Discursive Legitimation Strategies of Ancient Chinese Diplomats in the Warring States Period

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This study addresses an unexplored type of speech acts of ancient Chinese persuader diplomats in the Warring States Period (481–221 B.C.), although a plethora of literature about political legitimation centered on contemporary western English discourse. The purpose of this study is to disclose the discursive legitimation strategies used by the ancient diplomats who sought to persuade. Eighteen texts of *Volumes of Qin* in *Zhanguo Ce* were examined using an extended binary framework that was constructed by revisiting the prior frameworks of discursive legitimation strategy. It was discovered that the discursive legitimation strategies used by the persuader diplomats in the ancient Chinese political discourse were characterized by binary quality, predominately involving negativity and positivity. The legitimation strategies and their binary property were attributed to specific sociopolitical contexts as well as social cognition.

Keywords: critical discourse studies, legitimation, ancient persuader diplomats, *Zhanguo Ce*, the Warring States Period

Inherent in any discourse, legitimation is closely related to the key notions of authority, power, ideology, etc., and thus has long been the central concern of discourse analysis, especially critical discourse studies (CDS) (Cap, 2013; Chilton, 2004; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Xin, 2020). It has been a consensus among critical discourse analysts that the process of legitimization is enacted by argumentation, by explaining our social actions, ideas, thoughts, declarations, to seek the interlocutor's support and approval (Hart, 2014, p. 7; Reyes, 2011). Politics is a field of action in which legitimation is particularly important (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), and attaining legitimacy is the "principal goal of the political speaker" (Cap, 2006, p. 7). Legitimation strategies are consequently essential in political arguments, especially in political persuasion. In the small number of researches undertaken pertaining to this subject, different discursive legitimation frameworks were put forward in analyzing language and communication, either in light of educational discourses (van Leeuwen, 2007), political speeches delivered by state heads (Reyes, 2011), or media report headlines of geopolitical issues (Xin, 2020). Yet, the most of them—though not all—have focused on the discursive legitimation strategies oriented toward the public, and there is still a dearth of attention upon the discursive legitimation tools employed in political argumentations oriented to political figures, especially in the direct speech acts between political figures. Another scarcity surfaces itself in the attention upon the discursive legitimation manipulated by ancient political actors in the remote history, such as during the Warring States Period (WSP thereafter). Consequently, how ancient political figures laid out their persuasion, or what discursive legitimation strategies were employed still remains an open question.

In light of these research gaps, this study addresses an unexplored type of political speech acts conducted by ancient Chinese persuader diplomats collected in *Zhanguo Ce*, or *Annals of the Warring States*. It aims to discover what legitimation strategies were recruited by the ancient diplomats in their arguments to accredit their viewpoints and to mobilize a certain social action more than 2000 years ago. Therefore, this study would be significant in twofold: first, it would contribute to disclosing the discursive legitimation strategies manipulated by political figures to persuade their

political counterparts, including rulers; second, it would also be conducive to revealing the connection between language practices and social action in the particular historical setting of China.

Literature Review

A Social Political Account of Persuader-Diplomats and *Zhanguo Ce*

The period of the Warring Sates (481–221 B.C.), linking the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.) and the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.) of China, witnessed a turbulent evolution of annexations among the different states, each of which attempted to attain military supremacy. Together with military activities, diplomatic strategy has become a key element in bolstering connections with allies while eroding the alliance of enemies. The demands led to the emergence of *Zonghengjia* (persuader diplomats), or diplomatic experts in strategizing and persuasion who participated in politics by contributing to the creation of new interstate relations models (Chen, 2001).

The emperors' open admiration for influential strategists throughout the flourishing Period was another factor that contributed to the popularity of persuader diplomats. Because to their exceptional persuasive abilities, many engineers of the alliance system, like Zhang Yi, Su Qin, and Chen Zhen (some of them with very low origin), received high ministerial offices and significant wealth (Lewis, 1999, p. 587). Both in the history of diplomats who used political persuasion and in speaking practice, they had a significant impact.

Zhanguo Ce, or *Annals of the Warring States*, is a chronicle that compiles the political stances and diplomatic persuasion tactics of the twelve ancient Chinese states of East Zhou, West Zhou, Qin, Qi, Chu, etc. Each text in it consists of two parts: narratives and utterances. The narratives give information on the talk(s), such as the speaker, hearer, time, location, etc. The hearer is typically a monarch, another expert, or both, and the presenters are typically persuader-diplomats. The majority of the utterances are arguments or expostulations made by persuader-diplomats, with brief comments from hearers like "善" (OK), "请闻其说 / 愿闻之" (I would like to listen), or certain questions posed by kings making up a minor portion of the material. This annals, among other rare historical materials, is essential for understanding the speech acts used by ancient Chinese diplomats and persuaders throughout this period of Chinese history (Ke, 2011; Miao et al., 2018; Zhai, 2008).

Previous Research on *Zhanguo Ce*

The research about *Zhanguo Ce* was conducted mainly in three lines: the stylistic features (Ke, 2011; Liao, 2006; Qiu, 2009; Zhang, 2008), the rhetoric used by the persuader-diplomats (Guo, 2013; Lin, 1989; Yao & Zhang, 2008) and the putative fictionality as a historiography (Maspero, 1950, as cited in Goldin, 1993; Zheng, 1972). In the line of stylistic research, *Zhanguo Ce* is considered to be of pre-Qin *shuo* discourse characteristic of argumentation (Liao, 2006; Qiu, 2009; Zhang, 2008). It was found that in this genre, the interlocutors involved in the speech acts usually had conversations to persuade their counterparts into accepting his propositions or to justify their philosophies or diplomatic actions. The main discourse goal was to persuade, and to realize this goal, varied discursive strategies were adopted to help legitimate the standpoints of the diplomats, the part that usually initiated the persuasive interaction (Lin, 1989; Qiu, 2009, p. 154).

The research on *Zhanguo Ce* has contributed to better understanding the annals and its significance in the development of Chinese history and culture in the pre-Qin era especially in the facets of stylistic features and rhetoric patterns. But although these studies discovered the linguistic features of the political persuasion discourse, they neglected the social factors involved in the persuasion, such as identity, power, social order, etc. Thus the interaction between the language forms and social action is left untouched. In this regard, Critical Discourse Studies can help with its tenets set to disclose how intended ideology and institutionalized social order is maintained through language use.

Legitimation Strategies

Several discursive legitimation frameworks were proposed. On the basis of systematic functional linguistics, van Leeuwen (2007, p. 92) constructed a framework of 4 kinds of legitimation strategies, including authorization (reference to the power of persons or institutionalized traditions), moral evaluation (reference to a value systems), rationalization (reference to goals and uses of institutionalized social action) and mythopoesis (storytelling). Vaara et al. (2006) and van Leeuwen (2007) proposed five strategies of legitimation from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, in addition to the aforementioned "authoritativeness" and "rationalization." They removed "mythology," replaced "moral evaluation"

with "moralization," and added "conventionalization" and "narrativization," the former referring to recourse to conventional functions or behaviors, and the latter to the construction of compelling circumstances.

Reyes (2011) summarized five discursive strategies used for justification in political discourse: (1) emotions, where politicians often legitimize their words and actions by evoking various emotions in others in order to change the audience's perception; (2) a hypothetical future, where political discourse often envisions a threat of the future to indicate the need for immediate action or behavior; (3) rationality, which is similar to van Leeuwen's (2007) "theoretical rationalization," in which a policy, decision, or action is usually characterized as a rational process designed to show people that the decision was made or the action taken was the result of careful consideration; (4) voices of expertise, in which speakers cite the voices of others in their own discourse to support their own positions; (5) altruism, in which certain ideas and actions are presented as altruistic, especially for the benefit of the poor, the weak, the innocent, etc.

Drawing insights from these researches and through an examination of the speech acts compiled in *Zhanguo Ce*, we found six types of strategies were employed in the ancient Chinese political persuasion. And the strategies used by the persuader diplomats were binary in property in that each category involves two subcategories which stand in contrast. Based on the observations, we constructed a legitimation binary framework for the analysis of ancient Chinese political persuasion. Using this framework, the discursive legitimation strategies in the political persuasion during the Warring States Period will be investigated.

A Binary Legitimation Framework

The binary legitimation framework involves six categories of legitimizing strategies: authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, prophetization, mythopoesis, emotionalization, each consisting of two opposite subcategories, as illustrated by Table 1. Authorization divides in terms of animacy from which authority is produced, including animate sources like the speaker's personal identity, experts and role models, and inanimate sources such as laws, rules, tradition, custom, etc. "Voices of expertise" proposed by Reyes (2011) is involved in animate authority. Moral evaluation, renamed as "moralization" by Vaara et al. (2006), involves positive moral evaluation made through the use of attributive adjectives conveying positive moral valence as a way of legitimation

whereas negative moral evaluation is made through the use of designative adjectives carrying negative moral valence for the aim of delegitimation. Rationalization takes two main subtypes, instrumental rationalization and theoretical rationalization, with the former mostly dependent on reference to the goals and uses of actions while the latter dependent more on reference to the conventionally perceived natural order of practices.

Table 1

A Binary Framework of Legitimation Strategies

Category	Sub-category	Code	Items
Authorization	Animate authorization	A+	Reference to authority figures
	Inanimate authorization	A-	Reference to tradition, proverbs, etc.
Moral evaluation	Positive moral evaluation	E+	Positive moral evaluation as legitimate
	Negative moral evaluation	E-	Negative moral evaluation as delegitimate
Rationalization	Instrumental rationalization	RI	The goals and uses of institutionalized social action
	Theoretical rationalization	RT	The knowledge constructed with cognitive validity
Prophetization	Positive prophetization	P+	Prophet about the future with a positive result
	Negative prophetization	P-	Prophet about the future with a negative result
Mythopoesis	Hortatory tales	M+	Tales with protagonists rewarded in a happy ending
	Cautionary tales	M-	Tales with protagonists punished in an unhappy ending
Emotionalization	Positive emotive appeal	E+	Emotive appeal to honor, security, success, etc.
	Negative emotive appeal	E-	Emotive appeal to loss, danger, failure, etc.

In the other part of the framework, legitimation through prophetization is enacted when persuader diplomats exert their power addressing the future as an assured hypothesis. Reyes (2011) refers to this prophetization as "a hypothetical future." The future in the prophet may be depicted by the political persuader as incoming with a positive or negative consequence. This legitimation strategy is sometimes based on telling different tales, called mythopoesis by van Leeuwen (2007). Mythopoesis is based on telling stories about the past or the future stories about punishing evil and promoting good, or good is rewarded with good and evil is rewarded with evil. Although Vaara (2014, pp. 512–513) distinguishes between two kinds of legitimization through mythopoesis, one is "nightmare scenarios" compiled about the future, the other is "consequential rationalizations" that suggest or predict certain undesirable consequences, they point to one category, that is, negative mythopoesis. Here mythopoesis

refers to a binary pair of tales involved in two emotional valences: positive when hortatory tales with protagonists rewarded in a happy ending were narrated and negative when cautionary tales with protagonists punished in an unhappy ending were told. Emotionalization is borrowed from emotions proposed by Reyes (2011), refers to the legitimation process in which emotive appeals are activated by political figures in their attempts to legitimize their words, and elicit a behavioral or mental response from their audience. Positive emotionalization is conceptualized to be connected with emotive appeals of wealth, honor, security, success, etc., whilst negative emotionalization is often operationalized to be linked to emotive appeals of loss, disrepute, danger, failure, and so on.

Note that the typology of legitimation strategies described here are result of cognitive operations, in other words, they are outcome of conceptualizations, though in most cases subconsciously. This property surfaces itself in the lexical form representing them: they are names in the form of nominalizations of verbs, denoting a process of a mental action. But they are different from the legitimating strategies rooted deeper into more seminal cognitive abilities, such as Gestalt, identification, comparison, perspective, and so on. Compared with them, the five legitimation strategies listed in the above framework are of higher level compared to those outlined in the Critical Cognitive Linguistic analysis (CCL) of discourse by Hart (2011, 2014, 2020), and can be thought of as being supported in varied ways by the lower-level strategies defined by CCL (Hart, 2014, p. 184).

Data and Procedure

In this study, eighteen texts in five *Volumes of Qin* from *Zhanguo Ce* were collected as the data observed, which include the original texts and their modern Chinese translation by Miao et al. (2018). Their English translation was borrowed from *Records on the Warring States Period* conducted by Zhai (2008). The texts chosen for analysis share the same structure and similar hierarchical relationship between the persuader and the hearers with the rest of the entire annals; therefore they are taken as representative and able to reach high validity of this study.

Then the utterances of persuader-diplomats were identified and annotated in terms of legitimation strategies on a sentence-to-sentence basis. In this process, the texts were read through for a general understanding of the political interaction

before sentences or cluster of sentences were determined to fit for a categorization. Then according to the different properties of the categories, they were determined to be of a subcategory and annotated with the codes. After quantitative and qualitative analysis, an account of the recruitment of the different legitimation strategies was searched from the sociopolitical perspective. Two of the writers undertook a pilot identification to avoid subjectivity. Divergences in the categorization were examined to find out the reason for them, and then the standards that both had agreed upon were adhered to in the subsequent identification.

Results

For the purpose of disclosing the discursive legitimation strategies recruited by persuader diplomats in their political arguments during the Warring States Period, we constructed a binary framework of legitimation strategies, which consists of six legitimation devices, namely, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, prophetization, mythopoesis and emotionalization. Each strategy is made up of two subcategories which predominantly bear such an opposite relation as positive vs. negative with the exception of rationalization. After identification and annotation and statistical counting in the observed texts compiled in *Zhanguo Ce*, the frequency of each subcategory of the legitimation strategy was determined, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Overview of Legitimation Strategies in Volumes of Qin

Legitimation Strategy	Sub-category in Code	Occurrence	Total
Authorization	A+	2	12
	A-	10	
Moral evaluation	E+	7	19
	E-	12	
Rationalization	RI	19	60
	RT	41	
Prophetization	P+	14	29
	P-	15	
Mythopoesis	M+	9	16
	M-	7	
Emotionalization	E+	6	19
	E-	13	

It is shown that there are 155 instances of the discursive legitimation strategies overall in the observed data, with rationalization coming in first place, followed by prophetization, and authorization coming in last. According to nuanced analysis of binary subcategories, theoretical

rationalization was recruited more frequently than instrumental rationalization in the category of rationalization, whereas in the other subcategories, negative rationalizations outnumber positive ones (68 and 45 in total, respectively). To be more precise, negative moral evaluation and negative emotionalization were both more frequent than their positive counterparts. The discursive strategies that diplomats employed to justify their ideological positions and intended political activities will be demonstrated in the section that follows.

Legitimation Through Authorization

This justification strategy is strongly tied to the authority bestowed in a discourse producer's position, expertise, or institutionalized rules, practices, or traditions. There are two types of subcategories depending on whether the source of authority is animate or not: legitimation through animate authorization and legitimation through inanimate authorization. The speaker, the persuader diplomat, or a historical figure "in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested" (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 92) and what they had said about military strategy and diplomatic mediation was frequently used in the observed data to legitimize through animate authorization (A$^+$), for instance:

> *Example 1*
> 义渠君致群臣而谋曰："此乃公孙衍之所谓也。"
> 因起兵袭秦，大败秦人于李帛之下。
> 《战国策·秦策二》
>
> The sovereign of Yiqu called in his high-ranking court officials to consult with them and said, "This is what Gongsun Yan has predicted." Then he took this chance and sent troops to attack Qin. His troops defeated the troops of Qin in Libo.
>
> (*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 2 of Qin*)

> *Example 2*
> 故 "……先王之所重者，唯始与终。"
> 《战国策·秦策五》
>
> So, "… sovereigns in ancient times would pay great attention to both the beginning and the end of every undertaking."
>
> (*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Examples 1 and 2 exemplify legitimation of animate authority. In the former authority is vested in Gongsun Yan, a diplomatic specialist and military general of Wei who had

provided diplomatic stratagems for Yiqu against the stronger Qin in response to different potential actions initiated by Qin. In the scenario involved in this example, the speaker here, the sovereign of Yiqu, is justifying his decision to launch military action toward Qin by referring to the stratagem provided by Gongsun Yan, whose authority vested in the expertise and status is enacted. Instead of one authoritative figure, however, in example 2, a collective concept of role models, sovereigns in ancient times, are mentioned to legitimize the intended standpoint for perseverance in endeavors to build up a state. Note that the use of legitimation is also a strategy of delegitimation in the meantime. In this case, the legitimation of persisting in keeping good terms with different states around is achieved through delegitimizing the pride and arrogance the hearer had shown up in dealing with neighboring states and lords after having gained victory in military actions.

Legitimation through inanimate authorization (A$^-$) is often realized by reference to compulsory, mandatory and institutionalized rules, custom, traditions and so on. In the context of Warring States Period, political persuaders utilized proverb or excerpt from a revered book to endorse their political positioning and viewpoints, for example:

> *Example 3*
> 《诗》云："行百里者，半于九十。"此言末路之难也。
> 《战国策·秦策五》
>
> It is said in *Shijing* (*the Book of Songs*), "If a person heading for one destination located one hundred *li* away gives up after he has marched ninety *li*, there is no difference between him and those who give up halfway." This saying shows that it is very difficult to attain a goal especially when one reaches the last phases of his undertaking.
>
> (*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

> *Example 4*
> "所以然者，以其伐楚而肥韩、魏也。此所谓藉贼兵而赍盗食者也。"
> 《战国策·秦策三》
>
> "That happened because Qi attacked Chu, but Han and Wei benefited from this war. That is the so-called lending bandits weapons and giving thieves food."
>
> (*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 3 of Qin*)

Example 3 exemplifies legitimation through inanimate authorization vested in a proverb out of an influential book. The speaker, a diplomatic specialist whose name was

unspecified, adopted the proverb in his attempt to persuade King Wu of Qin not to be conceited about the military achievements he has made. Example 4 illustrates a similar kind of legitimization strategy of inanimate authorization assigned by a proverbial saying. With this device the famed persuader diplomat Fan Sui was creating an analogy between what is designated in the proverb and the benefit for the enforcement of Han and Wei brought by the attack of Qi upon Chu. In this way, Fan Sui warrantied his proposal of establishing close diplomatic relations with distant states and attacking those which were located nearby.

Legitimation Through Moral Evaluation

This legitimation strategy through moral evaluation is represented through close connection with the use of evaluative adjectives. When adjectives employed carry positive moral valence, the strategy falls into the subcategory of legitimation through positive moral evaluation (E$^+$). In the observed data, lexical items carrying moral valence mainly include "good (良/善); talented (贤); enlightened (明)," which, in lexical semantics, denote the mainstream moral standard that prevailed in the political arena during the Warring States Period. And "reputation" (名) in nouns are also employed in conceptualizing this legitimation device and thus can be seen as another lexical item under this subcategory.

Example 5
使臣得同行于箕子、接舆，漆身可以补所贤之主，是臣之大荣也，臣又何耻乎？
《战国策·秦策五》
If I can do something to help the king I consider virtuous, even if I might have to smear my body with lacquer just like Jizi and Jie Yu did, I would still consider it a great honor. How can I feel ashamed?
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Example 6
是我一举而名世两附，而又有禁暴正乱之名。
《战国策·秦策一》
Thus we can both gain fame and obtain huge profits with only one military action. Moreover, we can gain a high reputation by overthrowing a tyrannical regime and putting the state in good order again.
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 1 of Qin*)

Examples 5 and 6 demonstrate the adoption of positive moral evaluation as a legitimation tool. Positive moral valence

was added to the identity of the hearer, the king of Qin in text 5, who was represented as "virtuous." This evaluation would contribute to the construction of the hearer's image as a member of "us" in the group of the speaker. In the meantime, the positive moral evaluation helped the persuader diplomat Fan Sui legitimize his political standing for the benefit of the king of Qin, and further for the stratagems he would then put forward. In example 6, the military specialist Sima Cuo, in arguing against the persuader diplomat Zhang Yi on which state to attack, the state of Shu or Han, resorted to the positive morality of "gaining a high reputation" in addition to huge profits of attacking Shu. This positive moral evaluation was achieved on the basis of reasoning on launching a just war in order to persuade the addressee, King Hui of Qin into attacking Shu.

On the other hand, when lexical items and constructions that carry negative moral valence are used for legitimation, it falls into the subcategory of legitimation through negative moral evaluation (E$^-$). In the observed texts, (de)legitimation is realized in some cases through a speech act with constructions carrying negative morality or conveying threat to the sovereign, such as bad (恶), arrogant (骄), and so on. For example:

Example 7
今王广德魏、赵而轻失齐，骄也；战胜宜阳，不恤楚交，忿也。
《战国策·秦策五》
Now Your Majesty has given many generous favors to the states of Han and Wei. However, you don't pay any attention to damaging relations with the state of Qi. That's your arrogance. You have won a victory in Yiyang but you don't attach importance to establishing good diplomatic relations with the state of Chu. Thus you may provoke Chu's enmity towards you.

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Example 8
"今秦妇人婴儿皆言商君之法，莫言大王之法，是商君反为主，大王更为臣也。"
《战国策·秦策一》
"Nowadays, every man, woman and child in our state is talking about Shang Yang's law, but no one discusses the law of Your Majesty. Therefore, they take Shang Yang as the sovereign and regard Your Majesty as nothing but a court official."

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 1 of Qin*)

These two examples demonstrate that negative moral valence was added to the evaluation first for delegitimation of a given action or viewpoints and finally for legitimation of the speaker's political standpoint. In example 7, the persuader went direct to the negative evaluation of what the hearer, the king, had done in changing diplomatic relations with different states. In the same vein, in example 8, the political figure employed negative moral evaluation about the inversion of rooted hierarchical order of the monarch and ministers. In this case, the diplomat expostulated that Shang Yang has been posing a threat to the sovereign because "no one discusses the law of Your Majesty" but Shang Yang's. This moral evaluation was plotted to legitimize his positioning of Shang Yang as a member of "other" and his intention to marginalize him.

Legitimation Through Rationalization

When institutionalized social action and/or goals are employed for legitimating an expostulation of the political persuader, legitimation through instrumental rationalization (R^I) is conducted. Lexical items usually used involve those semantically pertaining to the "sovereign's commitment" (王业), "benefit" (利) and grammatical structures like "by relying on" (可以), "depending on" (因). For example:

Example 9
以大王之贤，士民之众，车骑之用，兵教之法，可以并诸侯，吞天下，称帝而治。
《战国策·秦策一》
Relying on Your Majesty's wisdom and capability, the large number of scholars and the masses, the use of chariots and horses, and the spreading of the art of war among the officers and men, surely you can annex other sovereigns' territory, unify the whole world, declare yourself emperor and rule the world.
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 1 of Qin*)

Example 10
……顾争于戎狄，去王业远矣。
《战国策·秦策一》
… On the contrary, you attached much attention to Rong and Di. This is not targeted to Your Majesty's imperial commitment.
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 1 of Qin*)

Example 9 displays the adoption of the goal and usefulness of actions in ancient political persuasion arguments. In this speech act, the persuader diplomat Su Qin blueprinted the goal of the sovereign King Hui of Qin, based on putting to full use of the ample manpower and material resources, so as to legitimize his diplomatic stratagems of aggressive military actions to the sovereign. While in example 10, the goal of the sovereign was mentioned by the persuader-diplomat Zhang Yi in his attempt to delegitimize the sovereign's attention upon the distant state of Shu. In this manner, Zhang Yi was trying to persuade the sovereign into diverting his military plan toward the prosperous place rather than attacking the disadvantaged Rong and Di.

When natural order(s) or consequence(s) of a certain practice are employed in rationalization for legitimation, it is referred as legitimation through theoretical rationalization (R^T). In the annals, the construction used involves such grammatical structures as *the reason why…is…* (所以……者……也), *therefore* (故……), etc. For example:

Example 11
"夫四时之序，成功者去。"
《战国策·秦策三》
"The four seasons come in turn, and each season fades away after performing its function."
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 3 of Qin*)

Example 12
今王之地小民贫，故臣愿从事于易。
《战国策·秦策一》
The territory of Your Majesty is small and your people are poor, so I want to start with something easy.
(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 1 of Qin*)

Example 11 and 12 show legitimation through theoretical rationalization by resorting to natural order of seasons and reasoning by possible consequences, respectively. The former was used by the persuader diplomat Cai Ze to justify his claim requiring Marquis Ying, the listener, to resign from the position of prime minister of Qin. Through rationalization, the speaker Cai Ze was making it endorsed that Marquis Ying has performed his function as a season does. In the latter the political persuader Sima Cuo rationalized the reason why he backed the military action of attacking the distant and disadvantaged state of Shu. He based his legitimation on the rationalization that it would be more likely to achieve a military goal for a small state faced with paucity of resources to attack another weak state.

Legitimation Through Prophetization

In legitimizing a given social action, political actors often

set the decision to be made in a time frame or time line. The action is related to a cause in the past and a consequence in the future. Put it the other way, the cause of the present problem is in the past, which now gives rise to a requirement for imminent action to avoid the same problem repeating itself in the future (Reyes, 2011). This leaves the space for prophetization about the probable consequence in the future. In legitimation through positive prophetization (P⁺), prophecy with positive outcome is employed. In the annals, it is often accompanied with lexical items like *if* (若), *definitely* (必), *then/thus* (则), etc. For example:

Example 13
"齐、楚今战，战必败。败，王起兵救之，有救齐之利，而无伐楚之害。"

《战国策·秦策二》

"Now Qi and Chu are engaged in warfare. One of them will definitely be defeated. After one side is defeated by the other, you can dispatch your troops to succor it. Thus you can enjoy the advantage of rescuing Qi, and avoid the disadvantage of attacking Chu directly."

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 2 of Qin*)

Example 13 displays a speech act in which legitimation through positive prophetization is employed. The persuader diplomat Chen Zhen made two prophecies in this case, with (a) made based on the interstate military conflict between Qi and Chu, and (b) based on a presumption that the hearer, a King of Qin, should succor the side to be defeated. This strategy was used to justify the diplomat's intention to persuade King of Qin to take a neutral stand between Qi and Chu.

On the other side, the use of prophecy with negative ending falls to the subcategory of legitimation through negative prophetization (P⁻). It often involves similar lexical items and structures as positive prophetization, but with a negative consequence. See the following example:

Example 14
"王一日山陵崩，子傒立，士仓用事，王后之门必生蓬篙。"

《战国策·秦策五》

"Once the king dies, Zixi will be enthroned, and Du Cang will be there to manage government affairs. Thus the queen will be estranged."

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Example 14 displays a speech act in which legitimation

through negative prophetization is used. In this case, by presuming the death of the sovereign, the speaker Lv Buwei made two prophecies which bear causal relation. To be specific, if Zixi, a prince not the son of Queen Huayang, were enthroned, then the queen would be estranged for she had given birth to no son. In this way the persuader made a prediction of the imminent threat in order to legitimize his stratagem for the queen to adopt a son as a crown prince.

Legitimation Through Mythopoesis

Storytelling is another means adopted for legitimation. Stories with different endings can achieve different discursive strategies. Legitimation through hortatory tale (M⁺) involves the use of tales, either historical or fictional, with desired ending, often accompanied with the construction denoting the time frame, such as *in the past* (昔者). For example:

Example 15
"太公望，……文王用之而王。管仲，……桓公用之而伯；百里奚，……穆公相之而朝西戎；文公用中山盗，而胜于城濮……"

《战国策·秦策五》

"Lv Wang, also known as Duke Tai, … King Wen employed him and subsequently unified the whole world due to his help. Guan Zhong, … Duke Huan of the state of Qi employed him and became one of the Lord-protestors because of his endeavors. Baili Xi … Duke Mu of the state of Qin appointed him to be the prime minister of his state and later the minority peoples of the western areas submitted to Duke Mu as the result of Baili Xi's effort. Duke Wen of the state of Jin employed an infamous bandit from the state of Zhongshan and with his help won the battle of Chengpu…."

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Text 15 illustrates a speech act in which hortatory tales are used as a legitimation device. Here tales of four historical figures were narrated by the speaker Yao Jia, the diplomat of Qin who had served as an envoy abroad to the states of Jing, Wu, Yan and Dai (not included in the example), in order to both delegitimize the slander against him and to justify his argument that wise sovereigns employed able but defamed scholars (not included in the example) in prospect of great contributions they would made to their states.

Besides, legitimation through cautionary tale (M⁻) is often realized by employing historical or fictional tales with tragic ending, as shown in the following text:

Example 16
桀听谗而逐其良将，纣闻谗而杀其忠臣，至身死国亡。
《战国策·秦策五》
Jie trusted slanderers and therefore killed his excellent generals. Zhou trusted slanderers and therefore killed his loyal court officials. As a result, not only did they themselves lose their lives, but their kingdoms were ruined.

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

In example 16, a cautionary tale with very miserable consequence is deployed as a legitimation tool. Here the speaker Yao Jia told tales of two notorious emperors in history so as to delegitimize the doubt of the sovereign of his loyalty, and in the meantime justify his innocence as an envoy. Base on the tales, he came to a prophecy that the sovereign would meet with a tragic outcome, i.e. to lose the loyal officials if he did as the protagonists in the tales had done.

Legitimation Through Emotionalization

Emotive appeal is a critical device in discursive legitimation (Reyes, 2011). Positive emotive appeal (E$^+$) can be invoked by self-esteem, secured personal safety, national security, etc. For instance:

Example 17
弊邑之王所说甚者，无大大王；唯仪之所甚愿为臣者，亦无大大王。
《战国策·秦策二》
Your Majesty, our sovereign appreciates you the most. Among all the sovereigns, I want most sincerely to serve you.

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 2 of Qin*)

Example 18
说有可以一切，而使君富贵千万岁，其宁于太山四维，必无危亡之患矣。
《战国策·秦策五》
But if you use my stratagem, you can maintain your wealth and power for tens of thousands of years to come. You will be as safe as Mount Tai and free from danger and trouble.

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Examples 17 and 18 illustrate speech acts in which positive emotive appeal is deployed as a legitimation device. While in the former the persuader diplomat used the emotive appeal of being respected by an official and the sovereign

of a neighboring state, in the latter the specialist employed the appeal of long-lasting wealth and power to his sovereign hearer.

The adoption of appeal for negative emotions is to realize (de)legitimation through negative emotive appeal (E$^-$). Lexical items in the annals involve fear for *danger* (危), *death* (死), loss of *position or imperial power* (君位). As illustrated in the following example:

Example 19
甘罗曰：“应侯欲伐赵，武安君难之，去咸阳七里，绞而杀之。今文信侯自请卿燕，而卿不肯行，臣不知卿所死之处矣。”
《战国策·秦策五》
Gan Luo said, "Previously, Marquis Ying wanted to invade the state of Zhao. But Lord Wu's disagreed with him. As a result, Lord Wu'an was hung at a place seven *li* away from the capital of Xianyang. Now Marquis Wenxin has asked you to serve as prime minister of the state of Yan in person. But you refused to do so. I don't know where you will lose your life!"

(*Zhanguo Ce, Volume 5 of Qin*)

Text 19 displays a speech act with legitimation through negative emotive appeal, that is, fear of death. The speaker Gan Luo, after telling a historical tale of Lord Wu'an who was hung because of his disagreement with the military plan of his master, attempted to persuade his listener Zhang Tang, a general of Qin, into accepting the mission designated by his master Marquis Wenxin.

Discussion

This study aims to address the legitimation strategies used in the political persuasion discourse in the Warring States Period, as compiled in *Zhanguo Ce*. Drawing insight from previous related research, a binary legitimation framework for ancient Chinese political persuasion was constructed and applied to the *Volumes of Qin* in the historical annals. In the qualitative analysis assisted with quantitative approach, it was found that the six legitimation strategies were used by the persuader diplomats. The type of legitimation through rationalization was most common, followed by prophetization, moral evaluation, emotionalization, mythopoesis and authorization. And in terms of subcategory, negative ones took the majority. These findings can be accounted for from three social dimensions as follows.

First, the persuader diplomats' status as an advisor of the ruler mattered in their choice of legitimation strategies. That historical stage in which they were active saw a turbulent development of annexations among a dozen states. Each state made an effort to establish military dominance by pushing allies into favorable vertical or horizontal alliances. The persuader diplomats were welcomed in nearly all states in that time. But they this gave rise to a challenge that they had to provide valuable stratagems to a ruler or with a person with power and authority. They needed to maintain their reputation before their hearers. Since they met no imperial limitations in terms of rituals and mindsets, thus they could freely exploit ornate language, rhetoric skills, to secure their manipulation (Zhai, 2008). During the persuasion attempts, they would construct their authority by resorting to other military experts or citations from the classics, and they were found to use inductive reasoning to reinforce deductive reasoning. In addition to keeping the imperial objectives of the lords or kings in mind, they also used a variety of natural laws and social norms to alter their rationale, which are typical of rationalization (Lu, 1998, p. 101). Besides, they employ a string of historical stories to make moral evaluation, adding emotional valence to the future scenarios, thus triggering the use of mythopoesis, emotionalization, and prophetization.

Second, the political aims of the persuader diplomats in the Warring States accounted for the binary property of the subcategories of each discursive legitimation strategy. What they were performing in the interstate relations was either to persuade a ruler into taking a given action or dissuade a ruler or another figure of high rank from a commitment. Thus, when they required a political commitment from a ruler, legitimation strategies were employed to emphasize the strength of the state. Conversely, they would focus on the advantages of the ruler's adversary and the weaknesses of the ruler's state. This practice was dubbed "doubled persuasion" (Crump, 1960; Metcalf, 2001, p. 39). Of course, this is based on the precondition that they were allowed to mix their rhetoric with a variety of justifications and resources rather than being constrained in any one way.

Third, social cognition can offer a hint for the other types in the binary legitimation paradigm, particularly those involving positive and negative valences. The opposition employed in ideas and language is most probably due to the transfer of the human bodily experience of opposition in the physical environment into conceptualizing of the world (Jeffries, 2010, p. 17). In political stance, an attribution of traits and/

or performance of activities by two different groups: "us" vs. "them" is frequently conceptualized. The Foucauldian ideas of "division" and "rejection" demonstrate how this construction of the "other" is done (Foucault, 1972). Division creates an exclusive "them" and an inclusive "us," and rejection elicits an ideological component that casts the excluded as insane, irrational, immoral, evil, etc. (Cap, 2013, 2020; Chilton, 2004; Martín Rojo, 1995, p. 50; Reyes, 2011). Therefore, the political speaker frequently aligns himself with the group characterized by positive, moral, and correct behavior and the right cause, while placing those they will delegitimize in the group characterized by negative, irrational, and improper behavior and the wrong cause (Cap, 2013; Chilton, 2004; Reyes, 2011). Apparently, in light of the above analysis of the political persuasion discourse in the Warring States, it can be seen that the persuader diplomats were no doubt ancient experts in recruiting this cognitive faculty.

Concluding Remarks

In this study we explored the legitimation strategies employed in speech acts by persuader diplomats in ancient China, using data recorded in *Volumes of Qin, Zhanguo Ce*. In the diplomatic discourses the persuader diplomats aimed to legitimize their diplomatic and military strategies to their interlocutors, whether they were imperial emperors, or other persuaders. We focused on how the persuader diplomats modulated legitimation strategies in their arguments in the sociopolitical context. Through this lens, we hope to investigate the interplay between language and social action.

Future work would be done mainly in two aspects. For one, more texts, other than *Volumes of Qin*, compiled in *Zhanguo Ce* would be included for further investigation. For another, the binary framework of legitimation of ancient political persuasion discourse would be put to a broader spectrum of ancient political discourses, such as *Zuozhuan* (*Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*) and *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*). Hopefully, this will shed light on how things worked in the political arena of ancient China during the Warring States Period, from words to action.

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