A Mixed Methodology Study of Media Coverage of the "One Belt, One Road" Strategy

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Abstract: This paper presents a quantitative and qualitative study of the journalistic reports on "One belt, One road" strategy from *China Daily* and *Voice of America* in 2015. Micro Corpus of *China Daily* (MCCD) and Micro Corpus of *Voice of America* (MCVOA) were built using related news articles from each website. The methodological approach involves both quantitative and software-assisted qualitative content analysis. Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Halliday's systemic functional grammar, the study analyzes news reports in terms of lexical choice, and keywords related qualitative content analysis to explore the implicit social ideologies, values and stance in the press discourse. The relationship between language and social ideology is identified by analyzing linguistic features. The findings can help us systematically understand how particular events are constructed as newsworthy, what values and stance are cultivated in news stories, and how these investigations enhance our critical language awareness.

Keywords: journalistic corpus; Software-assisted qualitative content analysis; one belt, one road; ideology.

Introduction

In recent years, China's silent rise to the second biggest GDP in the world is a frequent subject in topics. China realizes that it should have more say on the Asian continent and even in the world. With China's own rise, it is possible that China would play a pivotal role in Asian affairs. China proposed initiative strategies for the Silk Road Economic Belt on the land and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road on the sea, which is also called "One Belt One Road". The strategy includes 65 countries and 4.4 billion people or 63% of the world's population and presents an infrastructure investment plan that will take decades to implement.

The study was developed with Cotter's [1] idea that the journalist stance governs each stage of the reporting and editing process and that it is embedded in text. Both Chinese and American journalists use a series of lexico-grammatical resources in their articles, either to express their own feelings or to put words into the mouth of the government, that is, in the name of their social ideology and their political stance. We will find out how journalists of the two news outlets carry out a linguistic construction of social reality in their articles.

Language, Power and Ideology In Newspapers

Fairclough [2] noted that discourse, whether it is in speech or written form, is regarded as a kind of social practice. Fairclough [3] asserted that language is not isolated with the political and social workings of society; and when a political actor delivers a speech and a journalist writes an article, they follow the socially accepted ideologies that have social effects and implications. In a general sense, the notion of power and politics are strongly connected to each other in the domain of politics, governmental authorities and state affairs. In a general sense, the notion of power and politics are strongly connected to each other in the domain of politics, governmental authorities and state affairs.

As is illustrated above, speech or written discourses are not always neutral. They ideologically mirror the ambitions, interests and power of certain social groups. Blommaert [4] pointed out that the power of language depends on individuals who use it. When language is employed to put people's minds, beliefs, and action under control by individuals or social groups, then it is considered that language is used by them to acquire more power for specific purposes.

Ideology is one of the most frequently-used political terms. Kress [5] asserted that ideology simply means the 'false ideas' of politicians' political opponents. It is generally understood that ideology is related to interests of a given class, class structure, a religious group, or a political party. Blommaert [4] argued that an ideology stands for a set of ideas, values, and perceptions of the society among a particular group of people; it is produced under certain social and economic circumstances.

It is unavoidable that people's understanding and opinions on some events are influenced by newspapers [6]. Stuart Allan [6] argued that news media play a crucial part in establishing a discursive space, one framed by the state and economic domains on either side, for public deliberations over social issues. Then, Paltridge [7] further pointed out that ideology in newspapers is usually covert and implicit in creating a connection with a particular social stance or notion of society.

Keywords and Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Stubbs [8] pointed out that key words are the expressions of attitudes towards society and the study of recurrent wordings is therefore of central importance in the study of language and ideology, and can provide empirical evidence of how the culture is expressed in lexical patterns. Wierzbicka [9] gave keyword a definition that it is of great importance and revealing in a given culture. Baker [10] noted that a keyword depends on the frequency of the same word used in different corpora.

Comparing with the objectivity of quantitative content analysis [11], Schreier [12] claimed that the research method of qualitative content analysis is a subjective means of describing texts and grouping words into content related themes. Harwood and Garry [13] noted that media coverage, such as newspaper reports and magazine articles, has been widely interpreted with the approach of qualitative analysis. However, it has to be pointed out that it is difficult to distinguish quantitative from qualitative content analysis. For example, Krippendorff [14] asserted that all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers. Qualitative content analysts tend to integrate quantitative elements and counting into qualitative study [12, 15]. As Kuckartz [16] asserted, "it is possible to quantify the qualitative data, and vice versa. Then, there is no need to be suspicious about the difference between qualitative and quantitative perspectives" (p. 3). For example, QCA can quantify the qualitative phenomena, such as using high-frequency words analysis, in answering the research questions [21].

The content analysis the media coverage was based on a general integration of inductive and deductive coding approaches to illustrate the sorting of keywords (frequency), different overarching themes and the tone of these news articles. Actually, with the widespread use of computer coding software, the mixed approach to answering the research questions has been employed by analysts [17-19].

In this study, the "Silk Road" strategy is the topic of discussion in the two official media and the attributes assigned to the strategy will reveal how the newspapers see the strategy and the ideology they hold.

The Study
Research questions

Two research questions are considered in this paper:
1. What are the implicit ideological themes that conveyed through key words in the reporting of the two newspapers?
2. What are the differences in the reporting tone, attitude and ideology that the articles convey?

Discourse, corpora and methodology

In this section, the construction of the corpus and the methods of analysis are described. The newspaper discourses have been collected over a period of time (from April 14 to July 31, 2015), which allows the researcher to see how the news stories evolve. The newspaper, *China Daily*, established in June 1981, is the official print of the Chinese government and acts as the mouthpiece of the government; The Voice of America (VOA) is the official news agency of the United States federal government and is fully sponsored by the U.S. government. News reports of both newspapers were downloaded from their websites. For comparability, all the issued articles were collected within the time range from April to July (2015). There are altogether only six reports covered in VOA during that period, hence six articles in China Daily were also chosen from that time range. The articles on the topic were identified using the search terms "one belt, one road" in both websites.

The first step was to use Compleat Lexical Tutor v.8 (word frequency) to get a list of keywords by employing the search terms "one belt, one road". Then, bearing that list of keywords in mind to identify relevant articles and to read through the content for a first impression (un-code text part not relevant to research questions); next, re-read the articles to create themes as they emerge and read through each reference at themes and determine the tone and attitude of coverage.

Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Halliday's [22, 23] systemic functional grammar, the study analyzes news reports in terms of lexical choice, and keywords related qualitative content analysis to explore the implicit social ideologies, values and stance in the press discourse.

As discussed above, quantitative (sorting key words) and qualitative (inductive and deductive approach) content analysis was combined to answer the research questions. A more traditional corpus linguistic measure of high frequency words was also calculated

using Compleat Lexical Tutor and QSR NVivo11.0. Keywords in Table 2 and Table 3 which are sorted by the Compleat Lexical Tutor are the words that are far more frequent in the texts than they are in a reference corpus (the 14-million word mixed written-spoken, US-UK, developed by Paul Nation as basis for the first 2k of the BNC-Coca lists - see it - >bnc_coca_fams_speechwrite_US_UK_per14mill). For example, the first item (in the output of ChinaDaily) 31420.00 yuan means that yuan has 1 natural occurrences in 14,000,000 words, but 7 occurrences in your 3,119-word text. This would work out to (7/3119) x 14,000,000 =31,420 occurrences if your text were the same size as the corpus. The word is thus 31,420 / 1

= 31420.00 times more frequent in the texts than it is in the reference corpus. This probably means the word plays an important (or 'key') role in the text.

The keyword lists below (Tables 2 and 3) contain all the words in the texts that are at least 25 times more numerous in the texts than in the reference corpus (the "keyness factor"). The greater the keyness factor, the more 'key' a word is likely to be to the input text.

Finally, tables, charts and tree maps are created to visualize and present data as follows:

Table 1: (ChinaDaily) Keywords Output by Compleat Lexical Tutor

(1) 31420.00 yuan	(2) 11969.67 ASEAN	(3) 2743.06 maritime	(4) 1068.71 bilateral	(5) 897.73 diversify
(6) 448.85 friction	(7) 422.17 China	(8) 408.06 Thai	(9) 374.04 trillion	(10) 298.44 belt
(11) 268.55 initiate	(12) 264.04 southeast	(13) 264.04 silk	(14) 258.34 aviation	(15) 249.37 administer
(16) 205.59 ambassador	(17) 192.37 destination	(18) 183.20 solar	(19)170.46 embassy	(20)163.97 infrastructure
(21) 137.69 Asia	(22) 137.06 Africa	(23) 135.14 cooperate	(24) 128.25 Indonesia	(25)116.09 airport
(26) 106.45 boost	(27) 92.07 rail	(28) 84.32 billion	(29) 75.76 passenger	(30)72.69 mutual
(31) 71.15 Britain	(32) 65.64 invest	(33) 65.22 road	(34) 64.86 route	(35) 59.52 trade
(36) 55.81 project	(37) 52.81 geography	(38) 52.19 airline	(39) 47.08 ocean	(40) 46.92 comprehensive
(41) 37.83 priority	(42) 34.72 region	(43) 33.62 export	(44) 32.12 enterprise	(45) 31.57 emerge
(46) 31.03 expand	(47) 31.00 Europe	(48) 30.48 recover	(49) 29.76 manufacture	(50) 29.09 partner
(51) 28.82 energy	(52) 28.35 nuclear	(53) 27.64 economy	(54) 27.57 welcome	(55) 26.35 counsel

Table 2: (VOA) Keywords Output by Compleat Lexical Tutor

(1) 45563.00 program	(2) 36450.00 politic	(3) 15188.00 relation	(4) 12584.14 Laos	(5) 9113.00 meaning
(6) 7087.67 ASEAN	(7) 1918.42 afghan	(8) 1301.86 Philippine	(9) 460.24 Thai	(10) 311.96 china
(11) 293.97 marshal	(12) 257.91 Taiwan	(13) 248.35 Pakistan	(14) 221.92 infrastructure	(15) 214.30 Asia
(16) 170.33 ambitious	(17) 112.51 complement	(18) 105.35 route	(19) 88.86 belt	(20) 88.56 Vietnam
(21) 84.04 boost	(22) 83.61 backyard	(23) 82.47 institute	(24)80.93 project	(25) 77.89 rail
(26) 71.05 province	(27) 67.50 globe	(28) 65.83 silk	(29)65.18 communist	(30) 56.51 dispute
(31) 52.98 vulnerable	(32) 43.63 billion	(33) 43.52 corrupt	(34) 41.63 bank	(35) 39.84 territory
(36) 37.58 invest	(37) 35.00 expand	(38) 34.01 challenge	(39)33.56 region	(40) 32.45 initiate
(41) 32.27 influence	(42) 30.68 generate	(43) 30.28 port	(44) 30.18 ministry	(45) 29.55 India
(46) 29.49 launch	(47) 26.46 foreign	(48) 25.95 international	(49) 25.17 Europe	

Word Frequency Query in NVivo was used to sort out the most frequent words by limiting the number

of 50 words displayed in the results. And "stop words" are also excluded, by default, these are less significant

words (e.g., conjunctions or prepositions) that may not be meaningful to my analysis, therefore, the minimum length of most frequent words is set by four letters. These two Tree Map tabs (Figure 1 and Figure 3) display up to 50 words as a series of rectangles, the bigger the rectangles, the more frequent the words.

Moreover, the two Word Cloud tabs (Figure 2 and Figure 4) also display up to 50 words in varying font sizes, where frequently occurring words are in larger fonts. The more frequent the words, the larger fonts they are in-, hence the more 'key' are likely to be in the text.
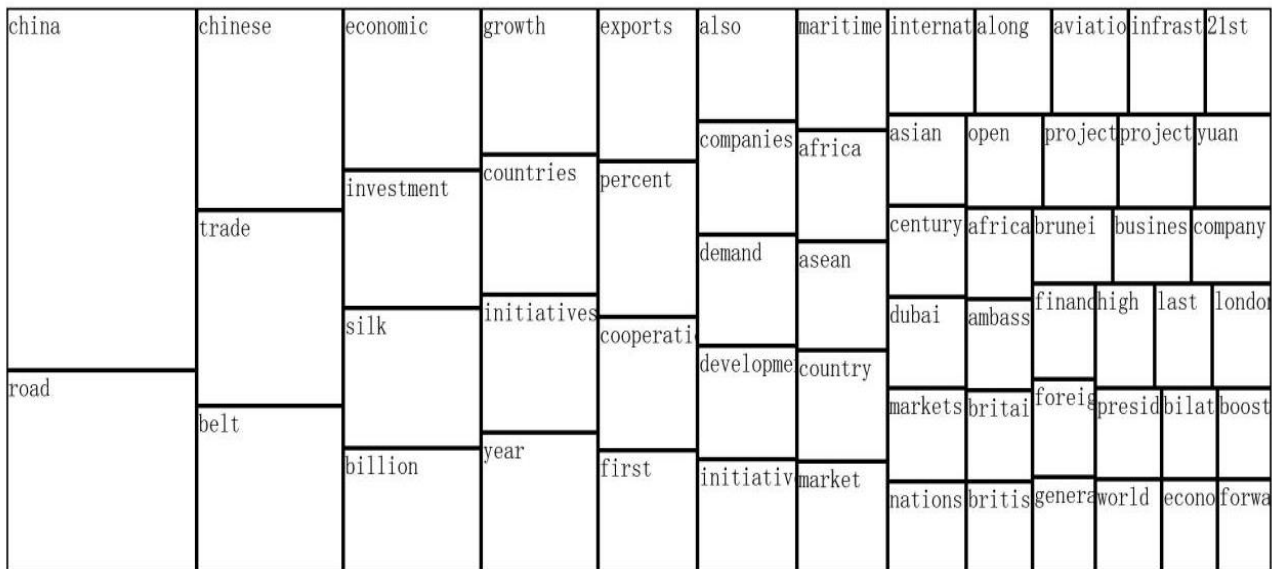

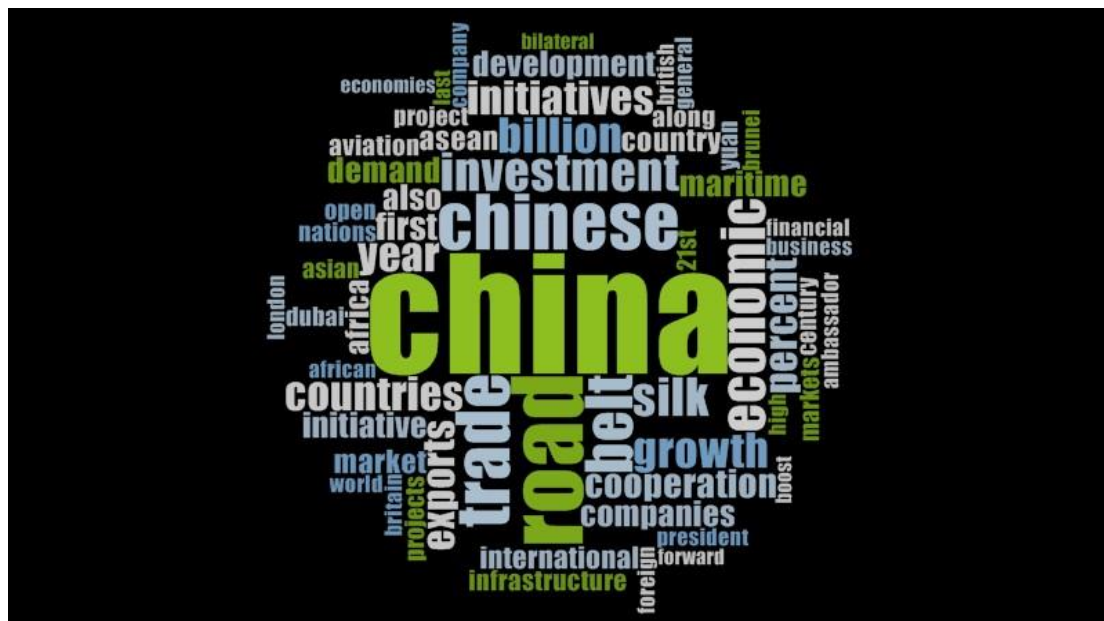**Fig-1: Tree map of ChinaDaily reports by NVivo Word Frequency Query**

Fig-2: Word cloud of ChinaDaily reports by NVivo Word Frequency Query

china	chinese	also	development	investment	program	political	economy	party	plan	trade
		beijing	economic	road	billion	project	belt	aiib	going	support
	bank				asia	south	foreign	central	east	island
		world	influence	taiwan				like	vietnam	year
					asian	analysts	many	local	asean	institut
countries	laos	projects	infrastruc	internatic	pakistan	country	afghanis	president	even	part

Fig-3: Tree map of VOA reports by NVivo Word Frequency Query

Fig-4: Word cloud of VOA reports by NVivo Word Frequency Query

Results and Discussion

After sorting out the keywords, it is clear that the concept of economy (including yuan, trade, trillion and export, etc) occurs most frequently. Three different overarching themes that reflect the implicit ideological meanings are consistently identified through sorting and grouping of key words in the news articles. Moreover, this stage is central in helping determine the tone of coverage related to each of those key terms that have been created. Themes are illustrated as follows: (1) China Daily's positive coverage on prospective certainty and progress of "silk road" strategy, (2) VOA's negative reports on uncertainty and mistrust regarding the strategy, (3) different attitudes and reporting tone towards the strategy.

Theme 1: China Daily's positive coverage on prospective certainty and progress of "silk road" strategy

Table2 clearly illustrates that Chinese journalists make use of the high-frequency words which focus on the area of trade and economy to cover their reports on the "silk road", such as yuan, infrastructure, manufacture, enterprise, export and project, etc.,

Example 1: *Britain has been encouraging Chinese investment in its infrastructure, transport and energy sectors, especially in nuclear, high-speed rail, offshore wind power and solar projects." (31,July, China Daily)*

Example 2: *Progress has been made in China-Laos and China-Vietnam Cross- border Economic Cooperation Zones, High-speed Rail Project between China and*

Laos, High-speed Rail Project in Thailand, Navigation Channel Improvement Project of the Lancang-Mekong River (Phase II). (23, April, China Daily)

Example 3: *Bilateral trade with China and the economies along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road stood at 1.45 trillion yuan during the first quarter,[...]. (17 April, China Daily)*

The densely covered key words by *China Daily* are in accordance with the major goals of "silk road" strategy. *China Daily* use encouraging economic words to interpret the purpose of the strategy, such as development, cooperation, growth, billion and investments. China conveys the hope to cooperate the countries along the silk roads to achieve a mutual benefit and a win-win situation on the economic development. In view of the *Vision and Actions* (Appendix 1) issued by Chinese government on March 28, 2015, facilitated connectivity is a priority for implementing the strategy. The strategy will focus on the connectivity and cooperation in highways, railways, maritime and aviation transport, telecommunications and energy, which describe a promising future for the "silk road" strategy.

Theme 2:VOA's negative reports on uncertainty and mistrust regarding the strategy
VOA news reports dealt with uncertainty and doubt regarding the strategy. In particular, reports from the U.S. side surrounding the question whether the strategy is effective or possibly even doomed to fail were discussed. Furthermore, there is an example used by the VOA reporter to predict the implicit consequence of the strategy in the future, which means the complication and the uncertainty of the external situation could place the strategy in a dilemma. A list of key words indicates the negative reports from U.S. media, including vulnerable, territory dispute, challenge and corrupt.

Example 1: *But such an ambitious and far-reaching project also is vulnerable to becoming entangled in foreign disputes that Beijing has traditionally worked to avoid. (15 April, VOA)*

Example 2: *Those include the Ukraine crisis, island disputes involving six countries along the South China Sea, China's border dispute with India, anti-China sentiment in Sri Lanka, instability in Myanmar's border areas with China, terrorism in Pakistan and unrest in the western Chinese region of Xinjiang. If the territorial dispute cannot be solved, it is bad for the One Belt, One Road program. If two neighbors are in conflict, there is no progress, (15 April, VOA)*

Example 3: *The ambitious project could end up as expensive boondoggles, said the CSIS article authored by Scott Kennedy and David A. Parker. (15 April, VOA)*

Example 4: *Scott Kennedy said that it should be expected that some of these investments could fail. In recent years the United States allocated several billion dollars in foreign development assistance to Pakistan, but studies show that officials found it a significant challenge to responsibly disburse the funds. Security problems, corruption, the limited capacity of local partners, and natural disasters all made it difficult to spend the money as intended. (24 April, VOA)*

Laos, Philippine, Thai, Taiwan and Vietnam are China's southeastern neighboring countries. Since there are potential risk of conflicts between China and those neighboring countries in the South China Sea on the issues of exploiting possibly extensive reserves of oil and gas in the controversial territorial regions, VOA reporters lay emphasis on the "geographical politics" which is the most frequently used word in their reports on the "silk road" strategy.

Example 5: *But Martin Stuart-Fox, emeritus professor of History at the University of Queensland, says China has developed a policy aimed at weakening the bonds between Laos and Vietnam. (23, April, VOA)*

Example 6: *Vietnam experienced anti-China riots last year after a Chinese oil rig parked in waters claimed by Vietnam. The Philippines has sought international arbitration in contesting Beijing's claims to remote reefs that Manila claims as its own. (15, April, VOA)*

Theme 3: Different attitude and reporting tone towards the strategy
The headings and content coverage in *China Daily* reports convey a positive and encouraging tone and attitude towards the strategy:

Example 1: *'Belt and Road' to energize exports. (14 April, China Daily)*

Example 2: *Belt and Road plan 'open' to all nations.(17 April, China Daily)*

Example 3: *Trade on the rise with US, ASEAN (9 May, China Daily)*

Example 4: *China's Belt and Road Initiative to boost civil aviation in Africa (11 May, China Daily)*

Example 5: *Ties turning to a golden chapter (31 July, China Daily)*

However, American counterparts use headings and reports to express a negative tone and attitude to the strategy:

Example 6: *China's Ambitious 'Silk Road' Plan Faces Hurdles (15 April, VOA)*

Example 7: *Challenges Ahead for China's Development Plans in Pakistan (24 April, VOA)*

Example 8: *Afghan Economy Sinks as Foreign Troops Depart (21 May, VOA)*

Example 9: *But such an ambitious and far-reaching project also is vulnerable to becoming entangled in foreign disputes that Beijing has traditionally worked to avoid. (15 April, VOA)*

"Marshall Plan" is used by the American journalists to equate with China's "silk road" strategy. As Randal [20] noted, "Marshall Plan" was regarded as a kind of economic imperialism and part of American hegemony. Its hidden goal was to put Western Europe under control though economic assistance, whereas the "silk road" strategy is based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit to other related countries.

Accordingly, Chinese journalists use encouraging words, such as energize, on the rise, golden chapter, open, to express the strength of the strategy. However, American counterparts report on the same phenomena by using words with negative connotations, for example, hurdle, dispute, vulnerable, corrupt and challenge. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that both parties that both of them hold their stance and ideology on their own country's side.

Conclusions and Limitations
This study investigates how news articles might reflect implicit ideology and attitude toward a nation. On the one hand, as expected, findings on key words from China Daily generally support the notion that Chinese domestic media hold extremely positive views on Chinese government's foreign and economic strategy. Specifically, China Daily does not talk disparagingly about America's domestic economic and political   issues.

On the other hand, American media are interested in foreign affairs and news about China. VOA's reports on China's strategy and findings on key words differences, in turn, correlates with more negative perceptions of Chinese foreign and economic policies and its strategy. Then, the results correspond to the notion that negative media coverage of China's strategy may have impact on individuals, especially those who have been bad - mouthing China and its

strategy. This study also found that not only associations among key words in news reports and tone and attitudes toward China are quite strong, but also found that the attitude and tone of news reports are apparently different and may impact individuals' ideology on foreign nations considering China as an American adversary or its economy as a threat.

One of an obvious limitation issue is that the sample is not large enough. Moreover, less frequently used words and phrases that may contain ideological themes have not been studied yet. With time going by and the progress of the strategy, future reports from American journalists may increase and further studies of different focal areas may arise.

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