do more to raise its currency so as to lower trade deficit with China.

1.2 Make America Great Again

During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump had promised to “make America great again”, and bringing back jobs from China is one of his promises. After entering the White House, he has taken measures to implement his administrative program. Since China is not only the largest trading partner of the US, but also the largest fast-growing consumer market, he “has to be pragmatic and needs help from China in reviving the US economy¹. Therefore, it is President Trump’s top priority to visit China to get more deals for US factories and companies through negotiation.

What’s more, the US will continue to play its traditional leading role in international affairs, especially the sensitive North Korean issue in East Asia. In this respect, President Trump will need help or support from China due to its traditional relationship and geographical location with North Korea. Therefore, seeking deeper cooperation with China in bilateral trade and international relations constitutes a major part of his American Dream.

1.3 Rejuvenation of China

Early in November 2012, the newly elected president Xi Jinping put forth Chinese Dream, which integrates national and personal aspirations by reclaiming national pride and achieving personal well-being². Through sustained economic growth, expanded equality and an infusion of cultural values, it is to “secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects” and “work tirelessly to realize the Chinese

Dream of national rejuvenation”³.

In October, 2017, prior to President Trump’s visit to China, the China Communist Party held its 19th congress, at which President Xi Jinping secured his second term and proclaimed a new era of China. As the world’s second largest economy, the largest developing country, and the largest trading partner of US, China is experiencing a critical period to elevate its economic structure. Whether from traditional and existing relationship, or for future development, it is necessary for China to cooperate with the US to introduce advanced technology and expertise from the latter. And on the other hand, the support of the US is of primary importance in further strengthening China’s international image and national identity. According to The Guardian, “Beijing is also hoping to make itself look great again - both within China and around the world - through Trump’s presence on Chinese soil (Benjamin Haas November 8, 2017)⁴.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Hofstede’s Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Traditionally, there are three approaches for the study of intercultural communication, namely interpretive, critical and social science (Ting-Toomey 2010). Social scientific approach is the use of “certain theoretical value dimensions in explaining and predicting particular intercultural communication phenomena” (Ting-Toomey, 2010, p.171). Since China and the US are representatives of eastern and western cultures respectively, the interpersonal interaction between President Xi and Trump reflects the convergence of the two cultures and will naturally involve strategies they adopt in this intercultural communication. In this paper, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and Hall’s high-low context theories are used as the basic theoretical framework for the analysis for President Trump visit to China.

Culture, as defined by Hofstede (2001) is the “collective programming of the mind” which “manifests

¹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2119437/what-chinese-people-think-donald-trumps-visit>

² http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2014-03/26/content_17380146.htm

³ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/08/what-will-happen-on-donald-trumps-state-visit-to-china>

itself not only in values, but in more superficial ways: in symbols, heroes, and rituals (Hofstede, 2001, p.1). He maintains that as a form of collective activities, rituals keep the individual bound within the norms of the collectivity, such as ways of greeting and paying respect to others, as well as social and religious ceremonies.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions include: Power distance, related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality; Uncertainty avoidance, related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future; Individualism versus collectivism, related to the integration of individuals into primary groups; Masculinity versus femininity, related to the division of emotional roles between men and women; Long-term versus short-term orientation, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present (Hofstede, 2001, p.29).

Originally developed within IBM company and applied to organizational behavior, these cultural dimensions have later been introduced widely into a number of other disciplines of social science. Despite some criticisms from researchers (Eringa et al., 2015; Schmitz & Weber, 2014), Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions still carries much weight and provides practical framework for analysis of organizational and social phenomena.

2.2 Hall's Theory of High-Low Context

The concept of high/low-context cultures is put forward and developed by Edward T. Hall, the American anthropologist. The concept was originally introduced in 1959 in his "The Silent Language" relating to three dimensions: time, space and context, and later elaborated further in his "Beyond Culture" (Kittler, Rygl, & Mackinnon, 2011) which was then widely adopted in the field of intercultural research. As "one of the dominant theoretical frameworks for interpreting intercultural communication" (Cardon, 2008), Hall's model of high/low-context cultures has enabled people to understand different cultural orientations (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998) in cross-cultural business activities.

Based on cross-national studies, Hall (2000, p.37) maintains "the level of context determines everything about the nature of the communication and is the foundation on which all subsequent behavior rests." When expounded with Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, low-context cultures are usually individualist cultures such as USA, Canada and Germany, where people tend to be straightforward and direct in communication and messages are contained in verbal codes; whereas high-context cultures are generally collectivist cultures such as Africa, Asia and South America, where communication is likely to be indirect and formal, with meaning having to be inferred from contexts or settings and not from words themselves (Jackson, 2010, p.102). Members from outside high-context cultures usually have difficulty understanding what people really mean, but members from within the

cultures can easily communicate with each other because they have established "cultural knowledge, nonverbal gestures, and shared experiences" in their interpersonal relationship (Jackson, 2010, p.102).

3. RESPECTIVE STRATEGIES OF XI AND TRUMP

3.1 Introduction

Against the background as mentioned above, the US needs help from China to address its trade deficit and stimulate domestic employment, and also needs support from China to ease Korea Peninsula tension. On the other hand, China is in want of American advanced technologies and expertise to enhance its economic structure and the image of world power. Both presidents are in need of the other party to consolidate their self-image at home and abroad. Therefore, despite the differences in history, ideology and culture, both the two leaders adopted appropriate strategies in this historical occasion of intercultural communication.

3.2 President Xi's Strategies

Shortly after President Trump's arrival in Beijing, he was treated by President Xi Jinping to a personal tour of the Forbidden City and a night at the opera (The Guardian Nov. 8 2017), which is different from the previous treatment of other American Presidents, generally held in Zhongnanhai. The place chosen and the activities arranged conveyed non-verbal messages themselves, with the analysis as the following:

First, a Chinese saying goes that "Courtesy deserves the same treatment in return", or "It is a polite routine to treat somebody well who treats you well first." In April 2017, President Donald Trump hosted President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan at Mar-a-Lago retreat, Trump's private estate. According to a senior White House official, as reported by Reuters (Steve, April 5 2017), this is a place "where he feels comfortable and at home, and where he can break the ice with Xi Jinping without the formality, really, of a Washington meet-up". The report also quotes former U.S. ambassador to China, Max Baucus' words that "Mar-a-Lago will probably help enhance conversation between the two of them"⁵. The meeting was proved to be a success, with Sun-Sentinel covering the event with the title "Trump has 'developed a friendship' with Chinese president after Mar-a-Lago meeting" (Andy Reid, April 6, 2017). South China Morning Post also believes the venue is a good choice before the meeting is held based on the following reasons: (a) The relaxed setting of the Florida resort will give Xi and Trump ample time to see if they can nurture a high-level working relationship, if

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-mar-a-lago/for-trump-mar-a-lago-is-place-to-break-the-ice-with-chinas-xi-idUSKBN1772N8>

not friendship. (b) The informal setting, rather than the typical formal trappings of a state visit, will not put undue pressure on either side to yield concrete results, which is unrealistic under the current circumstances. (c) Xi has been very open to using a more informal style to nurture friendships with foreign leaders (Wang, March 29, 2017)⁶.

Therefore, accommodating President Trump and the first lady Melania in the Forbidden City is, first of all, President Xi Jinping's arrangement in return for his hospitality in Mar-a-Lago in April 2017, which is also a customary practice in China. Secondly, the Forbidden City, the Peking Opera performance and tea ceremony combined to transmit the message that (a) China is a country with long history and rich culture; (b) President Xi would like to build up personal relationship and trust with President Trump, which will be the prerequisite for solving disputes, conflicts and crisis through dialogue and negotiation; (c) Understanding of Chinese history and culture can help better understand the thinking of Chinese people, thus getting deeper insights of the decisions made by Chinese government, which is conducive to mutual understanding and mutual trust.

A brief look at the history of the Forbidden City, the Peking Opera, and tea ceremony will help illustrate this perspective.

3.2.1 Forbidden City History

The Forbidden City is located at the center of Beijing, China and was built in the 15th century, originally as the palace of the emperors of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) which was later replaced by Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It continued to be the residence and administrative place for the emperors till the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. It has then been a museum since the 1920s after serving as the imperial palace for about five hundred years. In 1987, it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Going through more than two dynasties, the Forbidden City is not only a symbol of power, but a crystallization of Chinese culture in such aspects as aesthetics, architecture, politics and history.

The Forbidden City consists of three Halls, namely The Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony and the Hall of Preserving Harmony, all of which carry the Chinese character "he" (和) which means peace and harmony in Chinese culture.

3.2.2 Peking Opera History

Peking Opera, which originated and matured in Beijing, is "a highly comprehensive art, integrating music, singing, gesture, costume, make-up, movement, words, acrobatics, and stagecraft in a way unique in the world" (Mackerras, 1994). This form of art had grown up in China since the Ming Dynasty, gathered its momentum during Qing Dynasty under the reign (1735-96) of the famous Qianlong

Emperor. Then after several phases of development from infancy, formation and maturity, Peking Opera reached its peak period in the 1920s.

In 1930, Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), the premier exponent of female roles in Peking Opera, made a six-month performance tour across the United States, "took the hearts of American theater lovers by storm" and becoming "a trumpeted media spectacle, hailed as a triumph of cultural exchange" in both countries (Goldstein, 1999). Despite the decline since the 1930s, Peking Opera is still retained and regarded as China's National Opera for its characteristics of Chinese traditional culture. It has been always playing a part at the most popular program of Spring Festival Evening Party on China's CCTV since 1980s. The national rejuvenation as put forth in President Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream also includes the rejuvenation of traditional cultures such as Peking Opera.

3.2.3 Tea Ceremony

Tea is believed to be first cultivated and the leaf brewed as a beverage in China (Jolliffe, 2003), then spread to other parts of the world by trade. It plays so important a role in Asian culture, especially in China that drinking tea has become the most popular routine in accommodating guests, with a combination of social, cultural and traditional values. Tea ceremony, which consists of complicated process from tea leaf, water and tools selection to the preparation, requires professional expertise and provides great enjoyment to people. Tea ceremony is usually held under very relaxed and comfortable settings, and on the other hand, also creates cozy and pleasant atmosphere conducive to friendly and frank conversation.

3.2.4 Dialogue in Forbidden City

As discussed above, President Xi choose different forms of non-verbal communication such as symbols like the Forbidden City, art form like Peking Opera, and rituals like tea ceremony to convey explicit messages to President Trump that Chinese culture, which is based on the long history of development, is a high-context culture, but they are hospitable, friendly, and willing to play constructive role in international affairs. Hofstede maintains that culture is "the crystallization of history in the minds, hearts and hands of the present generation, and cultural differences cannot be understood without the study of history" (Hofstede, 2001, p.12). So if President has a better and deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture, he would be in a better position to understand China's stance and decision-making in Sino-US relationship and international forum.

Besides the non-verbal communication, a dialogue between President Xi and President Trump during their tour of the Forbidden City more clearly reflected Xi's concepts and ambition. The transcript from a short video is as follows:

Trump: China has a history of five-thousand years, is that right?

Xi: Three-thousand years for written recorded history.

⁶ <http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2079403/when-xi-meets-trump-why-casual-approach-mar-lago-could-pay>

Trump: The oldest culture they say is Egypt, with eight-thousand (years).

Xi: Yes, Egypt is a bit older than China. But China has the only continuous civilization.

Trump: So this is the original form of your culture.

Xi: Yes, we are just like our ancestors, with black hair and yellow skin. We are called the descendants of the Dragon.

Trump: Impressive!

Since this is an informal occasion, so the small conversation between President Xi and President Trump is also a casual one. Nevertheless, we can infer some hidden messages from the conversation.

First, the Forbidden City has a history of more than five-hundred years, so they naturally talk about history in this place. President Trump might know about the history of China if he is interested in history and China, or he must have made some preparation before coming to China, which is understandable. He started from the five-thousand years of history of China, which is a kind of appreciation. Even it is a truth, President Xi, just like almost any Chinese, did not admit with "Yes", but moderately replied that China has (only) three-thousand years of history if considered from written record, which indicates the general character of Chinese people.

Secondly, the topic shifted from history to culture when President Trump mentioned that Egypt has the oldest culture with eight-thousand years. He might wanted to belittle China with this comparison, or just instinctively thought of Egypt based on his possibly limited knowledge in history. President Xi, who must have studied history of both China and the world before putting forth his dream of "rejuvenation of China", did not deny that, but meanwhile turned to the unique Chinese characteristic of the only continuous culture in the world. This cultural continuity embodies the strong vitality, adaptability and endurance of Chinese culture after experiencing countless ups and downs, just as Hofstede pointed out that "History has shown cases of peoples that through such systems have maintained identities over hundreds and thousands of years, even in the face of such sweeping changes as loss of independence, deportation, and loss of language (Hofstede, 2001, p.13)." Chinese people, who had been ruled by several minor ethnic minorities besides the dominant Han ethnic group, and who was also once a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, have maintained its identity regardless of the difficulties and hardships. This reply indicates President Xi's pride in Chinese unique culture and he is assuming national identity in front of Mr. Trump, the president of the current world power.

Third, from continuity of Chinese civilization, President Trump concludes that this is the original form of Chinese culture, from which, President Xi shifted the topic to the people, reiterating his pride in being a decedent of the Dragon.

To sum up, from history to culture to people, this seemingly casual and small conversation between the two presidents reflected President Xi's thought, ambition

and beliefs. No wonder the title "Trump gets schooled on Chinese history by Xi Jinping"⁷ is given to this clip.

3.2.5 Summary

In this part, we analyzed the strategies adopted by President Xi Jinping in accommodating President Trump and his wife Melania for their first state visit to China. The selection of venue, the arrangement of Peking Opera performance and the tea ceremony all conveyed non-verbal messages based on their own innate historical and cultural elements. Argyle (1972) distinguishes three forms of human non-verbal communication: (a) attitudes and emotions and manipulation of the immediate social situation, (b) support and complement of verbal communication, and (c) a replacement for language.

Here, the Forbidden City as a static symbol of supreme power indicated the highest rank of hospitality and prestige to President Trump. The three Halls with the common character of "和" in their names, are of special importance, expressing that China is a peace-loving country, and Chinese government hopes to establish harmonious relationship with the US government, and of course to achieve world harmony. Peking Opera as a dynamic and robust performance transmitted the information that China attaches primary importance to traditional culture and customs, which distinguish us from other nations, and assumed a cultural identity under the global trend of diversity. The tea ceremony not only is indicative of China traditional culture, but also created a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for the two leaders to build up and consolidate their interpersonal relationship, which is beneficial and will facilitate further cooperation in bilateral trade and international relations. There are what Argyle (1972) referred to as support and complement of verbal communication, not necessarily articulated in languages.

3.3 President Trump's Strategies

In return for the hospitality of the host and hostess, President Trump as the visiting guest, showed a video to President Xi and his wife Peng during the tea service, on an iPad of a performance by her granddaughter Arabella Kushner, who sang a traditional Chinese song and recited several Chinese ancient poems in mandarin.

As is known to all, China is a family-oriented society, and family members especially kids are seldom involved in business or diplomatic occasions, except for very intimate relationships. The performance of President Trump's granddaughter, which is prepared in advance, was presented to President Xi and first lady Peng at their first meeting, indicating Mr. Trump's intention of building intimate interpersonal relationship with President Xi Jinping. Based on the analysis of the performance, we can get the following message.

At the very beginning, Arabella greets President Xi

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF119qafXq0>

and his wife Peng by addressing them Grandpa Xi and Grandma Peng, which is typical Chinese style of children greeting people one generation older than their parents. In USA and many other western countries, it is common to address others by their first names, but in most Asian cultures especially Chinese culture, it is generally rude and insulting for a youngster to address someone older by his or her first names. Here Arabella's way of addressing is typical Chinese, immediately shortening the distance between the Xi's and the Trump's. She then sang a Children's song, popular all over China among children, and recited three-character classic which is about the rudimentary principles for being a righteous and candid person. In the end, she recited two poems by two well-known poets of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), known to every household in China. The content of the performance as conveyed by the lovely little ambassador embodied President Trump's intercultural strategy of adapting to Chinese traditional culture, expressing his good intention and support to President Xi and China.

3.4 Results of Trump's Visit

Trump's visit to China has not only grabbed world attention, but achieved great success, covered widely by newspapers. The Independence reports that "China and the United States have signed additional business agreements valued at \$250bn during President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing(Independence November 9, 2017)"⁸, including sales of US-made chipsets, jet engines and auto parts. The report of South China Morning Post reads that "China handed visiting US President Donald Trump a business deal package worth an eye-popping US\$253 billion on Thursday, the biggest in the history of relations between the two countries (Wendy Wu November 9 2007 SCMP)"⁹. And the report of Fortune (Reuters November 9, 2017) is entitled "U.S. Companies Signed a Ton of Deals During Trump's China Trip"¹⁰, listing the deals announced by the companies and departments involved. While the Guardian called the event "Trump's super-sized state visit to China" (Hass, 2017)¹¹.

4. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES

President Donald Trump's visit to China is, first of all, a political event involving the diplomatic relationship between China and the USA. Nevertheless, since the

people undertaking diplomatic activities are from two different cultures, their mentality and behaviors are inevitably influenced, and to certain extent, determined by their values, which, according to Hofstede, are described by visible manifestations of culture: symbols, heroes and rituals (Hofstede, 200, p.10). The following is an analysis of this value-oriented intercultural encounter based on the theoretical framework provided in Part 3.

4.1 Cultural Dimensions and Stereotypes

A comparison between Chinese and American cultural dimension scales (Figure 1 below) shows the sharp contrast between the two national cultures, especially in such aspects as power distance, individualism vs collectivism, long-short term orientation and indulgence. One can imagine how hard it might be for the leaders from the two countries to deal with each other. However, in the spirit of intercultural cooperation, both leaders adopted appropriate strategies in treating each other and as a result, overcame intercultural barriers regardless of the deep-rooted stereotypes and achieved satisfactory results as reported.

Looking back at the strategies adopted by President Xi Jinping in accommodating President Donald Trump, we can find that, both the choice of venue for the meeting and the rituals arranged are indicators of high-context of Chinese national culture as proposed by Hall (2000) mentioned above. Unlike Zhongnanhai, the very formal and official place for diplomatic activities, the Forbidden City is a private place, which is suitable for building personal trust and friendship. In traditional Chinese culture, people generally tend to build personal relationship before doing business with each other for the purpose of long-term cooperation and benefit. This just corresponds to the score of Chinese culture.

According to the above Figure below, the USA scores the highest in individualism, which is also well known. President Trump, on the one hand, is the leader of a superpower of the world, and on the other hand, has somewhat an appetite for aggression, which is typical in an individualist culture. However, during his stay in Beijing and meeting with President Xi, he has restrained himself and used flattery in his talks with his counterpart, indicating his intercultural strategy in dealing with President Xi in order to gain business deals and political support.

4.2 Onion Manifestations of Cultural Depth Levels

"Cultural differences manifest themselves in several ways (Hofstede, 2010, p.7)". From the Figure 2 below, the "Onion Diagram" of Hofstede, we can see how culture is manifested through symbols, heroes, rituals and values. These cultural concepts will help explain the strategies adopted by President Xi and President Trump.

⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/trump-china-trade-beijing-xi-jinping-250-billion-a8045061.html>

⁹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2119211/deals-galore-us-firms-trumps-china-trip-are-real-trade>

¹⁰ <http://fortune.com/2017/11/09/trump-china-deals-companies-signed/>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/08/what-will-happen-on-donald-trumps-state-visit-to-china>

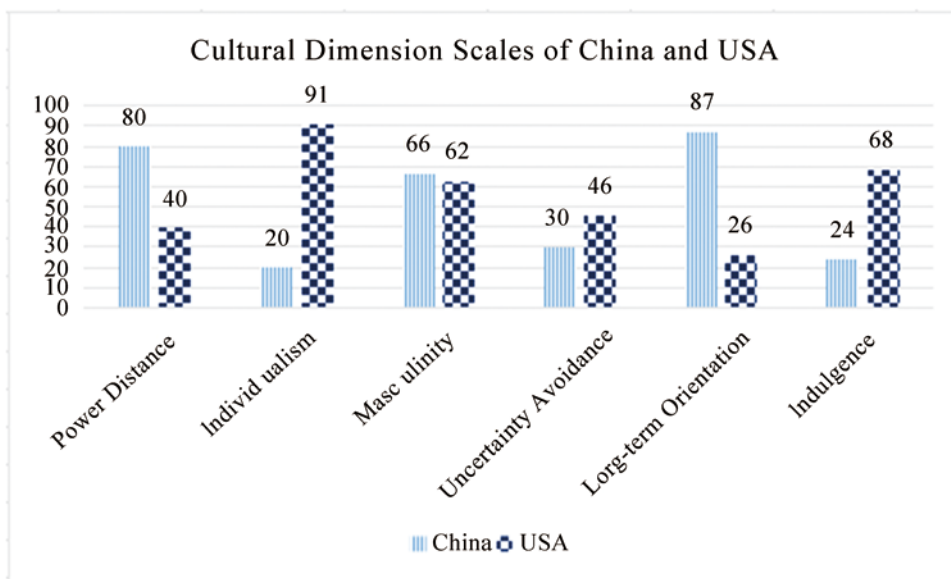


Figure 1
Cultural Dimension Scales of China and the USA
 Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

As illustrated by Hofstede, symbols are “words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning that is recognizable only by those who share the culture,” and are “the most superficial” in this Onion Diagram (2010, pp.7-8).

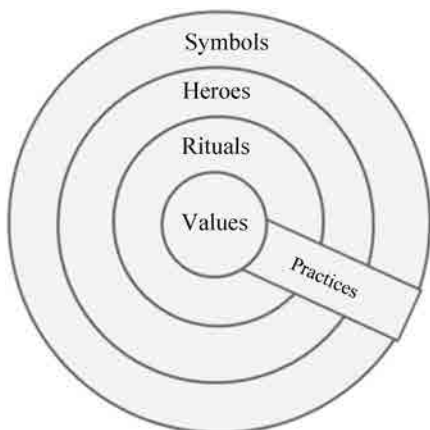


Figure 2
The “Onion Diagram” Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth (Hofstede et al., 2010)

Forbidden City is an object symbolizing long history and supreme power in China. Only the most powerful and respected people have the opportunity to be accommodated there. Heroes are persons possessing “characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior” (Hofstede, 2010, p.8). As the President of China, Mr. Xi Jinping is undoubtedly the hero able to make use of the symbols of the Forbidden City and the Harmony Halls to design and arrange rituals like the Peking Opera performance and Tea Ceremony. Rituals, as stated by Hofstede, “are collective activities

that are technically superfluous to reach desired ends (2010, p.9)”, and here the desired ends are to build trust and personal friendship with President Trump, and these rituals are “ways of greeting and paying respect to others (Hofstede, 2010, p.10).”

It is the same with President Trump, who as the visitor and guest to China, also made use of symbols and rituals during his meeting with President Xi to manifest his values. As a distinguished guest, President Trump didn’t use symbols characteristic of American culture, but showed the video of his granddaughter singing a Chinese children song and reciting two ancient poems, indicating his recognition of such Chinese culture and his intention of establishing harmonious relationship with China.

In fact, in the face of Rising China or China’s Rise, some countries have also adopted such attitudes as “The Chinese Will not Change; We have to change” (Stopniec, 2017). The author, I believe, is not saying that Chinese people are too stubborn and arrogant to make changes; but under that specific circumstance, it is better to adjust to the situation to benefit from cooperation with Chinese enterprises. It is wise for President Trump to make such preparation at least for this significant event. It is also wise on the part of President Xi to make use of the symbols and arrange the rituals in hosting his counterpart. As per this diplomatic activity, both governments have endeavored to adjust to the values of the other party by taking into account cultural considerations. The Lummi case in American history had already manifested the effect of such practices in intercultural communication.

4.3 Inspiration From The Lummi Case

The Lummi of Washington state is a Native American tribe, who have their own reserve territory on the Western

coast near the Canadian border. They make a living on deep sea fishing and liquor retailing. They are surrounded by white Americans who control vital necessities such as access to power, water and timber.

Before Lummi leaders go to discuss trade, taxes, utilities or transport with local business people and officials, they have, with the help of Russo, a cultural expert and scholar with extensive knowledge of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck theory of Value Orientation, well understood the cultural values and acceptable modes of decision-making of the majority of the whites, as well as the similarities and differences between them and their neighbors, thus achieving a success in negotiation and both parties have retained a harmonious relationship for many years.

The relationship between China and USA is not, apparently, like that between the Lummi and the white Americans, but the value orientation principles adopted by the Lummi leaders can be references for both China and USA as well as other parties involved in intercultural communication.

CONCLUSION

From the above cultural exploration of strategies adopted by President Xi and President Trump respectively in the intercultural communication, we can come to the conclusion that:

From cultural dimensions, China and the USA are apparently different from each other, representing typical high-context and low-context cultures.

Both President Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump adopted appropriate strategies in this significant intercultural communication event, showing to each other the greatest sincerity.

President Xi made use of symbols with typical Chinese features and arranged a series of rituals in accommodating President Trump and his wife Melania, manifesting his values, the central part of culture, which, on the one hand, conveying to President Trump the message that China has a long history with rich and continuous culture, and it is important to understand such culture to deal with Chinese people; and on the other hand, these rituals held at such a sacred place are extended only to the most important figures and most cherished guests. By doing so, President Xi is also demonstrating his intention and will to maintain the cultural identity, considering the dream of rejuvenating China he initiated a few year ago.

President Trump also made use of symbols and comparatively brief video-showing ritual as his strategies in this intercultural communication, reflecting his inner values.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, the mere cultural dimensions and high-low context theories are far from enough in accounting for the deep reasons

for the two top leaders to adopt such intercultural communication strategies. We should seek the answers from the background as mentioned previously in Part 2 of this paper. The Rising China needs advanced technology and expertise from the USA and also needs to sustain economic and political relationship with the USA to upgrade its structure at this critical point of transformation, while the USA is also in want of economic and political support of China to maintain its development momentum and to resolve some international tensions.

Furthermore, even in the same situation, different people are much likely to adopt different strategies. So personality is also a determining factor in intercultural communication. Personal characteristics such as beliefs, motives, decision style and interpersonal styles are of significance for foreign policy behaviors of political leaders (Hermann, 1980). Therefore, besides different cultural dimensions, such factors as personality, judgment of current situation and world general trend etc. also contribute to the adoption of the above strategies by President Xi and President Trump in this intercultural communication during the latter's visit to China.

In the final analysis, just as Hofstede pointed out, "The world is full of confrontations between people, groups, and nations who think, feel, and act differently" (Hofstede, 2010, p.4); however, whether at national level, organizational level, or individual level, so long as one is willing to deal with the other party for the sake of a solution to a problem or confrontation, one can, in most cases, always find a solution by adopting appropriate strategies in the spirit of intercultural cooperation.

We cannot predict the future development of Sino-US relationship, nor can we say for sure whether both Chinese and American governments will implement strictly the agreements signed between two parties during President Trump's visit to China. But at least from the perspective of intercultural communication, both presidents Xi and Trump adopted appropriate strategies and the visit has been a success for both countries.

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