

Rhetoric of Nationalism and Anti-Americanism: A Burkean Analysis of *China Can Say No*

Lucy Xing Lu

DePaul University

China Can Say No is the best seller in 1996 in mainland China and among the Chinese readers in the U. S. The rhetoric used in the book appealed to the rising nationalism in China and intensified anti-American sentiment. The book has drawn the public attention and provoked criticism regarding its positive and negative impacts from readers in China and overseas. This paper, however, does not take side in agreeing or disagreeing these criticism, but analyzes how the book has achieved or failed to achieve its persuasive effect in the use of rhetoric. The theoretical framework I have chosen for this analysis is Kennedy Burke's theories of dramatism and form.

I. About the Book

China Can Say No was authored by five young college educated "intellectuals" who hold professions of reporter, poet, and free-lance journalist. When the book was first published in May of 1996, 50,000 copies were sold out instantly, within one month, 10,000 copies were sold in China. The book was written in response to the accumulated tension in Sino-American relations that had been deteriorating since the 1989 Tiananmen massacre. The U. S has imposed certain sanctions against China and charged China with violation of human rights and the violation of the "intellectual property" right. Moreover, after the collapse of the Berlin wall and the former Soviet Union, which brought an end to the cold war, some U. S officials and media advocated a theory of "China threat" and further justified the necessity of sanctions against China (Krauthammer 1995; Lilley 1997). In the midst of all these humiliation and charges by the U.S, the Chinese government was even more infuriated by the U. S. government's issue of visa to Taiwan's President Li Denghui and American's vote against China becoming a member of World Trade Organization, and hosting Olympic Games in the year 2000 in Beijing. China retaliated by harsh rhetoric, accusing America's interference

in China's internal affairs and intentionally blocking China from the realization of its four modernizations (in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology). China claimed that American's ultimate motive is to maintain hegemony and the control of the world by blocking China from its economic development and deliberately targeting China as their enemy. All these rhetoric came mostly from the government controlled media.

The book, *China Can Say No*, in content and style resembles Chinese government's rhetoric against the U. S policy toward China, but claimed as representing the public opinion and common people. It was written in the format of refutation and argumentation and filled with anecdotes, sarcastic remarks, catchy words, Mao's quotations, threat of retaliation, and profane language. In addition to the topic of Sino-American relationship, the book also discussed Sino-Japanese relationship and Taiwan issue. Since its publication in May last year, the book has drawn the public attention and provoked various reactions from both Chinese and foreign readers. Most Chinese commentaries in China regard the book as having "revealed the true feelings of contemporary Chinese youth" and "reflected the Chinese people's dissatisfaction with American policy toward China" (*Still Say No* 418-418, Wen 1996) Most foreign sources and commentaries described the book as "attacking American's cultural invasion," "a work of "extreme nationalism" and "anti-Americanism." The language used in the book is "emotionally charged and filled with bias and stereotypes" (Li 1996; Lin 1996; Ni 1996).

None of the authors had been to the United States before the publication of the book and their account and charges against the United States are mostly derived from secondary materials and Chinese government news media. The authors claimed themselves as nationalists although they were once devout believers of Western values. They all once admired American culture and loved American movies. They smoke Marlboro, wear jeans, and one of them even speaks English.

While most commentaries are focused on the authors' background and the critique of the book on its positive and negative impact, few articles have been devoted to how the book has achieved or failed to achieve its persuade effect to various readers. How is the rhetoric of "nationalism" and "anti-Americanism" constructed and what are the rhetorical means the authors employed in the creation and depiction of the U., S. and American culture. By applying the Kennedy Burke's theoretical frameworks of dramatism and form, this article examines how the authors attempted to achieve identification and unification with the Chinese readers and to discover the authors' motive implicated in the rhetoric of nationalism and anti-Americanism. It will also explore how the use of language and argumentative style of the book perpetuated and polarized the thinking and stereotypes of American culture and American government's policy toward China.

II. The Burkeian Analysis of the Book

Pentadic Analysis of the Rhetoric of Evil America

Burke's theory of dramatism or otherwise known as pentadic criticism can be used as a means to examine how the persuader has reconstructed the audience version of reality and provided rationale for action through the persuader's description of situation. The pentadic criticism looks at the relationship between the five basic elements of a drama: act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose. The critic must indicate a strong relationship between two terms in that the first term in the pair determines, constrains, or requires the nature of the second term (Foss, 1989). For Burke (1969), "The ratios are principles of determination" (15), and through examining discursive system that features certain terminological ratios, the motives of the rhetor can be imputed and discovered (Introduction). Further, the relationship among pentadic terms provides a frame of reference which "encourage[s] the readers to anticipate potential future actions" and "enable[s] the author to shape interpretations and meanings of future actions." (Weier 1996, 247). In other words, certain terminological ratio prepares the audience with certain expectation and induces the audience's collaboration in self persuasion. According to Burke (1969), the dominant term or ratio discovered by the critic is linked to certain philosophical systems. For example, if the act is featured, the corresponding philosophy would be realism, and if the purpose is featured, the corresponding philosophy is mysticism (128).

In this analysis, purpose-act ratio is identified as the terminological ratio in *China Can Say No*. The purpose of the act is what the agent intends to accomplish by performing the act while act refers the major action involved and performed by the agent. The purpose-act ratio examines how purpose can determine and explain action done by agent and allows the critic to examine the relationship between the intention and action of the agent.

The agent in *China Can Say No* is the U. S. A. which to the authors includes American government, American people, and American culture. According to the authors, the U. S. has two clear purposes in relationship with the world, in particular with China. One purpose is to maintain and exercise American hegemony in the world and the other purpose is to put obstacles on China's economic development by sabotage and the policy of containment.

The American hegemony, according to the authors is extended to the whole world and is intensified after the end of the cold war with former Soviet Union. "A ghost of hegemony is lingering in the world" (*China Can Say No*, 305), warned the authors and that ghost is the U. S. A. The U. S. A., in the words of the authors, "plays the role of the world police" (65), "wants to dominate and dictate the world" (227); and never forgets to gain the status of the world leadership" (310). The authors exemplified the American hegemony by describing American's interference in the Middle East and Asia (210, 241). The authors claimed that the U. S. hegemony "threats the peace of Asia and the world" (316) and what is scaring is that

it hides behind the self labeled terms of "humanitarianism and justice" while in fact "its appetite [to eat the world] is bigger than a Heavenly dog" (241).

The American hegemony, according to the authors, is most evident in its policy of containing China. The authors, believe that the U. S. "has placed obstacles everywhere to block China from its economic development and treats China as its enemy" (195). The authors gave two explanations for the U. S. hostility toward China. First, it would be boring for the U. S not to have an enemy after the cold war (82). Second, the authors strongly hold the opinion that the U. S. has always been hostile to China and never wants China to be economically strong. In their judgment, "The strategy of the U. S. is containing China and finally turns China into chaos" (325). Further, they state, "The U. S. tried all their best and take every opportunity to achieved the purpose of containing China" (328). "They don't like China to have atom bomb, they are unhappy to see modernization of China's national defense" (227). To assure that China is the enemy, the U. S. proposed a theory of "China threat" describing China as "evil, menace, not following the international rules" (82).

It is not surprising then, that these evil intentions and hostile attitude against China would naturally determine and be followed by evil acts against China in every way possible. The authors listed a number of actions done by the U. S to achieve their purposes of hegemony and plotting against China through the use of anecdotes and statements. In their accounts, the U. S. has organized anti-Chinese club with a large membership(82); CIA has plotted the instance of Harry Wu and the publication of the book *Private Doctor of Mao Zedong* (144); The U. S has prevented China from joining the Organization of World Trade and voted against China's hosting of the Olympic Games in year 2000 in Beijing. Further examples are, "The imported coca cola from the U. S. has thick smell of sugar while the coca cola Americans drink at home do not have that much sugar. The cigarettes America sold to China have more nicotine than the cigarettes Americans smoke at home" (46).

By examining the logic of the author's argument, all these anti-China acts are presented not as evidence to induce and render a conclusion, but as examples and confirmations to support the claims that the purpose of the U. S. was to maintain and exercise its hegemony as well as to blocking China from economic development. In other words, the purposes of the U. S. hegemony and its evil intention on China determined and explained the American acts of anti-China in policy making and communication with the Chinese. Such argument is a powerful means of persuasion as the end is justified by the means, the action is explained by motives. For the Chinese readers who have doubts on the American motives of sanctioning China, the authors provided a logical explanation. That is, the U. S. purpose of its role in the world and its attitude of treating China as its enemy predetermined that they will act against China in every way possible.

Analysis of Form and the Rhetoric of Nationalism

According to Burke, form is an important means of identification used by the rhetor. A critic must consider the use of form in the analysis of the subject matter (Burke 1966; 1969). Form, defined by Burke (1968), "is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (31). Forms, therefore, works unconsciously in the audience mind that shape the future of the audience's desire and appeal to the audience familiarity with the progression and development of a drama or any symbolic events. In other words, form recalls our familiar symbolic experience implicated in subject matter and "leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence" (Burke 1968, 124). For example, the form of syllogistic progression proceeds the development of events from an agreed-upon or shared universal principle and draws an conclusion based on the principle. The repetitive form refers to the restatement of the same thing in different ways and by new details. Another reason that form works to persuade is that, the reader's gratification is stimulated by his or her participation and collaboration in the rhetorical process.

In sum, form is an argumentative tactic in which the rhetor provides the reader with evidence for inference and logical reasoning. Burke treats form as a powerful means of self persuasion that leads the reader to certain expectations and induces the reader's cooperation. It serves to awaken the reader's attitude and to satisfy the reader's desire. It invites the reader to surrender to the version of reality constructed by the rhetoric. Form is also the use of language style that triggers audience's experience, expectation, desire, and collaboration.

Two forms are used in the text of *China Can Say No*; syllogistic form and repetitive form. The syllogistic form is evident from the pentadic analysis of purpose-act ratio in that the purpose is proposed as an well accepted principle and agreement that the U. S is hegemonic and hostile toward China. The U. S. actions against China fit into the description of their purpose, and accordingly the U. S. has an evil motive and is China's enemy. This deductive reasoning process was characteristics of the rhetoric of the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976) in China where a person to be persecuted was first charged and labeled as "capitalistic running dog," "counterrevolutionary," or "traitor" based on insufficient and unverified evidence. Then the red guards or masses would enlist or make up all the "evil doings" that would quality the person for the charges. As many Chinese who lived through the "Culture Revolution" are accustomed to this form of argument, they feel very much at home with this form of argument. The book in some way recalled their symbolic experience with such form and satisfied their desire to understand and interpret the motive of the U. S. in its attitude and actions against China.

The repetitive form used in the book is exemplified by repeated reference to the decline and degradation of American culture and how American cultural influence has disgraced the Chinese national character and pride. American culture is described as "naïve," "degenerate," "has no sense of history and depth of thought"

(25), "has no value for tradition" (219). American people are portrayed as "obnoxious," arrogant," and "ignorant," (33) and "lazy" (128). "have lost interests in independent thinking" (25). Americans are also described as "no self control, cold in human relationship, no responsibility to each other, lack of love and care, numb toward public and political life" (127). American politics was corrupted (252). Hollywood films were "trash" filled with sex and violence and should be burned (122-125). Moreover, in the authors' eye, the U. S. poses a threat to the world as it is "the biggest terrorist country. No matter where you live, everyday you can feel the terror of the U. S. which has power all over the world" (247). The authors assert that "A world without America will be even better, no terror of atom bomb, no cultural invasion and economic looting. People of the world will have more peace and a shared human civilization"(305).

In describing the U. S. as a nation, the authors claimed that "American personality has bias and arrogance," it has "lost its soul" (304); "it is shallow, short-sighted, and rude" (305). The authors conclude that given these characteristics of the U. S., "The U. S. will decline, which will come sooner than we thought" (28). Further, the authors disqualify the U. S. as a leader in the world as they state "Americans do not have empathy and sympathy. From educated to ordinary people, they cannot understand what the inner world of people of other cultures. They do not have the quality to lead the world" (34). "They lack all the characteristic of an advanced nation [in morality]."(25)

The authors also blamed the U. S. for its "cultural invasion" to China with Hollywood movies and American media. They sharply and sarcastically criticized those Chinese who still admire American culture and long for the opportunity to the U. S. In their words, these people "pursue anything American. Their admiration of American culture has stifled their imagination and make themselves slaves to a corrupted culture" (17-22). They are the people who "cannot identify with the Chinese blood and is experiencing spiritual crisis" (56).

The corruption of American culture and the bad influence of American culture on Chinese people are portrayed through anecdotes such as a talk with an American youth on the sovereignty of Tibet, American soldier's rape of Japanese girls; American police beating of Mexican illegal immigrants; CBS anchor woman Connie Chung's accusation of Chinese students as spies; a Chinese man who was repeatedly refused visa to go the U. S. and finally died of disease on the boat to the U. S. These stories, not backed up by any sources, are what Burke called "representative anecdote."

The representative anecdote, according to Burke (1969), is "a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed" (59). Such form appeals to the reader's conventional symbolic experience and define reality in a selected fashion. Rueckert (1969), interprets Burke's notion of the representative anecdote as "the paradigmatic embodiment of the 'pure' or 'ideal' for. . . the archetypal myth, the perfect imitation of the pure essence" (381). In other words, the representative

anecdote has a rhetorical power to shape reality, to frame certain circumstances, and to use as reference to draw cultural meanings. According to Madsen (1993), the selection of the representative anecdote is a conscious choice of the rhetor in order to depict a reality and respond to a rhetorical situation in certain way. In his words, "Rhetors may employ the representative anecdote as they try to produce a representative text to round out a situation" (209). The anecdotes used in *China Can Say No* are selected deliberately for a negative portrayal of American culture and American people as a response to American hostility against China and as a means to promote Chinese nationalism. Such use of forms created and reinforced the stereotypes against American culture, perpetuating the image of "ugly Americans." More importantly, it sends a message to the Chinese people that they should maintain their cultural esteem and dignity, and establish a new national identity that is rooted in Chinese civilization and tradition.

In addition to the use of anecdotes, value statements, and labels, the authors seemed to be fond of catchy words, metaphors, Mao's quotations, and sometimes even profane words. Words such as "stumbling blocks," "a group of crows," "upstart," are used to describe the U. S. and American politicians. Phrases like "pushed onto the trial of history" is used to describe what will happen to the U. S. in the future; "burning the Hollywood" as a resistance to American cultural invasion. The quote "just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little support" is a famous saying of Mao Zedong to predict the outcome of China's enemy. All these terms were popular sayings during the "Cultural Revolution" and were used to describe the "class enemies" and international superpower namely the U. S. and the former Soviet Union. These terms are emotionally charged, giving vent to one's frustrations and hatred, and being redeemed in the process. Such use of terms does not allow the reader to engage in rational and critical thinking, but to surrender to the rhetor's version of reality and to join the rhetor in the gratification and satisfaction of verbal attacks.

The rhetorical form used in *China Can Say No* can be a powerful means of persuasion when the reader can identify with the author's use of language, the way of presenting a syllogistic argument that has strong moral tone (the U. S. is evil) and emotional involvement (Chinese national dignity), and when the reader's desire of wanting to know the motive of the U. S. and American culture is being satisfied. However, the book will not be persuasive to those who have the ability to detest the logical fallacies in the presentation of argument. It would not achieve its persuasive effect to those who engage in critical thinking and arrive at conclusions based on factual evidence rather than on preferential judgements and personal feelings. In other words, for those readers, they cannot identify themselves with the form of the book. They would consider the argumentative form and the use of language biased, emotional, and invalid. The authors would quickly lose their credibility to those readers. The book is also not persuasive to the readers who have benefited from the American culture and have been genuinely acquainted with American people.

III. The Motive of the Authors

The U. S. as Scapegoat

An analysis of purpose-act ratio reveals clearly the authors' motive of anti-Americanism. A more careful reading of the text also reveals that the authors do not just call change in attitude toward the U. S., but also call for action in response to American "evil intentions" and "evil doings." Such action must include from simply saying "no" to American hegemony, reacting to the U. S. with retaliation and hatred, to counter economic sanctions, making military alliance with Russia against and the U. S. and preparing war against the U. S.

It was commonly understood that American sanction against China would also hurt its own economy. Based on the anti-American sentiment the authors have generated and intensified, it is natural to take the step of retaliation to impose a counter sanction. Such retaliation include "close the door to American company for entering-the Chinese market" (192), "doing business with other countries" (196). The authors also warn the U. S. "You can do things your way by your rule. Chinese can do things by their own rule. If America continues to contain China, and places obstacles everywhere to block China from development, takes China as the enemy, it will lose China and will not stand firmly in Asia" (195). "China can say no." defined the authors, "means China will not lower its head to power and injustice [imposed by the U. S.]" (300-301). They claim that "Fight against America will be a long time goal" (266). One author goes even further, "I believe that one day if reconciliation becomes impossible, I call the Chinese people to remember all these with the hatred" (221). "Violence is the means to maintain dignity as well as to win peace" (42)

By presenting the argument by a purpose-act ratio and the syllogistic form, the authors provide the readers with no room to engage in counter-argument, but one version of the reality that the U. S. is China's enemy, and the only effective and dignified way to deal with the enemy is to fight back with retaliation, confrontation, and hatred. In portraying China as the victim of American hegemony, the reactions of hatreds and revenge seemed to be justified. Such reactions, according to Schwartz (1994), characterize the rhetorical responses of those who consider themselves as victim nations of the superpowers. They are also means of achieving purification or relieving the guilt caused by disobedience to hierarchy (Burke 1984).

One of the ways to achieve purification is through victimage or scapegoating, "where a victim is selected to be the representative of the unwanted evils and loaded with the guilt of the victimizer" (Foss, 1991, 196). A scapegoat allows the individual to target external enemy for the caused evil. In *China Can Say No*, the authors have targeted the U. S. as the scapegoat for blocking China's economy and corruption of Chinese culture with American media, and their personal dissatisfaction with their own career development. Targeting an external enemy as

the scapegoat has been used as a means of unification and identification in Hitler's rhetoric against Jews. As Burke (1969) pointed out, "The Hitlerite Anti-Semitism as scapegoat principle clearly reveals a related process of dialectic: unification by a foe shared in common" (408). Similarly, in Hitler's rhetoric toward Jews, it was filled with implicit meanings of moral superiority, hatred, and retaliation (Burke 1957).

China as the Emerging Superpower

While the authors are obviously promoting Chinese nationalism, the underlying motive of the authors is to call for a renewal of national identity and dignity of the Chinese and to depict China as the future legitimate world leader. These motives are at times expressed explicitly such as asking "Why not China become a superpower?" (39) or in statements like "19 century belongs to the British, 20th century belongs to the Americans. But someone also said that 21st century will be a glorious century for the Chinese. Thus, 21st century will belong to Chinese" (199).

Other times, the motive of promoting Chinese superpower is expressed implicitly. For example, in the discussion of degrading American culture and celebrating Chinese culture, a syllogistic form was presented in the text with the premise that only a culture that values justice, has enduring humanistic principles and a rich tradition, and national pride can lead the world. The authors then describe China as the only nation that has all these attributes. In their words, "Chinese thought, Chinese management ability will influence the world and will become the solely drive in leading the human thoughts in the future" (51). The Chinese national identity was glorified by its contribution to the world in terms of humanistic and moral values. The authors announce that "All the liberation movements in the world were showered with Chinese thought and sunshine. All the peace and progress of the world have gained from Chinese wisdom. The Chinese foreign affairs is the only one that has high moral standard and spirit of justice" (49). By this syllogistic reasoning, China is undoubtedly the only country that will emerge as a superpower in the 21 century. In their conclusion remark, the authors used an analogy of the relationship between a lion and its trainer saying "'we all know that a lion is more powerful than a lion trainer, the lion trainer knows that too. The problem is that the lion does not know. Once the lion is awake, and the trainer still plays his role, what will happen?" (344). Here, China is the lion which is about to awake. When China is awake, the author quote from Napoleon: "the world will shake" (339).

In the analysis of Hitler's rhetoric, Burke (1957) identified four devices Hitler used as a means of unification: (1) inborn dignity; (2) projection device; (3) symbolic rebirth; and (4) commercial use (173-174). By these rhetorical device, Hitler provided a perfect recipe for the rhetorical exigency in Germany. The rhetoric used in *China Can Say No* also have those components in promoting Chinese nationalism and superpower image. With similar rhetorical devices, the authors

portrayed the Chinese a morally superior race; projected the U. S. as the enemy; called the need for the Chinese to redefine their mission and identity in the world; and promoted the sentiment of anti-American by selling the book. In doing so, the authors of *China Can Say No* attempted to satisfy the Chinese yearning for national dignity and achieve a new sense of national identity that is rooted in moral superiority through symbolic discourse. According to Burke (1937), an identity or perspective change indicates redemption, characterized the end of drama. The end result of redemption serves to direct our future action with new purpose and meaning. Through rhetoric of anti-Americanism, Chinese nationalism, by targeting the U. S. as the scapegoat and by promoting China as the future superpower, the authors of *China Can Say No* completed the process of redemption and achieved some sense of new national identity or rebirth.

IV. Implications

In this paper, I analyzed the rhetoric of anti-Americanism and nationalism in the 1996 bestseller in China *China Can Say No* by applying Kennedy Burke's theoretical framework of form .. and pentadic criticism. In this book, the U. S was charged with having the purposes of hegemony and blocking China from economic development, which determined and explained their "evil acts and attitude" toward the Chinese. I discussed the rhetorical forms of syllogism, repetitiveness, representative anecdote and language techniques in creating the reality of a corrupted American culture and the need for Chinese nationalism. I discovered and defined motives of the authors as targeting the U. S. as the scapegoat and envisioning China as the emerging superpower to finish their process of redemption and rebirth of national dignity and identity. Through this analysis, three implications can be drawn.

First, *China Can Say No* indicates the rising nationalism that is influenced and legitimized by the rhetoric of ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and bias in Chinese official and sometimes scholarly discourse. In describing the future trend of nationalism, Anderson (1996) points out, "Ethnic and racial stereotyping, xenophobia, sectarian 'multiculturalism' and the more brutal forms of identity politics seem to be the wave of the future (12-13). The post colonial discourse of Western stereotypes on Oriental cultures has created and constructed negative stereotypes and aggravated Eurocentrism (Said, 1978), and has brought much hann to the world peace and economic progress. The same mode of thinking may be under the disguise or name of nationalism in today's world. Our task, as contemporary scholars should be on guard of this new type of nationalism and should not let history repeats itself on a vicious circle in the discourse regarding international relations.

Second, the authors suggest in their use of language and argumentative style in the book that confrontation is the only means of communication. In fact, in the second book published by the same five authors entitled *China Can Say No*, the

authors reiterated their positions advocated in the first book and claimed explicitly that "Confrontation is an important form of human communication." However, such confrontation would be commendable if it is based on honest exchange of opinions, mutual respects for each other, and sincere efforts to clear misunderstandings and problem solving. If, on the other hand, it is based on verbal attacks, retaliations, hostility, and threat, such confrontation should not be allowed. From the long-term interests of the peoples of China and the U. S., and from the long-term interests of peace and development in the world, dialogue and cooperation would be more constructive forms of communication. It is a big irony to oppose American hegemony while promoting China's superpower, to criticize American stereotypes of China and Chinese people while spreading stereotypes of American culture and American people. A true sense of equality and dialogue is based on mutual respect and understanding, not on hatred and retaliation.

Third, the Burkeian analysis of dramatism and form has shed light on our understanding of symbolic discourse in both content and style. Certain language habit or familiar argumentative style are persuasive appeals in and out by themselves. Many Chinese believed that they have grown out of the shadow of the "Cultural Revolution," but the rhetorical form used at the time has a lingering effect on their thinking process. With little change in political discourse and of ficial language in the form of persuasion in China today, people could still hold to the sequelae in the use of symbols experienced during the "Cultural Revolution." Rapid change in economic development has taken place in China, however, such change may not easily bring about political reform without conscious efforts to examine and critique the use of language and argumentative form in persuasion.

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