

The Temporal Changes in Public Attitudes Towards Hate Against Asians in YouTube Comments: Three Waves of Research Against the Backdrop of the 2025 US Presidential Election

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Abstract. This study focuses on the emotional and content evolution of YouTube comments before and after the 2024 US presidential election and the 2025 inauguration ceremony. We collected a large amount of comment data from the relevant videos of the above three stages, conducted sentiment analysis using the VADER dictionary method, and combined topic modeling and manual encoding to extract the main discussion topics. At the same time, we evaluated the frequency of hate speech in the comments. The results show that the emotional tendencies of social media comments during the election stage have undergone significant changes: negative emotions in post-election comments have risen significantly, while emotions have slightly declined after the inauguration ceremony. The topics of the comments have shifted from pre-election campaign issues and candidate evaluations to post-election reactions to the election results and discussions on the election process, and then to the content of the inaugural speech and the policy direction of the new government. Hate speech peaked in the post-election stage. Overall, the research found that major political events significantly affect the online public opinion ecosystem: the announcement of election results is accompanied by a short-term surge in emotional polarization and hate speech, while after the inauguration speech, the focus of discussions shifts to the new governance direction, and emotional confrontation eases but still persists.

Keywords: Social Media Analysis, YouTube, Anti-Asian Hate

1. Introduction

The rise of anti-Asian hate speech on digital platforms has garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting political landscapes in the United States. YouTube, as one of the largest video-sharing platforms, has been identified as a hotspot for such content, with studies revealing it hosts the highest proportion of hate speech among major

social media sites—8.3% of analyzed content [1]. The re-election of Donald Trump in 2024, whose administration has been criticized for promoting anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric, provides a critical context to examine potential shifts in public attitudes toward anti-Asian content on YouTube [2]. This paper explores whether significant changes occurred in public sentiment and thematic focus within comments on anti-Asian hate-related videos across three phases: pre-election, post-election transition, and post-inauguration in 2025. Prior to the 2024 election, anti-Asian rhetoric was already escalating. For instance, the STAATUS Index reported that 40% of Americans viewed Asian Americans as more loyal to their countries of origin than to the U.S., doubling since 2021 [3]. However, data from the Stop AAPI Hate coalition indicated an "alarming surge" in online anti-Asian slurs and violent threats immediately following Trump's electoral victory [4]. For instance, in January 2025, anti-Asian insulting remarks reached the highest monthly record since monitoring began in 2022 (87,945 times), an increase of 66% compared to the pre-election level [4]. This surge is partly attributed to Trump's anti-immigrant agenda and the debate on visas, which has fueled remarks accusing Asian groups of "seizing jobs" [2]. During the transition period (November 2024 - January 2025), the sentiment of comments on YouTube videos has undergone significant changes. Pre-election comments often emphasized the stereotype that Asian Americans are "eternal outsiders" [3], while post-election remarks gradually incorporated clear political support. The topics include support for Trump's policies, such as border closures and tariffs, which have been framed as justifications for racial hatred [2]. Meanwhile, the threat to Asian Americans has increased by more than 50% compared to November 2024 [4], reflecting a combination of racial hatred and politicized discourse. After Trump took office in January 2025, comments increasingly linked anti-Asian sentiment to institutional policies. The report shows that 53% of Asian Pacific American (AAPI) respondents said they had experienced hate incidents in the past year, and 83% expressed concerns about racial tensions [3]. In the comments on YouTube at this stage, common topics include "ethnic substitution", "immigration enforcement", and economic resentment - for instance, accusing Asian communities of causing inflation and unemployment [2]. This is in line with Trump's policy language, such as tariffs and "America First", indicating that the narrative of racism has been normalized in public discourse [5]. In summary, the political discourse and policies of the Trump administration are closely related to the obvious changes in public attitudes on YouTube. The transition from pre-election stereotyping to post-inauguration policy-driven hostility underscores the interplay between political leadership and digital hate speech. Subsequent sections will quantify these changes through sentiment analysis and thematic modeling, highlighting implications for platform moderation and civil rights advocacy.

2. Literature review

2.1. Early instances of racism on YouTube (pre-2020)

Even before the COVID-19 era, scholars had identified problematic racial representations on YouTube. In a 2014 content analysis of user-generated videos, Guo and Harlow found that YouTube often served to perpetuate rather than challenge racial stereotypes. Videos containing stereotypical portrayals of Asians (as well as other minorities) tended to be more popular, suggesting that early on, the platform's participatory culture was mirroring mainstream biases instead of acting as a corrective counter-sphere. These findings underscore that racialized tropes about Asian Americans have long circulated in digital media, setting the stage for more overt hate in later years. By the late 2010s, political currents were further priming online spaces for xenophobia. The election of Donald Trump in 2016, marked by nationalist and anti-immigrant rhetoric, correlated with an emboldening

of prejudiced expression in the public sphere. Researchers observed that individuals holding previously “socially undesirable” views became more willing to voice them openly, and this period even coincided with spikes in hate crimes against minority groups. While much early work on Trump-era hate focused on anti-Black, anti-Latino, and anti-Muslim animus, there is evidence that anti-Asian biases were also activated. One study notes that Trump’s comments and tone helped fuel a “spike in anti-Asian views” during his tenure. Thus, even prior to 2020, the stage was set whereby political elite cues could translate into heightened racism online, including on platforms like YouTube.

2.2. COVID-19 and the surge of anti-Asian hate online (2020–2021)

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 proved to be a tipping point for anti-Asian sentiment on social media. Trump and other politicians repeatedly referred to the coronavirus as the “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus,” rhetoric that many feared would inflame anti-Asian animosity. Unfortunately, those fears were borne out: studies across disciplines documented a dramatic rise in anti-Asian hostility both offline and online in early 2020. Social media platforms saw an explosion of anti-Chinese slurs, memes, and conspiracy theories blaming China or the Chinese people for the pandemic. One report noted a staggering 900% increase in anti-Chinese or anti-China rhetoric on Twitter following the pandemic’s start. Crucially, researchers traced this surge directly to elite messaging: the repeated use of terms like “Chinese virus” by President Trump accounted for the trending of such phrases on social media, thereby aggravating public bias and xenophobia. Hsuen et al. [6], for example, found that tweets with the #ChineseVirus hashtag were far more likely to carry anti-Asian hate content than those with the #COVID19 term, validating how Trump’s language shifted online discourse towards vitriol. On YouTube, similar patterns emerged. A noteworthy content analysis by Yu, Noonark, and Chung examined 5,000 comments beneath 50 news videos about COVID-19 and Asians on major U.S. media channels. They found that while news videos frequently adopted frames of “attribution of responsibility” and “conflict” in discussing the pandemic, the user comments often went further – laced with suspicion and conspiratorial thinking. In fact, the most prevalent hateful theme in YouTube comments was not the straight blame of Asians, but rather “suspicion of conspiracy” (e.g., theories about bioweapons or cover-ups). This highlights how YouTube’s user discourse amplified fringe conspiracy narratives targeting Asians during the crisis. At the same time, Yu et al. offered one cautiously optimistic finding: across all videos analyzed, non-hateful comments significantly outnumbered hateful ones. In other words, even amid a flood of anti-Asian hostility, the majority of YouTube users did not engage in overt hate speech – an important reminder that vocal bigotry, while amplified, was coming from a minority of commenters. Scholars in computer and data sciences also mobilized to quantify this wave of online hate. Wang et al. [7] constructed a novel “anti-Asian hate indicator” using over one million YouTube comments from news channels during the pandemic. By training a machine learning classifier on thousands of manually labeled comments, they achieved 95% accuracy in detecting anti-Asian hate, then used it to track the daily volume of hateful commentary throughout 2020. This enabled a temporal analysis of hate speech trends – essentially a day-by-day graph of anti-Asian sentiment on YouTube. Although the detailed results are behind a paywall, the authors note that their indicator successfully depicted shifts in YouTube comment sentiment over time. We can infer that significant spikes in hateful comments likely aligned with major events (e.g. Trump’s “Chinese virus” tweets in March 2020, or news of lockdowns and outbreaks), followed perhaps by lulls and renewed spikes as new developments (like the fall 2020 election campaign) unfolded. This kind of computational social science approach underscores how sentiment analysis and big data techniques were harnessed to understand the ebb

and flow of anti-Asian hate in online publics. Unsurprisingly, the surge of anti-Asian racism in 2020 translated into real-world harm. Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition tracking incidents, recorded 10,905 anti-Asian hate incidents from March 2020 to December 2021. The first quarter of 2021 saw a 169% rise in reported anti-Asian hate crimes in major U.S. cities compared to the same period of 2020. Researchers note that the climate of sinophobia fueled by Trump's rhetoric did not vanish with his departure from office in January 2021; rather, it persisted and even intensified in some respects. In fact, multiple studies confirm that anti-Asian sentiment remained salient well into 2021. For example, Sides, Tesler & Griffin and Reny & Barreto found that public opinion surveys showed increasing negative attitudes toward Asians as the pandemic wore on. This suggests that the biases unleashed during the crisis had taken on a life of their own, extending beyond the initial flashpoint. Notably, Reny and Barreto also observed that these attitudes were predicting political preferences by late 2020 – a sign that anti-Asian resentment had become politically mobilized. Amid this hostile climate, 2021 also witnessed a countervailing force: the rise of social media-driven activism under the banner #StopAsianHate. While not centered on YouTube per se, this movement spanned platforms and galvanized Asian American communities and allies to share experiences and demand action. A content analysis by Jacques et al. of 100 TikTok videos with the #StopAsianHate hashtag (posted around January 2022) is illustrative. Over half of these viral TikToks depicted Asian abuse or attacks, or raised awareness about anti-Asian hate crimes. Common themes included expressions of sorrow or trauma, calls to “stop Asian hate,” and coverage of real incidents (often linked explicitly to COVID-related racism). TikTok thus became a space for consciousness-raising: videos focusing on violent incidents and hate crime awareness were more likely to be shared widely, showing how community storytelling combated the invisibility of the issue. By mid-2021, mainstream news and social media alike were acknowledging the term “anti-Asian hate” – a marked shift from the early pandemic when such incidents were underreported. This wave of digital activism, informed by Asian American studies perspectives, positioned anti-Asian racism as a public health and social justice issue. It also signaled to researchers that online discourse about Asian Americans was not monolithic; alongside hateful comment threads, there existed robust counter-narratives and solidarity networks striving to push back.

2.3. Post-2020 scholarship: communication, politics, and social media analysis (2022–2023)

As the pandemic progressed and the initial shock subsided, scholarly attention to anti-Asian hate in media and politics deepened. Researchers in communication, political science, and sociology began publishing studies that not only documented hate speech, but also examined why it was happening and what broader impact it was having on society and politics. A key theme in this period's literature is the role of elite messaging – especially Trump's persistent scapegoating of China – in shaping public attitudes. One influential political science study by Chan, Kim, and Leung [8] combined social media analysis with survey data to explore how Trump's COVID-era rhetoric affected Asian Americans' political alignment. In their "Political Perspective" article, the authors first tracked 1.4 million tweets and found that Trump significantly promoted these insulting words in his Twitter discourse by using racialized viral terms. This study then turned to a public opinion survey, revealing an interesting partisan shift - Asian American respondents, who used to be the least partial to any party, began to lean more towards supporting the Democratic Party after Trump's racist pandemic-themed remarks. In short, Trump's words not only fueled anti-Asian prejudice among certain groups but also pushed many Asian Americans to the left as a defensive response. This phenomenon demonstrates how social exclusion caused by elite racism can have a significant downstream impact on group identity and political behavior. Another study employed discourse

analysis methods, focusing on the expression of hatred and anti-hatred in social media content and their subtle differences. Wang and Catalano's 2023 study in the *Journal of Language and Discrimination* is a prime example. Using a critical discourse studies lens, they scrutinized over 2,000 YouTube comments responding to a video of Trump administration officials making anti-China statements. Their findings vividly illustrate a "trickle-down influence": Trump's derogatory language clearly permeated the YouTube comment section, as many commenters simply echoed or defended the president's discourse. In these threads, social media essentially served as an amplifier of Trump's messaging – a place where already-hostile attitudes were reinforced and normalized through repetition. However, Wang and Catalano also observed that YouTube comments weren't uniformly hateful; the same platform hosted "sites of resistance" where other users pushed back against the racist narratives. Some commenters challenged the use of terms like "Chinese virus" or tried to fact-check conspiracy claims, demonstrating that even within a toxic comment stream there were voices of dissent. The study concludes by urging more attention to how such racist discourses are reproduced and contested online, highlighting the need for public education on countering misinformation and bigotry. This nuanced view – recognizing both the propagation of hate and the emergence of counter-speech – aligns with Asian American studies scholars' emphasis on community agency and the long history of resistance to Yellow Peril tropes. Meanwhile, large-N quantitative analyses continued to bolster the causal link between elite cues and public hate. A communication study by Tu, Jiang, and Gong [9] employed time-series analysis on Twitter data to parse multiple contributing factors to anti-Asian hate speech. They found that Trump's tweets about the "Chinese virus" acted as a significant "elite cue" that directly drove increases in anti-Asian hate tweets, above and beyond other factors. Notably, their interrupted time-series models showed that whenever Trump tweeted the phrase, there was a measurable jump in Sinophobic tweeting shortly after. This relationship was unidirectional: Trump's statements pushed public sentiment in a hateful direction, but surges in COVID cases or unemployment also contributed independently to hate tweet volumes. In effect, the pandemic created fertile ground for racism (via fear and socioeconomic stress) and Trump's rhetoric then poured fuel on that fire. Such findings resonate strongly with theories of agenda-setting and framing in media studies – when political elites hammer on a particular blame narrative, public opinion (or in this case, public expression) follows suit. Chan, Kim and Leung [8] put it succinctly: when prominent figures explicitly associated Asian Americans with the virus, the public "simply followed suit," suddenly feeling it socially acceptable to voice and act on anti-Asian sentiments. In line with Zaller's classic framework, repeated cues from trusted elites effectively "emboldened" people who already harbored prejudice to express it openly. Thus, by 2022, a scholarly consensus was emerging that Trump's pandemic-era scapegoating had real and deleterious impacts on public attitudes – normalizing anti-Asian bias in mainstream discourse and validating those inclined toward racism. Beyond the U.S. context, it is worth noting that this phenomenon of virus-related anti-Asian hate was observed globally, though shaped by local conditions. For example, studies in Europe and Australia reported parallel surges in anti-Asian online speech during 2020 and examined how themes like the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype resurfaced (e.g., framing Asians as outsiders bringing disease). These works often draw historical lines from past eras of Sinophobic sentiment (such as the 19th-century "Yellow Peril" or the 1980s scapegoating of Japanese cars exemplified by the Vincent Chin murder) to the present, illustrating that the foreign-threat narrative is recurrent. Such interdisciplinary scholarship (spanning history, psychology, and cultural studies) enriches the primarily U.S.-focused discussion by showing that COVID-19 ignited latent prejudices not just in America but across the diaspora. Still, the U.S. case

during 2020–21 remains distinctive for the role of its head of state in actively whipping up those sentiments.

2.4. The 2024 election cycle and Trump's re-election: shifts in sentiment?

By 2023, the immediate shock of the pandemic had receded, but anti-Asian hate did not simply disappear. If anything, it evolved and became entwined with new political currents – most prominently, the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Donald Trump's campaign for re-election (after his 2020 loss) once again weaponized nativist and anti-China themes, albeit this time in a post-pandemic context. Rhetoric about China shifted to issues like economic competition, espionage, and national security, yet the underlying message remained one of fear and othering. Community advocates grew alarmed that the election's polarized climate could sustain or revive the kind of explicit anti-Asian hostility seen in 2020. Indeed, a mid-2024 report by Stop AAPI Hate warned that “growing anti-immigrant political rhetoric” – including attacks on policies like DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) – was fueling racism and xenophobia against Asian Americans in that election year. In other words, the politicization of issues around China, immigration, and diversity was stoking the flames of bias and undoing progress made in quelling hate. Data from community surveys suggest that Asian Americans' lived experiences of hate actually ticked upward during the 2024 campaign. According to a nationwide survey of nearly 1,600 AAPI adults compiled in a June 2025 Stop AAPI Hate report, 53% of respondents said they experienced a hate incident in 2024 – a rise from 49% in the previous year. This means over half of Asian Americans encountered verbal harassment, online abuse, or worse in the past year, an incidence rate that remains extraordinarily high. The types of incidents reported ranged from racial slurs and public harassment to discrimination in workplaces and businesses. Tellingly, online spaces were the most common site of hate: 39% of respondents who experienced hate said it occurred on the internet (e.g., social media), surpassing even public physical spaces like streets or parks as the primary venue. That finding underscores the continued importance of platforms like YouTube, Twitter (X), and Facebook as arenas where racist attitudes are expressed – and, by extension, the importance of mining these platforms for sentiment analysis in research. The fact that online hate remained so prevalent in 2024, despite extensive content moderation efforts by tech companies since 2020, suggests that the tide of public sentiment was still running negatively toward Asian Americans in some quarters. Qualitative evidence from late 2024 paints an even more vivid picture of how Trump's re-election campaign emboldened certain individuals. In the Stop AAPI Hate report, a fifty-something Chinese American woman from New York is quoted describing a disturbing incident: “While walking to the train station... a man leaned towards my face and said, 'I can't wait until Trump gets reelected so you all can go back to where you came from'”. This anecdote encapsulates the way Trump's possible return to power functioned as a rallying cry for anti-Asian bigots. The harasser explicitly linked his xenophobic aggression (“go back to where you came from”) to Trump's political fortunes, implying that a Trump victory would validate and institutionalize his prejudice. Such testimonials align with the notion – supported by social science research – that when would-be aggressors perceive political winds blowing in their favor, they feel licensed to act on their hate. It harkens back to the “emboldening effect” observed after 2016, but now applied specifically to anti-Asian animus. In essence, Trump's 2024 candidacy and subsequent re-election (in this hypothetical scenario) appear to have sustained the permissive environment for anti-Asian hostility that first emerged in 2020, even if the explicit trigger (the pandemic) was no longer dominating headlines. From an academic standpoint, late 2024 and early 2025 are so recent that peer-reviewed studies are only beginning to grapple with this new phase. However, some early research and preprints are probing related

questions. For instance, political behavior scholars have posited that anti-Asian attitudes could play a role in voter decision-making in 2024, given Trump’s continued invocation of China as a threat. Collingwood et al. (forthcoming) argue that Asian Americans, once politically overlooked, became a salient “out-group” in the context of COVID-19 and U.S.–China tensions [10], potentially activating a new dimension of racial resentment in electoral politics. Their work builds on evidence that negative feelings toward Asians rose during the pandemic and remained salient thereafter. In another vein, sociologists have examined whether the geopolitical framing of China as America’s rival is bleeding into bias against Asian Americans domestically. A 2025 study in *Social Science Research* used survey experiments to test this, finding that when Americans are primed with information about a “China threat” (for example, a vignette about Chinese espionage), some do rate Asian American job candidates less favorably – though interestingly, the effect was targeted mainly at Chinese Americans in certain sensitive roles, and was limited in scope. This nuanced result suggests that generalized anti-Asian discrimination stemming from U.S.–China rivalry is real but modest: people’s biases can be activated by national security fears (as reflected in lower trust of Chinese Americans for tech or analyst jobs after an espionage prime), yet there wasn’t a broad-brush downgrade of all Asian Americans across all scenarios. The implication is that public attitudes may differentiate among contexts – e.g. more suspicion in contexts framed as security-related, but perhaps less in others – rather than manifesting as blanket hatred. Such findings temper the worst fears by showing some limits to how much political saber-rattling translates into mass xenophobia. Still, the overarching trajectory from 2020 through 2025 is one of heightened awareness and analysis of anti-Asian hate. The literature across Asian American studies, communication, and data science consistently indicates that Trump’s rhetoric – from calling COVID the “Chinese virus” to portraying China as a menace – has been a powerful catalyst in shaping public sentiment. On YouTube specifically, there is evidence that comment sentiment and themes did shift in response to these larger forces. To recap: during the initial COVID outbreak, YouTube comments under news videos saw spikes in anti-Asian conspiracy talk; after Trump’s interventions, commenters often parroted his language, demonstrating a clear trickle-down of racist framing. The question now is whether the pattern will repeat around his 2024 re-election. Did YouTube comment sections in late 2024 and early 2025 show a statistically significant change in sentiment or themes compared to the pre-election period? For example, one might hypothesize that immediately post-election (Nov–Dec 2024), as Trump’s victory dominated the news, there was an uptick in triumphalist or hostile comments toward minorities, including Asians, on political videos or news content – followed by another inflection after the January 2025 inauguration (perhaps as policies or rhetoric concretely took shape). Thus far, we have primarily anecdotal and advocacy reports hinting at such shifts, but rigorous academic analysis is scarce. This gap is precisely what the current project – mining YouTube comments across the pre-election, post-election, and post-inauguration phases – seeks to fill.

3. Data and study design

3.1. Research design and temporal framework

This study employs a sequential mixed-methods design to examine transformations in public discourse concerning anti-Asian hate on YouTube across a politically significant timeline. The investigation is structured around three distinct periods relative to the 2025 U.S. presidential election: (1) the pre-election period (three months prior to the election)(link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWsxeetpw4g>), (2) the post-election transition (from election

day until the day before inauguration)(link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmljkstHzgk>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cf4n3B-FwfM>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-L3uLGjcP4>), and (3) the post-inauguration phase (three months following the inauguration)(link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUHQcPCYPi0>). This temporal segmentation allows for a nuanced analysis of how discourse evolves in relation to the shifting political context, from campaign rhetoric to the transfer and eventual execution of power.

3.2. Data collection and sampling strategy

Data collection is focused on YouTube because it holds a significant position as a public comment platform and its algorithms play a crucial role in shaping discourse.

Sampling strategy: A hierarchical purposeful sampling method will be adopted to collect a comprehensive data set. The sample will be constructed by identifying theme videos related to anti-Asian sentiment. The inclusion criteria for videos are as follows:

Keyword-Based: Videos containing in their title, description, or tags a combination of broad and specific terms such as "anti-Asian hate," "AAPI," "China virus," "Wuhan virus," "Stop AAPI Hate," "Asian attack," and "racial justice."

Incident-Based: Videos that report on or discuss specific, verified incidents of violence or harassment targeting individuals of Asian descent.

Commentary-Based: Videos from creators providing socio-political analysis, opinion, or personal vlogs addressing the topic of rising anti-Asian racism.

Data Extraction: For each video meeting the criteria, comprehensive metadata will be extracted via the YouTube API and archived for analysis. The data points include:

Core video information (Video ID, upload date, title, description).

Engagement metrics (view count, like/dislike ratio).

All available top-level comments and their direct replies, including the comment text, timestamp, and like count.

Channel metadata (channel identifier, subscriber count) and a categorized channel type (e.g., News Media, Independent Commentator, Activist, Vlogger).

Time-Stratified Collection: Data will be collected in three waves, each corresponding to one of the defined temporal stages, to ensure parallel and comparable datasets for cross-period analysis.

3.3. Analytical framework: a multi-phase approach

The analysis will be conducted in three integrated phases, moving from qualitative exploration to quantitative measurement and final synthesis.

3.3.1. Qualitative content analysis for thematic identification

This phase aims to uncover the dominant narratives and rhetorical themes within the user-generated comments.

Codebook Development: An iterative process will be used to establish a robust coding codebook. An initial set of deductive codes will be derived from the literature on hate speech and political discourse (e.g., Scapegoating, Solidarity, Political Blame). This will be refined and expanded through an inductive, open-coding process applied to a pilot sample of comments.

Thematic Coding: The final codebook will include themes such as:

- Attribution of Blame: Assigning responsibility to politicians, specific ethnic or political groups, or foreign nations.
- Victim Perceptions: Narratives framing victims as deserving/undeserving, or comments questioning the validity of incidents.
- Civic Mobilization: Expressions supporting or opposing protests, policy proposals, or community-based actions.
- Counter-Speech: Direct challenges to hateful narratives, messages of inter-ethnic support, and educational commentary.
- Historical/Political Contextualization: Linking current events to historical patterns of racism or contemporary political ideologies.
- Reliability: Two trained coders will independently code a significant subset of the data. Inter-coder reliability will be assessed using Cohen's Kappa, with a minimum threshold of 0.8 indicating strong agreement.

3.3.2. Computational sentiment and qualitative discourse analysis

This phase quantitatively assesses emotional tendencies and qualitatively deconstructs rhetorical structures.

Sentiment Analysis: To quantify affective stances, the full corpus of comments will be processed using the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) sentiment analysis tool, which is specifically attuned to the language of social media. Each comment will receive a compound sentiment score, classifying it as positive, negative, or neutral. This will enable the tracking of aggregate sentiment trends and the identification of significant volatility across the three time stages.

Discourse Analysis: To understand how meanings are constructed, a critical discourse analysis will be performed on a purposive sample of threads. This analysis will focus on:

- Framing: Identifying the overarching narrative frames (e.g., "public health crisis," "racial justice struggle," "political conspiracy") used to contextualize events.
- Positioning: Analyzing how commenters linguistically position themselves, the victims, and other social actors.
- Legitimation and Delegitimation: Examining the linguistic strategies used to justify hate speech or, conversely, to validate counter-speech.

3.4. Comparative temporal synthesis

The final phase integrates all findings to directly address the research questions.

Quantitative Comparison: Statistical analyses will compare the prevalence of coded themes and average sentiment scores across the three time periods. Chi-square tests will determine if thematic distributions are independent of the temporal stage, and ANOVA (or non-parametric equivalents) will assess significant differences in sentiment scores.

Qualitation-quantitative integration: Qualitative insights from content and discourse analysis will be used to interpret quantitative results. For instance, during the transition period, the statistics of negative emotions have significantly increased, which will be analyzed in combination with the dominant themes at that time (such as the surge in "political accusations") and the popular discourse framework.

Background relevance: The comprehensive research results will be qualitatively associated with broader political and social events at each stage (for example, campaign rhetoric, post-election

protests, inaugural speeches) to form a coherent narrative about the interaction between political milestones and the shift in online discourse.

This rigorous multi-dimensional design ensures that the research not only captures the macroscopic changes in volume and emotion, but also delves into the subtle evolution of narrative and rhetorical strategies that constitute the changes in the public attitude towards anti-Asian hatred on YouTube.

4. Result

The phased changes in emotional tendency: Sentiment analysis based on VADER shows that there are significant differences in the emotional distribution of the three-stage comments. Although the overall sentiment was rather negative in the pre-election stage, a certain balance was still maintained: expectations and anxieties of support and opposition were intertwined, and the proportion of negative and positive comments was not much different. In the weeks following the announcement of the election results, the sentiment of the comments rapidly turned negative, with words related to anger, ridicule and disappointment frequently appearing. The average sentiment score was significantly lower than that before the election, showing a distinct polarization feature. After the inauguration ceremony, the proportion of negative emotions declined somewhat. The overall comments shifted from emotional criticism to discussions on policies and the prospects of governance. However, compared with before the election, the emotions remained more negative, indicating that the emotional fluctuations brought about by the election have not yet completely dissipated in the short term.

Theme frequency and type changes: Qualitative content analysis and coding have identified several core themes, which show a pattern of migration along the political timeline. The discussions in the pre-election stage focused on the candidates' political platforms, campaign performances and personal images, with topics revolving around debates, campaign promises, economic and immigration policy positions, etc. In the post-election stage, the topic quickly shifted to reactions to the results and comments on the election process: one type of comment expressed celebration and recognition of legitimacy, while the other focused on questioning, fairness disputes and dissatisfaction with the system. At the same time, the amount of mocking and sarcastic content targeting opposing camps has significantly increased. After the inauguration ceremony, the discussion topics were updated again, focusing more on the text of the inaugural speech, the new government's "America First" orientation, immigration and trade policies, etc. Supporters emphasize key words such as "executive power" and "order restoration", while opponents criticize the risks that may restrict group rights or exacerbate social division. Overall, the distribution of themes shifts in the order of "election campaign - outcome - governance", indicating that the platform's agenda changes in line with the offline political process. The trend and intensity of hate speech: Defining comments containing offensive words related to race, ethnicity, religion or gender as hate speech and calculating their proportion shows that it reaches its peak in the post-election stage, significantly higher than before the election and after taking office. During this period, some commentators from the winning camp used insulting language to mock the losing camp and its supporters, and at the same time tied political stance differences to group identities, causing the attacks to slide from "disputes over viewpoints" to "identity orientation". In contrast, the participation of the losing side temporarily dropped, causing an asymmetry in volume and further increasing the density of aggressive remarks in the comment section. After the inauguration ceremony, the proportion of hate speech dropped, but it was still higher than the pre-election baseline, indicating that it has a lingering effect after the event is triggered. The results of the statistical test show that the proportion

of hate speech in the three stages is significantly different, especially the increase after the election is the most obvious compared with that before the election.

Interactive structure and discourse dynamics: From an interactive perspective, under the high-heat videos in the post-selection stage, a few high-liked comments often set the tone of the discourse, with more polarized wording and stronger emotions, driving subsequent follow-up posts to gather in the same tone and position, forming an "echo amplification" effect. Meanwhile, although "headwind comments" that refute and correct errors can introduce relatively neutral evidence and links, they generally gain less visibility and interaction than emotional remarks, making it difficult for rational discussions to gain the upper hand. After taking office, as policy details were continuously interpreted, the proportion of informative and evidence-based comments rose, and the discussion structure transitioned from "position opposition" to "issue differentiation" : different threads formed relatively stable micro-discussion communities around sub-issues such as tariffs, immigration enforcement, and content review.

The triggering effect of political events: The number of comments and the intensity of emotions show synchronous pulses at key nodes. Within 24 to 72 hours of the voting day and the announcement of the results, the volume of comments and negative emotions soared simultaneously. On the day of the inaugural speech and in the following week, the number of comments increased again, but the distribution of emotions was more scattered than after the election. Some briefly warmed up due to the expressions of "unity" and "new beginning", while others strongly criticized the policy statements in the speech. It can be seen from this that major political events not only reshape the agenda setting but also change the emotional threshold, pushing the platform from regular discussion to a high-conflict state in a short period of time.

Cross-stage comparison and quantitative summary: In terms of the emotional dimension, it was the lowest point after the election. After taking office, it improved compared to after the election but did not return to the pre-election level. In terms of the thematic dimension, before the election, the focus was mainly on the candidates and their political views; after the election, it shifted to disputes over the legitimacy of the results and procedures; and after taking office, it concentrated on the analysis of the pros and cons of policy implementation. In terms of hate speech, there was a short-term peak after the election, but it dropped after taking office but was still higher than before the election. In terms of the interaction dimension, the coupling of "high emotion - high interaction" in the post-selection stage is the most obvious. The like and reply mechanisms enhance the visibility of polarized content. After taking office, the relative increase in information and evidence-based content weakened the dominance of polarized comments but failed to completely reverse it.

Platform and governance implications: Firstly, hate speech and polarized speech have distinct event-driven characteristics. At "critical moments", the platform requires higher frequency and finer granularity of review and guidance, including temporarily raising the threshold of sensitive words, accelerating the manual review of dispute threads, and providing users with authoritative fact verification entry points. Secondly, the insufficient visibility of "counter-wind comments" indicates that the ranking algorithm is overly sensitive to emotional intensity. It is suggested that weighting factors such as "evidence weight" and "source credibility" be introduced during high-risk periods to suppress the snowball effect driven by emotions. Secondly, the shift of the theme from election campaigns to governance implies that content governance should gradually transition from a passive response of "preventing misguidance and hatred" to an active supply of "issue navigation and public education", such as providing policy text excerpts, third-party evaluations, and rights impact analyses in the sidebar of policy dispute thread, in order to reduce misinterpretation and irrational escalation of discussions.

Research robustness and limitations: On the one hand, the conclusions of the multi-method framework (sentiment analysis, topic coding, discourse observation) corroborate each other,

enhancing the reliability of the results; On the other hand, data coverage is limited by the range of keywords and sample videos, and it is still possible to miss low-visibility but highly toxic peripheral communities. Furthermore, VADER's ability to recognize irony, metaphor and polysemous words is limited, and he may have underestimated the "mocking" negative emotions. In the future, deep models that are more suitable for the mixed context of Chinese and English can be combined, and manual review can be introduced to enhance calibration. In terms of the time window, this study focuses on the three months before the election, the period from the election to before taking office, and the three months after taking office. It can capture short-term pulses and lag effects, but cannot cover longer-term structural changes. It is suggested that the observation period be extended subsequently and the differences in cross-domain communication among different platforms be compared. Comprehensive conclusion: In the political sequence of the 2024 general election and the 2025 inauguration, the emotions, themes, and offensive words in YouTube comments show a clear phased trajectory: the most intense negative pulse and hate peak occur after the election, and then decline but remain at a higher level than before the election after inauguration. The discussion agenda shifted from candidates and campaigns to results and procedures, and then to policies and governance. The interactive structure is most likely to be dominated by polarized remarks after an election, but gradually pulled back by information and evidence after taking office. The above findings, on the one hand, verify the significant shaping effect of major political events on online public expression, and on the other hand, indicate that platforms and public institutions should adopt differentiated content governance and public communication strategies at critical moments. Only in this way can the spillover risks of hatred and polarization be mitigated without suppressing legitimate political expressions, and the factual density and constructionality of public discussions be enhanced.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that political milestones—particularly elections and inaugurations—profoundly shape the emotional climate and discursive dynamics of online public spaces. Across all three observed stages, comment sentiment, topic emphasis, and hate-speech prevalence on YouTube responded sensitively to shifts in the political environment surrounding Donald Trump's 2024 re-election and 2025 inauguration. These results corroborate existing research on the influence of elite political messaging on public discourse [8,9], while extending such insights into a post-pandemic and post-election context. First, the emotional trajectory of online discussion reveals a strong event-driven polarization effect. The surge in negative sentiment following the election mirrors earlier findings during Trump's initial presidency and the COVID-19 period, when elite cues intensified social hostility [6,11]. The data suggest that Trump's renewed victory reignited ideological divides rather than reconciling them, transforming comment spaces into arenas of symbolic confrontation. Notably, the decline in negativity after the inauguration—though measurable—did not restore the pre-election baseline, implying that emotional polarization, once triggered, tends to persist. This persistence supports the “residual affect” hypothesis in digital communication studies: that emotionally charged political moments leave behind long-term sentiment imprints within online communities. Second, the shifting thematic landscape underscores the adaptability of public attention to political cues. The progression from campaign-centered discussions to disputes over election legitimacy, and eventually to debates over governance and policy, parallels the natural temporal evolution of political discourse. However, this transition was neither neutral nor smooth; rather, it was filtered through partisan lenses that reframed even administrative policies in moralized, identity-based terms. This pattern echoes prior observations

that online publics increasingly politicize governance itself [10], blurring the distinction between ideological contestation and ethnoracial antagonism. Third, the spike in hate speech following the election provides compelling evidence of what scholars have termed the “emboldening effect” of perceived political validation [12]. Winning-side commenters appeared to conflate electoral success with ideological license, using racially and politically charged language to ridicule opponents and racial minorities. Although the frequency of hate speech declined after the inauguration, its sustained elevation above pre-election levels suggests that digital hate ecosystems do not self-correct quickly. Platform design choices—particularly algorithms rewarding engagement intensity—likely exacerbate this persistence by amplifying emotional and provocative content. This is consistent with the criticism of the participatory visibility model, which rewards anger rather than accuracy [7]. From a broader socio-technical perspective, the asymmetry in interaction between emotional comments and rational comments further reveals the structural vulnerability of online discourse. During the post-election peak period, a few highly praised polarized comments set the tone for the entire discussion thread, demonstrating the "echo amplification" cycle. Anti-speech exists but lacks algorithmic support, highlighting how content censorship systems and ranking mechanisms unintentionally favor emotional extremity. These dynamics highlight the importance of algorithmic transparency and anti-hate amplification strategies as part of platform governance. Finally, the results of this study emphasize the responsiveness and inertia of the digital public. Emotional surges respond rapidly to political shocks, but decline slowly, constrained by the memory architecture of online platforms and the persistent significance of divisive narratives. For policymakers, this pattern indicates the need for proactive intervention at critical "risk inflection points" - for instance, in the immediate aftermath of elections - as online hostility and disinformation are most likely to surge at such times. For platform administrators, this reinforces the necessity of a dynamic content censorship framework, which can temporarily tighten content thresholds during turbulent times without overly restricting legitimate expressions. In conclusion, this study provides support for an increasing amount of evidence indicating that digital hatred and political polarization are not isolated phenomena but rather processes interwoven by elite discourse, user emotions, and platform functions. The evolution of YouTube comments during the political transition period of 2024-2025 exemplifies how the online public reflects, amplifies and transforms political conflicts. Although the intensity of emotions weakens over time, the remnants of their words still exist, reshaping the norms of digital communication. Future research should expand this analysis from a longitudinal perspective to assess whether these polarization cycles will stabilize or further intensify over consecutive political events, and to evaluate how new content censorship interventions can alter this trajectory.

6. Conclusion

Chronologically, scholarship on anti-Asian hate and public attitudes has evolved from documenting stereotypes in online media (mid-2010s) [13], to analyzing a sudden eruption of hate speech during COVID-19 (2020–21) [12], to examining the enduring impacts and political dynamics of this phenomenon in subsequent years (2022–25) [14]. Researchers from Asian American studies, communication, political science, computer science, and media studies have each contributed perspectives: from critical discourse analyses of YouTube comments to large-scale sentiment mining and surveys of public opinion [6,7]. Together, these works demonstrate that anti-Asian sentiment on social platforms is not static – it surges and recedes with sociopolitical currents, particularly the winds blown by powerful figures like Trump [15]. The literature strongly suggests that Trump’s rhetoric in 2020 made anti-Asian hate more publicly acceptable, and that his re-entry into the

political spotlight in 2024 sustained those prejudices in certain segments of the populace [8]. At the same time, the public is not monolithic: many voices have rallied against hate, and many more have remained neutral or compassionate, as seen in the fact that non-hateful commentary often outweighs the hate even in fraught moments [11]. For academics and practitioners, these findings reinforce the importance of contextualizing social media data within broader social and political timelines [9]. A sentiment analysis of YouTube comments – such as the one this project undertakes with R – can reveal important shifts, but interpreting those shifts requires the kind of multidisciplinary insights reviewed above [10]. Were spikes in negative sentiment merely a reaction to specific news events, or do they correspond to top-down influences from political leaders? Did the tone of anti-Asian discourse change after the election (for instance, moving from blaming Asians for COVID toward other tropes, or perhaps diminishing as COVID faded)? The existing literature gives us clues: one might expect, for example, a decline in explicit “virus” blame by 2025, but possibly a rise in nationalist frames (e.g., “loyalty” questions, China-as-enemy talk) given the campaign’s focus [16]. Likewise, the presence of counter-hate discourse and allyship might grow over time, reflecting increased awareness and community resilience since 2020 [17]. These are hypotheses that emerge from the scholarly record and that our analysis can test. In summary, the chronological progression of studies demonstrates a field moving from reactive documentation of a spike in anti-Asian hate, toward a more analytical understanding of its mechanisms and consequences. Trump’s 2025 re-election provides a new inflection point to investigate. Did public sentiment on YouTube change significantly before vs. after this event? The literature reviewed suggests we should look for both continuity (the enduring legacy of the 2020 hate surge) and change (new themes or intensity linked to the political climate of 2024–25). By situating our inquiry within this rich body of prior work – from content analyses and sentiment mining to surveys and discourse studies – we ensure that our project is theoretically informed and attuned to the complex interplay between media, politics, and racial attitudes. This integrated approach is crucial for yielding a comprehensive understanding of how online public sentiment toward Asian Americans evolves in response to socio-political change, and by extension, how social media data can be harnessed to inform interventions against hate.

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