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Microblogging and Media Policy in China: Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

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Microblogging and Media Policy in China

Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative



Yuxi Nie

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on the Belt and Road Initiative

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Microblogging and Media Policy in China

Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

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Note on Conventions

1. I use Pinyin (all italics, unless otherwise stated) and simplified Chinese when introducing Chinese terms and phrases; I translate or explain the Chinese terms and phrases in thesis writing in English.
2. I leave the spellings in the collected social media messages unchanged from their appearance in the original online sources.
3. Following their full spellings, I use abbreviations in the text for names of Chinese state and party agencies (thus CCP for Communist Party of China; MC for Ministry of Culture of China; PD for Publicity Department of China).
4. I provide a simple glossary of technical terms that I frequently use in describing my methodology.

Glossary

API (Application Programming Interface): a set of methods, communication protocols, and tools to build software.

Classifier: a computing algorithm that can implement classification.

Concordance: an index of the principal words from a specific set of text data together with their immediate context.

NLTK library (Natural Language Toolkit library): a platform that can process natural language and work with language data through Python programs. Its text processing libraries can implement tokenization, classification, and semantic reasoning.

REST API (Representational State Transfer API): a specific API architecture designed to use existing communication protocols for web services to enhance interoperability between computer systems on the internet.

Token: a combination of words, characters, terms and phrases. **Tokenization** is a method to break up a sequence of strings into various tokens. In the process of tokenization, undesired elements like punctuation marks can be eliminated

Chapter One

A New Phase of China's Communication

1.1 Introduction

Xinhua News Agency, under the supervision of the central government, is a major official news outlet in mainland China. However, its openness to free flows of information has not been keeping up with the country's fast economic growth after the opening-up policy in the 1980s. The acceleration of global communications by social media has given rise to a major transition in China's external communication strategies. To cultivate a national image, the Chinese government has embraced various digital-media-led communicative strategies, and has established, revised, and adjusted a series of media regulations. These encourage traditional mass media outlets, like Xinhua, to utilize various social media platforms under the central government's guidance, while also aiming to preserve their leading roles in both internal and external communication. This study aims to explore the interplay between digital media and government's policymaking under the leadership of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang. By tying the research concerns of China's political communication and the empirical case of Xinhua's digitalization to broader conceptual issues, this study aims to provide a prism through which the intrinsic relations of the government's communicative strategies and media convergence can be seen.

In 1955, Mao Zedong, the first Chairman of People's Republic of China, demanded that Xinhua News Agency should take on the task of "managing the earth and letting the world hear China's voices" (Xinhua net, History). Since 1961, China has pursued a media policy that aims "to treat the external communication and internal communication differently" (Li, Yanbing, 2010). Since the 14th Party Congress in October 1992, when the leadership introduced a "market economy," they allowed major media outlets "greater freedoms" in economic reporting, though still restrained them "on matters which related to the aspects of CCP power" (Brady, 2008, p. 49). In 2001, China's broadcasting official Xu Guangchun initiated a new going-out policy that developed Chinese broadcasting in foreign languages (Nelson, 2013). At present, expanding their global media presence, major state media outlets in China, such as Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua), China Central Television (CCTV), and the

People's Daily, have all registered on social media, both national and international. The interplay between media and politics seems to be a symbiotic relationship. Political communication, geared for revolution and social transformation in the Mao era, now carries the tasks to maintain social stability internally and improve the national image externally.

The political system has influenced the relationship between the government and media in China, and my research will explore how this interaction works by looking at arguably the most influential of these major traditional media players: Xinhua. With a detailed study of Xinhua's communicative strategies online, this research aims to find out how the mass media outlet has integrated digital media forms into its reporting, and how it has done so within the overarching regulatory system. In order to explore this issue, I will examine the social media messaging of Xinhua and then compare it to Xinhua's traditional ways of communication. My project seeks to determine whether Xinhua's social messaging differs from one platform to another in content, subject matter, or tone. In other words, which separate domestic and international communicative strategies does Xinhua, describing itself as "the mouthpiece of the Party," display in the social media age? What message is Xinhua trying to send out? And how does Xinhua use social media platforms to showcase its news value?

1.1.1 Context for the Media Convergence -- Xinhua News Agency and Social Media

Xinhua News Agency, China's major state media outlet, was founded in November 1931 in Ruijin, Jiangxi Province, as the Red China News Agency. It is the earliest news agency under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In October 1934, the agency relocated during the Long March of the Central Red Army. Later in Yan'an, Shaanxi Province, based on decisions from the central government, the agency's name changed to "Xinhua News Agency"¹ in January 1937 (Xinhua net, History).

At present, Xinhua has established 180 news bureaus overseas. In the context of global communications expedited by digital media, social media platforms are indispensable to news organizations. Twitter, founded in 2006, is an international social media platform and provides online news and social networking service. The length of tweets, messages posted by the users, was restricted to 140 characters until 7 November 2017, when the limit was doubled

¹ Xinhua (新华) in Chinese means "new China."

to 280 characters for all languages except Japanese, Korean, and Chinese (Rosen, 2017). It is worth bearing in mind that Twitter is not widely accessible in China, due to the tightened censorship by the Chinese government since 2009. Its Chinese counterpart, Sina Weibo (Weibo, 新浪微博), launched by Sina Corporation in 2009, is now one of the most popular Chinese microblogging websites, in no small part due to the government's restrictive actions against foreign social media offers. In fact, Clay Shirky points out in *Little Rice* (*xiaomi*, 小米) that censorship in China also functions as a form of protectionism for home-grown alternatives with a recent commercial infrastructure (Shirky, 2015). From 28 January 2016, member users were allowed to write longer messages on Weibo, though the full text would not show immediately (BBC, 2016). Journalists use these social media platforms to follow developments in their fields of expertise and post quick updates of breaking news stories. Xinhua, for instance, often publicizes a fresh story by sending out a short, headline-style summary over a social network, along with a link to the online version of the article. By clicking the link, followers can go straight to the story on Xinhua's official websites, or to videos or news photographs that Xinhua publishes on other channels, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

Xinhua's registration on Weibo and Twitter can be explained by the widespread use of social media platforms among domestic and international audiences. Its presence on social media connects to its news websites such as Xinhua.net and iCrossChina, Xinhua's first English language travel website (People.cn, 2013). It is worth noting that Xinhua's launch of its multilingual webpage on Xinhua.net is to reach international audiences. Xinhua's largest official accounts on Weibo in both Chinese and English languages link to Xinhua.net, and its most active account on Twitter links to iCrossChina. Inferred from the language, the intended audiences of Xinhua's Weibo accounts in Chinese and its Twitter account in English are domestic and international audiences, respectively. Xinhua has been through a transition from mass media to digital media. From releasing the news stories on CCTV's news program to the set-up of its official multilingual website and the opening of accounts on social media such as Weibo and Twitter, Xinhua is now trying to reach the broadest possible audience through all channels of communication.

According to the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC), there were 731 million internet users in China in December 2016: an increase of 42.99 million since 2015.

The number of internet users in China increased to 751 million by June 2017, with more than 90% of the users accessing the internet via smartphones. The internet penetration rate in 2017 reached 54.3%, up from 53.2% in 2016 (CNNIC, 2017). Echoing the trend of the thriving online industry, Weibo had 340 million active monthly users according to its first-quarter results on March 31st 2017, a 30% increase over 2016. There are around 154 million active daily users, 91% of whom access the site via mobile devices (People.cn, 2017b). Compared to Twitter, which had about 328 million active monthly users in 2017, the number of Weibo users outdid the number of Twitter users by 12 million worldwide (BBC, 2017). Since 2017, in partnership with the commercial video platform Miaopai.com and the subtitle service provider Easub.com, Weibo launched an online video editing program, Jian.weibo.com (*Weibo Yunjian*, 微博云剪). The use of video editing programs in China shows a growing trend among online users. Having a large pool of video clips, Weibo Yuanjian features video editing, releasing, and data analysis. Though presently, it is accessible only to media organizations and video production companies (Xinhua net, 2017b), offering an online video editing platform. This shows Weibo's intentions to continue expanding its market and commercial value. With the increasing options of editing, posting, and sharing video clips of daily events, the Chinese online users can obtain information from various sources.

In the context of media commercialization, the “formerly state-subsidized and closely state-controlled media” had to compete in the market, which encouraged the surge of social media presence (deLisle, Goldstein and Yang, 2016, p. 2). Xinhua initially had news websites for domestic and international audiences in different languages. With both audiences meriting social media presence, Xinhua pushed further for commercialization in order to also benefit from the use of social media platforms. Xinhua opened its first account on the Chinese Weibo service in June 2012. Four months earlier, in February, it created an account on the U.S.-based Twitter platform (Caijing Net, 2012). Xinhua first issued messages in Chinese on Weibo, and in English on Twitter, but soon enough Xinhua had registered more accounts on Weibo focusing on issues in different world regions in both Chinese and English. In response to the trend of media convergence, Xinhua rebranded its overseas accounts on various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. On March 1st 2017, Xinhua reset these accounts under one collective name “New China” with the logo “NC.” The letter “N” implies media innovation and the letter “C” symbolizes hope and vitality, according to the agency. The two letters are “reminiscent of a belt, alluding to the news agency's role as

a conduit of ideas that bring China and the world together” (Xinhua net, 2015a). This culminates in an “image-making” strategy that is essentially aimed at distinct domestic and international audiences.

Audiences often treat social media platforms as actual forums for a more open political discourse. However, whether this perceived role as open forum is recognized and utilized by the other end (i.e., the government) remains to be seen, and what the impact is on the government’s media policy, is worth evaluating in its own right. What the audiences want to achieve is not just to keep themselves informed through the state’s media, but also to develop a reciprocal relationship with the news organizations. Even though Xinhua has vigorously expanded on social media messaging and has a large number of Weibo and Twitter followers, the comments, reports, and retweets are still far from interactive.

As a state media outlet, Xinhua has now integrated digital media forms into its reporting within the overarching regulatory system, which tends to oscillate between de-regulation and over-regulation. The political system has influenced the relationship between the government and media in China. Regarding the current media regulations, on the one hand, scholars including Zhang Ximing (2001) and Yang Guobin (2009, p. 2) make the case that the mass media have been overly constrained, while digital media, where the most unorthodox, imaginative, and subversive ideas can be found, have been somewhat left free. On the other hand, Daniela Stockmann (2013) notes that the “online journalists” for official websites of CCTV or the *People’s Daily* could only copy news from official media rather than publish their own stories, and thus online news consumption in China is quite different from other places. “For extremely serious incidents, only Xinhua News Agency is allowed to report on them and all other Chinese media must use the Xinhua report word for word” (Brady, 2008, p. 157). Instead of challenging the political status quo, with increasing numbers of internet users each year, the Party-State proved “to be adept at adapting these technologies to its own uses” (Brady, 2008, p. 145). Therefore, internet users² in China often confront “contradictory, ever shifting regulations and ‘harmonizing’ state interventions that require constant choices, compromises, and great flexibility, in negotiating the boundaries of permissible online and

² Marolt uses the term “netizens” in the original text, which is defined as the people “who concurrently inhabit and perform” in both “cyber and physical place-worlds” (Marolt, 2015, pp.3-4). In their co-edited volume, Herold explains the connotations that the term “netizen” invokes, and chooses to use the term “users” instead (Herold, 2015). The term “netizen” is controversial as it connotes the “dichotomies of state versus netizens, censorship versus resistance” (Herold, 2015, pp.20-28).

offline behaviour and action” (Marolt, 2015, p. 4). As Herold states, Chinese internet users thus create “their own hybrid spaces out of a mix of online and offline settings that are largely free from government interference—not as sites of protest, but as sites for amusement that allow people to ignore (and forget) the government and its power over offline spaces” (Herold, 2015, p. 22).

Nevertheless, the convergence of mass media and digital media creates a far more complex mechanism in China. Actors from different social groups have begun to shape the online public discourse. Through managing their personal blogs and websites, many of the journalist bloggers who are affiliated with Chinese official media outlets provide in-depth event coverage, through digital communication tools. Scholars marked the year 2005 as “a year of blogging” due to increasing incorporation of blog service providers into mass media (Yu, Haiqing, 2011, p. 379; Nip, 2009). Unlike offline and/or online professional journalists, journalist bloggers enjoy the privilege of access to exclusive events and interviews (Yu, Haiqing, 2011). Encouraged by their affiliated mainstream media to set up their own websites as star bloggers to attract more online audiences, they tend to reinforce rather than challenge the dominant mainstream media.

From 2005 to 2012, Weibo provided an important platform where different influential Weibo users (often called “Big-V’s,” after the “V” that marks their accounts as “verified”) could collaborate and call out for the civic response from their followers. These Big-V’s are journalist bloggers, entrepreneurs, celebrities, intellectuals, and government officials. Examples include the fund-raising during the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 and the campaign to “counter human trafficking” since 2010 (Shi, Zengzhi, and Yang, Guobin, 2016). The NGOs, activists, and celebrities in China have increasingly used social media to encourage “civic engagement” online and even to encourage “summoning ‘witnessing publics’ to create and circulate visual testimonies of injustices” (Svensson, 2016, p. 54). For instance, along with their civic volunteers, many NGOs used online tools to monitor the air pollution levels in China (Xu, Janice Hua, 2014). However, since 2013, many of the Big-V’s’ accounts have come under strict scrutiny by the authorities for their postings, and those whose “socially irresponsible” postings were transmitted by others for more than 500 times could face punishment (Buckley, 2013; Kaiman, 2013). Therefore, the complexity of the media regulations characterizes the Chinese online media culture, and Chinese policymakers regard

the mass media and digital media convergence as an opportunity to re-mediate mainstream media perspectives.

With the old forms of communication technology from the 1950s and 1960s still in use today, new forms of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) or transmission methods became integrated into an existing communication system (Brady, 2008, p. 74). In June 2017, the former State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT)³ ordered Weibo, the news site Ifeng.com, and video platform ACFUN to halt their multi-media streaming service. The reasons were that these web portals did not hold an official license for video releasing and publicized programs that broke with state rules or presented negative remarks and opinions. In addition to publicly acknowledging the criticism and disabling the uploading of video clips longer than 15 minutes, Weibo announced to “further enhance cooperation with state media including CCTV and Xinhua News Agency to present the mainstream of public opinions” (Cai, Mengxiao, 2017). The interplay between digital media and policymaking displays a far more complex, multi-layered relationship compared to the ad hoc situation a decade ago. I concur with deLisle, Goldstein, and Yang who contend that “simple dichotomies of ‘freedom versus control’ or ‘promoting democracy versus strengthening authoritarianism’ do not suffice as frameworks” to grasp the role of digital media (deLisle, Goldstein, and Yang, 2016, p. 3).

1.1.2 Image Project

During the 19th CPC National Congress in October 2017, Chinese President Xi asserted the necessity of building “cultural confidence” (*wenhua zixin*, 文化自信) within the nation and the state and of constructing “Chinese cultural soft power” (*Zhongguo wenhua ruanshili*, 中国文化软实力) at an international level (Xinhua net, 2017a). In order to “tell good China stories,” the government leadership intends to strengthen Chinese soft power and use the media’s influence to persuade the audiences to follow the government’s policy.

³ Since September 2018, the government leadership has set apart the former SAPPRFT as the State Administration of Radio and Television (SART), and the National Film Bureau, and the National Office of Press and Publication (NOPP) (Ma, Damien and Thomas, Neil, 2018). The official website of SAPPRFT is now renamed as National Radio and Television Administration (*Guojia guangbo dianshi zongju*, 国家广播电视总局) (www.sapprft.gov.cn/sapprft/).

Soft power includes anything that makes societies “want what you want” (Nye, 2004, p. 5). While continuing to utilize the traditional methodology such as “using entertainment as a vehicle for political thought work,” the Chinese government leadership has adopted new methodologies and technologies, such as political PR and the internet (Brady, 2008, p. 87). China’s political PR work since 1989, according to Brady, has been relatively successful at the national level but “has had mixed results in terms of its impact and influence over the international community.” On the one hand, China’s political image has improved in spite of the government’s efforts to “reinvent political perceptions of it”; on the other hand, China’s image in economic terms “continues to maintain a highly positive international profile” (Brady, 2008, p. 170). According to Shambaugh, the official publicity system in China (*xuanchuan xitong*, 宣传系统) is a “sprawling bureaucratic establishment, extending into virtually every medium concerned with the dissemination of information” (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 27). Even with tremendous investments in all efforts since the shift of top leadership in 2012, the country still “suffers from a severe shortage of soft power” (Shambaugh, 2015, p. 99).

In the dynamics between Xinhua’s social media performance and the government’s communication policy, Xinhua deploys different resources in order to reach the target audiences. First, in terms of economic resources, China has put in far more investments in the media industry, compared to countries like the US and the UK. By 2011, the USA spent about US\$750 million annually on international broadcasting, and the UK provided just under US\$400 million funding for the BBC World Service (Midgley, 2011), whilst China has committed US\$6.5 billion for the overseas expansion of its major media outlets (Barr, 2011, p. 38). With projects that could expand the media’s reach and influence, Xinhua, CCTV, and the *People’s Daily* could receive up to RMB 15 billion (US\$2.19 billion) respectively (Lam, 2009). Xinhua’s annual total spending rose from 5.85 billion yuan (\$852 million) in 2015 to 5.99 billion yuan (\$873 million) in 2017 (Central Budget and Final Accounts Public Platform, 2018). Since China rolled out its “Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Road” initiative (Belt and Road Initiative, henceforth BRI) in September 2013, an estimated annual budget of US\$10 billion is put up to improve the external communication so as to enhance the country’s soft power through media and other domains (Shambaugh, 2015, p. 100).

Second, under the proactive media policies, starting in 2001, Chinese state media outlets launched their official news websites (Zhan, Xinhui and Yang, Chunlan, 2006). As a “key public diplomacy outlet,” Xinhua launched its website Xinhua.net, and to catch up with the communication technologies, it has since developed webpages in different languages (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 108). The aim is to enable the mass media and the digital media to collaborate through sharing resources. Xinhua News Agency could use the online audience resources from Xinhua.net to reach out to more internet users, and Xinhua.net could use the agency’s information, brand and human resources to cover major media events (Peng, Lan, 2005, p. 210). In 2014, the Publicity Department launched its “China Civilization Website” (*Zhongguo wenming wang*, 中国文明网). Xinhua News Agency and its official website Xinhua.net both coordinate the website by setting up special portals such as the “Chinese Dream” (*Zhongguomeng*, 中国梦) and the “Core Socialist Values” (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi guan*, 社会主义核心价值观). The website updates are mostly devoted to releasing policies and the government’s good deeds, that are usually reposted on Xinhua.net in the form of announcements by the authorities. However, the technological update does not mean that the way information is chosen and presented has changed. According to Zhang Xiaoling, this is how the Party has framed its ideological hegemony in terms of “civilization” (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, pp. 101-105). The government intends to demonstrate a transparent governing system, in order to attract overseas audiences. Scholars argue that as the actual working of the governing system remains opaque, the restricting conditions are causing challenges for the Chinese media to win over foreign audiences (Li, Xiguang and Zhou, Qingan, 2005, p. 34).

Third, Chinese cultural legacies provided additional resources for the media to create nationalistic narratives. For instance, stories on the ancient Silk Roads⁴ caught attention from the Chinese media outlets. Since 2015, Xinhua, CCTV and *People’s Daily* all started frantic reporting on the topic, shown by news reports on historical sites, historical documentaries, regional development, and international events. Xinhua vigorously reported on cultural events

⁴ The Silk Roads are an ancient network of caravan routes linking Xi’an, the ancient capital Chang’an, to the eastern Mediterranean cities; it was established during the period of Roman rule in Europe when silk was introduced to Europe from China. The name Silk Road was given by Ferdinand von Richthofen from Germany, who travelled to China seven times from 1868 to 1872. The German term *Seidenstraße* means Silk Road, implying the lucrative Chinese silk trade (Waugh 2007, p. 4.; Eliseeff 2000, pp. 1-2). Chinese silk trade led to cultural transmissions and economic relations between China, India, Persia, and Europe to the Horn of Africa and Arabia. Technologies, philosophies and religions travelled through the Eurasian network as well (Bentley, 1993, pp.32-33). The Chinese, Persians, Somalis, Greeks, Syrians, Romans, Armenians, Indians, and Bactrians were the main traders, and from the 5th to the 8th century the Sogdians. The debate among scholars is carried out on the development of the Silk Roads during the rise of Islamic empires in the 15th century. For instance, Keown argues that the route was cut off by the Islamic empires, but Bentley contends that during the age of Islam, Arab traders joined the Silk Road and became prominent (Keown, 2004; Bentley, 1993).

related to the Silk Road, such as the celebration of Marco Polo's new Silk Road during the Expo Milano (Xinhua net, 2015b), the English version of "I am from Xinjiang on the Silk Road" during the Book Expo America (Xinhua net, 2015c), and the documentary "The Silk Road in a New Century" (Xinhua net, 2015d). During the Chinese New Year Gala on CCTV in 2015, under the show's name "Silk Road Dance" (*silu nishang*, 丝路霓裳), traditional performances from different cultures in China, India, Persia, Russia, and Egypt were presented to Chinese audiences (CCTV, 2015). Remembering this part of history, according to Chinese scholars, "expresses a nostalgic sentiment as a corrective to Chinese post-socialism" (Yu, Haiqing, 2009, p. 51). The reasons that the media outlets openly cover nationalistic narratives may be twofold. On the one hand, "nationalist credentials," as "a key source of legitimacy" for the Chinese government, have impacts on foreign policy, which is increasingly influenced by public opinion (Jie, Dalei, 2016, pp. 151-152). On the other hand, the media commercialization has driven the media outlets to compete for audiences by tilting toward "sensational stories that appeal to a nationalistic readership" (Shirk, 2011; Stockmann, 2013; quoted in Jie, Dalei, 2016).

China's external communication policy relates closely to its foreign policy. "As China's involvement in world affairs grew, and its sensitivity to its image abroad increased," Shambaugh argues, China's external communication "became more important to the leadership and as a tool of foreign policy" (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 47). The targeted audiences of China's external communication were initially mainly Chinese people living abroad, who also provided the incentive for launching Xinhua's English website (Wang, Dongying, 2011). In July 2009, Xinhua launched an English-language television news program on international channels. The program broadcasted outside Chinese embassies across Europe. This move was to shift the target audiences from the peripheral group (overseas Chinese) to the mainstream social groups abroad (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, pp. 183-188).

The Chinese government's external communication policy is to influence public opinion in a target country in order to influence diplomacy with that target country. This is to avoid situations where other actors (most notably foreign media) set the political agenda in a way that negatively influences Chinese interests. Scholars from within and outside China have taken on different analytical perspectives on whether digital media have an influence on the government's communication strategies. Joseph Nye once noted that in an Information Age,

in which credibility is the scarcest resource, the best propaganda is no propaganda (Nye, 2012). Gabriel Almond (1996) argues that public opinion of foreign policy is formed by four types of audiences: the general public, people caring about current affairs, public opinion leaders, and elite policymakers. Wang (Wang, Dongying, 2011) emphasizes the importance of target audience analysis, mentioning that the latter two types of audiences Almond discusses—often from the middle class or important social strata—are significant in forming public opinion as they can greatly influence the general public. Media critic Guo Ke (Guo, Ke, 2003) agrees that the Chinese government should consequently consider external communication through “elite influence.” Thus, the target audiences of Chinese news outlets are the opinion leaders and policymakers in a foreign country, who are believed to eventually determine the whole society’s opinion of the Chinese government. Guo also suggests that elite influence is more applicable to the audience in developed countries, and that communication directed towards the general public is preferable for developing countries, as in these regions there is less bias towards Chinese media (Guo, Ke, 2003).

According to a BBC poll in 2014, positive views towards China had declined by 14 per cent and negative views had gone up 16 points to 90 per cent, which was at its highest since 2006 (BBC, 2014; also quoted by Shambaugh, 2015, p. 107). However, Shambaugh also points out that in a 2013 survey by the Pew Research Centre’s Global Attitudes Project, China’s soft-power deficit is equal in Africa and Latin America (Pew Research Centre, 2014; also quoted by Shambaugh, 2015, p. 107). The reason that Chinese state media outlets may have their greatest impact in developing countries deserves more attention in itself. First, a media outlet like Xinhua has a lower cost of news provision, compared to AP, Reuters, or AFP. Second, Xinhua has offered deals with free content, equipment, and technical support to buyers in the Middle East and Africa, “where Xinhua’s role as a government censor matters less” (Barr, 2011, p. 47).

With the acceleration of information technology, Xinhua tries to win over foreign audiences by changing the strategies on covering negative events or sensitive issues. However, it is not only strategies that need to be adapted: the tone and the topics of the reporting also need to be more in line with what non-Chinese audiences expect or want to see, hear, or read about. As media reception relates to the “politics of reception” (Chu, Yingchi, 2013, p. 3), credibility becomes a major concern in communicating with foreign audiences. Drawing on McQuire’s (1986) review and Draper’s (1991) case studies of US media advertising, Manuel Castells

concludes that regardless of the huge amount of financial input (US\$50 billion at the time), media advertising has a very limited effect on actual behaviour (Castells, 2010a, p. 334). As the communication process is based on the interaction between the sender and the receiver, the sender's message contains its own codes, "which coincided with those of the dominant ideology, while the addressees filled it with 'aberrant' meanings according to their particular cultural codes" (Eco, 1977, p. 90, quoted by Castells, 2010a, p. 335). In terms of readerships of Chinese official newspapers, this does not mean that the readers expect news credibility, but it does imply their intention to know the government's position on particular issues (Stockmann, 2013, p. 12). Therefore, it can be argued that the Chinese government's financial input for the state media outlets, such as Xinhua, mainly aims to clarify its position in the international arena through major events reporting, rather than merely providing news reports. This is what affects the credibility of Xinhua among audiences, and also what challenges Xinhua from gaining larger non-Chinese audiences.

In different social contexts, specific political strategies can also lead to differences between domestic and international audiences' reception. For instance, the reporting styles between the Chinese official broadcasting channel CCTV4 and Australia's Channel 10 differ markedly. For the news coverage of Beijing's heavy rainfall in 2012, CCTV4 adopted a positive reporting tone by showing citizens' good deeds, in contrast to Channel 10's display of disrupted city images during the natural disaster. The differences in the interpretation of this subject are embedded in two different social contexts: one appears to be more nationalistic, and the other sceptical. Without knowing what the audiences actually think about any of this, it nevertheless shows the different ideological choices made by the producers of the content, which are influenced by the set of norms, values, and beliefs that make up priori assumptions of the social context of the news story. This goes to show that the "horizon of expectations" from the audience has historical, social, and political dimensions (Chu, Yingchi, 2013, p. 7).

1.2 Controversy in China's Belt and Road Initiative

By observing Xinhua's activity on different social media platforms, my research aims to find out how Chinese state media carry out their tasks of internal and external communication through social media. To create a discursive environment that is in favour of the Party and the state, Chinese official media outlets play an important role in forming the new diplomacy discourses under the leadership of Xi.

As an important part of the Chinese diplomacy, the BRI shows that the Chinese government is calling for a greater role in international relations on the one hand; on the other, its establishment has caused contentions from within and outside China. My research will explore how Xinhua has taken on the diplomatic task through a case study of China's current diplomacy of the "Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Road" initiative (BRI).

To back up this initiative, the Chinese government has put up a huge number of investments to attract global partnerships. President Xi promised a US\$40 billion fund for the Silk Road initiative, and a further US\$50 billion to establish two investment banks, the New Development Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), to build roads, railways and other transport links to Central Asia. This is to open up markets for China and strengthen the value of the Chinese currency: the RMB or *yuan* (元). The government plans to invest US\$50 billion in infrastructure and energy deals in Central Asia (Chu, Ben, 2013), and to create a US\$16.3 billion fund to "build and expand railways, roads and pipelines in Chinese provinces" which are part of the planned Silk Road Economic Belt (*Bloomberg*, 2014). According to Lin Minwang, "the great economic vision of the Belt and Road is to make use of China's foreign exchange reserves—the world's largest—and of China's capability to promote neighbouring countries' infrastructure construction and development" (Lin, Minwang, 2015, pp. 16-17).

Media outlets from within and outside China have focused on the political and economic goals of the BRI and its influence on different geopolitical regions. The media debates between the English language media and Chinese state media outlets are over the comparison of China's BRI with America's Marshall Plan.⁵ Together with social media, the reports, comments, and tweets from different media organizations have played out as a fierce debate over China's ambitions.

For instance, media from English speaking countries such as the BBC, the *Guardian*, CNN and the *New York Times* have compared the Silk Road initiative to America's post-war policy,

⁵ The Marshall Plan was a strategy by the U.S. government after World War II to help European countries through its economic power, so as to achieve its own foreign-policy ambitions. Financial resources were provided to help rebuild Europe. The political motivation was to gain more allies to avoid the influence from the communist countries.

the Marshall Plan. In response to the criticism and analysis from American and British media, Chinese official media outlets such as Xinhua, CCTV and the *People's Daily* have responded to the comparison by listing the incomparable elements of the two policies. Xinhua defends the government's "harmonious rise" (*heping jueqi*, 和平崛起), by releasing news reports titled "China's silk road proposals not Marshall Plan" on its official website (Xinhua net, 2015a). Xinhua also further states that it is "inappropriate to draw an analogy" between the BRI and the Marshall Plan (Xinhua net, 2017c).

The following reports that are collected from different media outlets have their title either comparing the BRI directly to the Marshall Plan or implying a controversy in the BRI. The articles from several popular English media websites are titled "The New Silk Road: China's Marshall Plan?" (*The Diplomat*, Tiezzi, Shannon, 2014), "China's 'Marshall Plan'" (*Wall Street Journal*, 2014), "China's Ambitious 'Silk Road' Plan Faces Hurdles" (VOANews, Dasgupta, Saibal, 2015), "Where all Silk Roads lead" (*The Economist*, 2015), etc. Topical articles from several major Chinese media directly counter the comparisons to the Marshall Plan: they carry titles such as "China's silk road proposals not Marshall Plan" (Xinhua net, 2015e), "Closer Look: So China's Silk Road Fund Is Marshall Plan Redux? Not Really" (*Caixin*, Wang, Liwei, 2014),⁶ "Silk Road initiatives not China's Marshall Plan: spokesman" (China Org.cn, Zhang, Lulu, 2015), etc.

In general, the controversy is shown from two perspectives. On one side,

Beijing is naturally trying to take advantage of its advantageous financial situation to boost foreign policy influence.... The Marshall Plan helped establish the U.S. as a bona fide super power; Beijing is betting its twin Silk Roads can do the same (*The Diplomat*, Tiezzi, Shannon, 2014).

Mr. Xi is rolling out a more audacious version of the Marshall Plan, America's post-war reconstruction effort. Back then, the United States extended vast amounts of aid to secure alliances in Europe. China is deploying hundreds of billions of dollars of state-backed loans in the hope of winning new friends around the world, this time without requiring military obligations (*New York Times*, Perlez, Jane, and Huang, Yufan, 2017).

⁶ As part of China's financial media group, Caixin Media, Caixin Global is known to produce independent, investigative journalism in China, with information sources and analytical opinions from a wide range of social groups.

On the other side, the Chinese state media state that

[u]nlike the Marshall Plan, no political conditions have been imposed on participants in the Silk Road frameworks. China has always advocated that countries should respect each other's rights to independently choose their own social system and development path. The Marshall Plan helped establish the United States as a superpower, but China is not interested in doing the same (Xinhua net, 2015e).

While western European countries had little say in the implementation of the Marshall Plan, China is stepping up policy consultation with its partners (China Org.cn, Zhang, Lulu, 2015).

Facts speak louder than words. ... There is no guarantee that the modern Silk Road will be an easy success, but time will prove that it is much more than the Marshall Plan and that China's gain is not others' loss (*Caixin*, Wang, Liwei, 2014).

The different conceptions over the BRI form a dichotomy. The ongoing debate about China's current foreign policy may have started under the influence of the Cold War mentality, but the debate eventually leads to questions such as whether and how China will play a role in shaping the "new world order." The comparisons between the conceptions of the two policies are perhaps less about the "China threat" theory⁷ launched a decade ago, and more about how other countries can play their parts in the changing world system.

The Chinese government leadership is well aware of the "China threat" theory and the "new world order." During the 19th CPC National Congress, Xi first underlined that by adhering to both the national defence policy and the opening-up policy, China "does not pose a threat to

⁷ The "China threat" theory has taken ideological, economic and military forms (Broomfield, 2003) under the notion of a rising China. Since the opening-up policy and economic reform in 1978, China shows the highest GDP growth rate in the world with an average 9.4 percent annual GDP growth (Zheng, Bijian, 2005). Perceived by various policymakers and academics from mainly North America and Western Europe, China as a growing global power with increasing military might becomes "an indisputable challenge to America's security and the very survival of democracy throughout the world" (Broomfield, 2003, p.265). Broomfield provides an in-depth analysis of the perceived China threat through reviewing a variety of books and conservative publications such as *The Washington Times*, *The American Spectator*, *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, and the *Heritage Foundation Reports* (Broomfield, 2003, p.266). Furthermore, Callahan explains the two general trends in deeming China's burgeoning impact as an alternative to Western modernity, which are (1) a shift towards perceiving "China itself as the future" from exploring the future outside China, and (2) a shift to many more individuals "dreaming about many different futures" from officials' top-down planned future (Callahan, 2012b, pp.138-139). According to Callahan, while there are multiple modernities taking shape within China, the various conceptual practices such as socialism, capitalism, and world order in fact "shape discussions of politics, economics, culture, and society beyond China" (Callahan, 2012b, p.144). Callahan holds that with the tendency to "think beyond the current world system to craft post-American world orders," China strategic future could serve to delegitimize American-influenced global norms (Callahan, 2012a, p.620).

any other country” at any stage of its development and will “never seek hegemony.” Second, affirming that the BRI is to promote international cooperation, Xi stated that “as a major and responsible country,” China will play “an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system” (Xinhua net, 2017a, pp. 53-54). To examine the Chinese state media’s handling of the case, I will conduct a discourse analysis of how Xinhua promotes the BRI on its Weibo and Twitter accounts. This analysis will explore whether Xinhua adopts different communicative strategies on Weibo and Twitter, how Xinhua conceptualizes news values on social media platforms, and whether social media messaging differs from Xinhua’s traditional way of communication. By looking into how its messaging on social media fits with Xinhua’s overall performance, pertinent questions will be: what image is Xinhua trying to cultivate for the respective target audiences, what communicative choices do Xinhua media workers make and why, and does the government respond by making new media policies?

By studying Xinhua’s message distribution on Weibo and Twitter, this research project will explore China’s official news agency’s social media performance. It aims to clarify whether and how Xinhua employs certain communicative strategies in order to provide specific audiences with positive news about China’s relations with the rest of the world. Questions will inevitably arise regarding the extent to which Xinhua News Agency reports about events outside China and how it intends to inform the audiences by integrating social media. Issues such as Chinese image and publicity play an important role in China’s current media policy. Despite recent efforts to use social media and to provide quicker, more transparent coverage, there is still space to improve the system itself. On Weibo and Twitter, the news agency’s editorial choices show that maintaining China’s “face” is often contradictory with the country’s efforts of showing its openness. Adopting a policy of merely maintaining a positive image to the outside world can mislead both domestic and international audiences. Xinhua’s performance thus demonstrates the challenges that China faces in its internal and external communication endeavour in the transforming period led by digital media.

My project will draw attention to the importance of the discourse of political communication under the impact of digital media. China, with its transitional mass media system of the reform period, is now turning into a highly mediated society. My research will relate different media theories to the findings of case studies to examine trends in Chinese media, their influence on Xinhua’s communicative strategy, and even China’s image. It will open up avenues of future research into other news organizations’ performance on digital media platforms.

1.3 Research Questions and Aims

This research project asks: What is the relationship between social media messaging and media policy in China? Under the new media regulations made by the government, what role does social media play in Chinese external and internal communication, specifically in the case of China's official news agency Xinhua? My project intends to find the answer by studying the interplay between Weibo, Twitter and the Chinese state-owned media outlet Xinhua News Agency, an active actor on both platforms.

My project aims to expand our understanding of how ICTs influence China's official news agency, Xinhua, in terms of the government's communicative strategy, and aims to develop theories as well as research methods that will contribute to contemporary Chinese media studies. Through the analysis of recent social phenomena in China regarding issues of new media regulations and Xinhua's communication strategies, my project is likely to raise pertinent questions as to how these regulations work on Weibo in terms of news information, political discourse in the public sphere, why it matters to the authorities to pass these regulations, whether the innovation of technology can be a reliable incentive for social change, and how the interplay between digital media and mass media will alter China's image in terms of the soft power in the years to come.

1.4 Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. Chapter Two, the theoretical chapter, consists of five sections. The first section will provide a clear paradigm of the relationship between discourse and power. In order to do so, I will discuss the media's role in political communication, and review the literature on theories of power and discourse analysis. In the second section, I will review the literature on communication power within the Chinese context. I will provide a discussion on the convergence of mass media and digital media to present a picture of the Chinese media environment, and how ICTs in the media industry have given rise to a more dynamic environment for public discourse. In addition, I will review the ongoing scholarly debates on the role of the ICTs. In the third section, I will discuss the main literature with respect to soft power in China. Particularly, I will focus on the central government's scheme of soft power construction and media policy. The fourth section will

elaborate on China's internal communication power within the Party and the state, and the external communication power in international relations. In this section, I will discuss Xinhua's role in the government's policymaking. In the fifth and sixth sections, I will discuss Xinhua's integration into social media platforms and further elaborate on the sources, intentions, and functions of media production. This chapter also details the contributions of this research to the academic fields of discourse studies and political communication.

In Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, I will discuss the methods used in the two phases of my research. In the first phase, I collected and studied the legal and policy documents from the Chinese central government's websites as well as from the official website of Xinhua News Agency. I also conducted a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with media practitioners, scholars as well as policymakers, during my fieldwork in 2016. The comparison between these policy papers and the interviews highlights the relations between policymaking and media changes. The aim of the first phase is to disentangle the political context for Chinese media production towards domestic and international audiences. In the second phase, through digital tools, I first carried out a broad analysis of the public discourse of the BRI on Weibo and Twitter. Having conducted the analysis on the performances of active players, I then adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyse in particular Xinhua's performance through its account on Weibo, called Xinhua net, and New China on Twitter. In addition, this chapter also explains relevant social media conventions, like the use of hashtags "#," links, and @ handles. Both the quantitative and qualitative analysis helped to produce knowledge about Xinhua's perspective in terms of soft power construction.

Chapter Four is titled "Policy Reviews and Fieldwork," and consists of two sections. In the first section, I will analyse the legal and policy documents from the Chinese central government's websites as well as the official website of Xinhua News Agency. I will look at the rules that might affect the interaction between the public and the government through social media messaging, and then in particular the legislation that applies to Xinhua. I will then examine the expressions and terms adopted in these documents, and then relate the official language to the discourse on the social media platforms. This is to explore how the official language influences social media language and vice versa. In the second section, I will provide the data from and analysis of the qualitative interviews from my fieldwork in 2016. Based on the interview results, I will discuss, in respective sub-sections, the role of digital media in external communication policy, national image construction, the position of the state

media, Xinhua's interpretation of government guidelines, and its performance on social media platforms. The goal of this combined approach of policy reviews and interviews is to examine the relations between policymaking and media changes.

In Chapter Five, titled "Online Players in the Belt and Road Discourse," I intend to identify the active players that shape the online discourse of this initiative on social media platforms. In order to achieve that goal, I collected social media messages related to the BRI from both Weibo and Twitter. I used two different digital methods of collection and conducted sentiment analyses for both social media platforms. The focus will be on finding out what role Xinhua News Agency is playing, by comparing it to the performance of a variety of other active accounts of organizations and individuals on Weibo and Twitter.

I used the software platform Founder to analyse data from Weibo and the programming language Python for the data from Twitter. Selecting two different digital methods enabled me to examine and compare two different research methods and environments, from within and outside China. As a methodological reflection, I will comment on both the advantages and disadvantages of conducting analyses with these two software tools.

Chapter Six, "Quantitative Outlook," focuses on Xinhua's message distribution on Weibo and Twitter. Here, I will discuss the results of a qualitative approach that I used to examine whether Xinhua performs different functions towards domestic and international audiences on different platforms, and where the strategic differences lie. These results take the form of a categorization of posts and tweets, collected from Weibo and Twitter, according to themes, timeline, and regions. I followed each step of categorization by discussing from which perspectives Xinhua tends to portray the initiative. Finally, through identifying the keywords of the messages from Xinhua's Weibo and Twitter accounts with the software tools Yoshikoder 6.5.0 and CNCORPUS.org (*yuliaoku zaixian*, 语料库在线), I was able to make a comparison between Xinhua's activity on the two platforms.

Based on the empirical results from Chapter Six, Chapter Seven discusses the qualitative findings to further explore and compare Xinhua's communicative strategies on social media. This chapter consists of three sections. The first provides an analysis of the recurring linguistic features of Xinhua's messages. Based on the corpus analysis from Chapter Six, I

will discuss the similarities and differences in the meanings and usages of keywords in Chinese and English. Second, by examining and comparing the grammar features and rhetorical figures that have frequently appeared in the Chinese and English texts, I will further explore the intentions and functions of deploying certain expressions and literary features. The analysis in these two sections is to generate qualitative information and substantive explanations complimentary to the findings from the quantitative research: why and how does Xinhua display different communication strategies towards domestic and international audiences, and what do these differences suggest about Xinhua's interpretation of geopolitics? Finally, I will provide a visual analysis of the images collected from the Weibo and Twitter messages. By analysing the compositions of the images, I will discuss what the visual elements symbolize and what effects the images from Xinhua may create for the audiences.

In the conclusion, I will review the entire research project and summarise the key findings from the two research phases—the policy reviews and interviews in the first phase and discourse analysis in the second phase. I will also report the strengths and limitations of this study, in addition to some reflections and indications for future research. Finally, I will utilise the findings to answer the main research question that motivates this dissertation. Based on the results, this chapter ends with implications related to the ICTs' influences on the state media outlets, suggesting that at this stage, the technological innovation cannot be seen as a reliable incentive for social change as China continues its opening-up policy.

Chapter Two

Concepts and Relations on Media, Discourse and Power

In this chapter, I intend to clarify the main concepts and broader debates in communication studies, and then explain the relationships between these concepts in the Chinese context. Through comparing the overarching theories of scholars from within and outside China on power, soft power, and media discourse, I then ask how the ongoing debates reflect political communication in China, and what the communication environment in China can reversely tell us about the academic debates. Power theories play an important role here toward the understanding of intentions and functions of Chinese communication strategies. In order to analyse what interests the communication practices of the Chinese state media ultimately serve, and what its implications of communication choices are, I will then specify the conceptual issues, such as the role of media in power-making, internal and external communication, media production, resources, and the target audience.

2.1 Power and Discourse

Power, by definition, means the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way (Oxford Dictionary). Some of the most influential theories of power, although developed through different perspectives, have shown more similarities than differences. Power is based on control and is therefore never just one-sided. Max Weber (1925) conceptualized power (*Macht*) as the “possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons” (Bendix, 1962, p. 290).⁸ Based on Weber’s concept, Hanna Arendt (1958) indicated that the power to do something is actually the power to do something against someone or someone’s values and interests. By presenting the strengths and weaknesses of three different views of power, Steven Lukes (1974) provides a conceptual analysis of power. According to Lukes, the one-dimensional view focuses on behavioural study, decision-making by political actors, and overt conflict; the two-dimensional view qualifies the critique of behavioural focus and looks into decision-making, nondecision-making, and overt or covert conflict; and the three-dimensional view of power focuses on decision-making, control over political agenda, and observable and latent conflict (1974, p. 25). Defining the concept of power by “saying that A

⁸ Max Weber’s original definition of power in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* is, “Macht bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel, worauf diese Chance beruht (1925, p.28).” The translated text is from Reinhard Bendix (1962, p.290).

exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interest," he contends that different views of power rely on "some normatively specific conception of interests" which associate with certain moral and political positions (Lukes, 1974, pp. 34-35). Michel Foucault compares disciplinary power to how power was exercised traditionally. He explains that traditionally, power was "what was seen" and paradoxically "found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). Thus, those on whom power was exercised "remain in shade." Compared to this, disciplinary power "is exercised through its invisibility" and "imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). The empowerment of social actors is founded upon their empowerment against other social actors (Castells, 2009, p. 13). Power, in the view of Castells, is relational, and to be more specific, power in modern society is generated through the control of communication and information. Furthermore, Castells holds that when there is power, there is counter-power, as the latter depends on breaking through the control of power (Castells, 2009, p. 3).

The theories of power associate with violence and discourse. In the 18th century, the philosopher Jeremy Bentham introduced the concept of the "Panopticon." The design of the Panopticon consists of an inspection house at the centre of a circular building. From this inspection house, the inmates can be watched everywhere around the perimeter. The Panopticon, as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example," assures the visibility of power (Bentham, 1843, p. 39). Acknowledging that power was traditionally what was seen and what was manifested, Foucault contests that disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility and functions permanently and largely in silence, as "it is the apparatus as a whole that produces 'power' and distributes individuals" (Foucault, 1977, pp. 177-187). The process of power production and distribution relates to politics and the state. Max Weber regards this relation as "a relation of men dominating men," and "a relation supported by means of legitimate violence" (Weber, 1946 [1919], p. 78, p. 121). Domination and violence in this notion are not simply physical, as they are fundamentally exercised through control over mind. Communication scholars nowadays indicate that the source of power ultimately lies in knowledge and thoughts (Mulgan, 2007, 2009; Lakoff, 2008).

Based on Foucault's notion of "disciplinary power" and Weber's "legitimate violence," Castells suggests the fundamental source of power in the information age is symbolic power,

that is, the capacity to shape people's minds (Castells, 2010b, p. 396). Symbolic power, embedded in cultural expression, image-making and value-making, is mediated by electronic communication networks. According to Castells, in a network society, with information and communication coming into effect through media, leadership becomes personalized, and image-making is in fact power-making (Castells, 2010a, pp. 473-476). The rules, the language, and the interests of the media determine that they are neither neutral tools nor direct instruments of state power (Castells, 2009, p. 194). Castells contends that media are much more important than simply being the power-holders, as they provide space for politics and "constitute the main source of socialized communication" (Castells, 2009, p. 157). Therefore, "politics is fundamentally media politics" (Castells, 2009, p. 8). With his notion of "network society," Castells articulates the forms of power into "networking power; network power; networked power and network-making power." Suggesting that the network-making power has the most impact in a society, he calls the social actors with the ability to constitute network(s), and to program/reprogram the network(s) the programmers, and those who are able to connect networks and share resources, the "switchers" (Castells, 2009, pp. 45-47). In the process of power-making, the media enable the power to program and switch through agenda-setting, priming, and framing (Castells, 2009; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Power, as the relational capacity, is embedded in the institutions and exercised through "the construction of meaning on the basis of the discourses through which social actors guide their action" (Castells, 2009, p. 10).

If power is relational (Castells, 2009), then the discourses that power is exercised through, in the Foucauldian sense, represent the relationships among social actors (Foucault, 1984). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu views discourse as "the political economy of communication" where relations of power are exercised and enacted (Bourdieu, 1991 [1988]). Composed of signs, discourse constructs our knowledge of society, and this is because discourse not only functions through the signs, but also has far more significant impacts than the signs (Foucault, 1972; quoted in Smith and Jenks, 2006, p. 145).

Expounding the critical theory from the Frankfurt School, Raymond Geuss holds that an ideology, in the descriptive sense, contains both discursive elements such as concepts, ideas, and beliefs, and non-discursive elements such as gestures, rituals, and attitudes (Geuss, 1981, pp. 5-6). Speaking of an ideology of a group, Geuss further explains that carrying a set of moral and normative beliefs, it refers to a world view or a world picture that comprises

coherent bundles of beliefs, attitudes and desires that are “widely shared among the agents in the group” (Geuss, 1981, p. 10). The more recent critical discourse analysis (CDA) aims to decipher ideologies within which symbolic forms are adopted (Thompson, 1990; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Addressing the discursive effects of ideology, Eagleton holds that ideology, as a matter of “discourse” rather than “language,” functions through its relations to its social context (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 9, 223). Based on Foucault’s framework of discourse, many CDA theorists relate discourse with knowledge. For instance, Siegfried Jaeger (1993, 1999) views discourse as “the flow of knowledge” that forms collective doing (quoted in Jaeger, 2001). Theo van Leeuwen further illustrates the different relations between discourses and social practices: one stems from Foucault’s theory, that is, discourse as representation of social practices and a form of knowledge; the other one is discourse itself as social practice (van Leeuwen, 1993, p. 193). In the same vein, Wodak asserts that the production of discourse is in fact controlled and organized in every society (Wodak, 2008, p. 4). To that end, the procedure of discourse production already exercises power, during which it includes and also excludes certain social members. Political discourse, as Martin Reisigl delineates, is “a multifaceted bundle of semiotic social practices” which connects to a specific macro topic and to the validity claims such as “truth and normative validity” (Reisigl, 2008). Stemming from this point of view, discourse constructs knowledge and shapes social reality between the dominant and the dominated. Therefore, Teun A. van Dijk holds that critical discourse analysis exposes power abuse, but he also points out that as the CDA research contains “an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk ... CDA is biased—and proud of it” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96). Notwithstanding, it is worth pointing out that the biased CDA narrative of the “underdog” against the “oppressor” somewhat contradicts the ethos of Foucault’s work, who viewed power as fundamentally neutral.

In Foucault’s words, one must cease to think of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” “represses,” and “censors,” as power substantially produces reality (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). The relationship between discourse and power is interactive. Discourses express and enact power through knowledge, and eventually shape reality; reversely, the possession of power decides the dominant discourses that influence and control the mind (van Dijk, 2001; Jager, 2001).

2.2 Communication Power in the Chinese Context

Chinese media scholar Zhao Yuezhi argues that “there was never an essential ‘Chinese culture’ to begin with,” since Chinese society has been shaped by foreign ideologies and communication technologies throughout its history, including Mao’s period (Zhao, 2008, pp. 149-151). Scholars have linked the research on Chinese culture with the issues of national identity and ideology (Castells, 2010a; Barr, 2011; Callahan, 2010; Waldron, 1993). In a multi-faceted society, Chinese national identity today is composed by different social groups, including “fervent nationalists, disconnected urban workers, affluent business people, ageing retirees, vast numbers of rural poor, ‘little emperors’ (...) democrats, Marxists, and so on” (Barr, 2011, p. 129).

With an attempt to probe the construction of identity, Castells holds that identities are formed originally from dominant institutions, and more importantly, identity in the network society is different from social roles (Castells, 2010b, pp. 6-10). That is to say, among different social groups in modern China, it is the power holders who influence the national identity and reinforce the dominant social values. In China, these power holders, referred to as “programmers” and “switchers” by Castells (2009), are often the state and social actors who associate closely with the state. Nevertheless, there are occasionally scenarios where citizen journalists, dissidents or artists are not directly associated with the state programme public discourse in a significant way. Joel Mokyr (1990) also links the development of Chinese culture to the mechanism of the state. On the one hand, the Chinese social system is considered to have shifted successfully from statism towards more of a state-led capitalism than the “socialism with Chinese characteristics” advocated by the government (Castells, 2010a; Nolan and Furen, 1990; Hsing, 1996). Referring to China’s entry into global capitalism and regarding socialism as “a viable alternative to capitalism,” Dirlik describes Chinese socialism as “post-socialism” (Dirlik, 1989, p. 364; Yu, 2009, p. 6). Dirlik expounds the Chinese version of “socialism” as a successful model. On the other hand, David Harvey argues that China’s socialism is not de facto socialism, but neoliberalism. As the Chinese economy is under stringent control of the authoritarian state, whereas it is also encouraged to incorporate neo-liberal elements such as privatization and free trade, Harvey proposes the term “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” (Harvey, 2005, p. 120). However, the system has also been criticized for lacking “the ideology of the present,” except with nationalism and consumerism to be called upon as new ideologies (Waldron, 1993, p. 53).

According to William A. Joseph (2010), ideologies consist of a variety of social values and beliefs which could shape citizens' world view. As for *political* ideology, it influences the way that the decision-making elites distribute, organize, and use the ideas on power-making. The official ideology of the PRC is based on Marxism-Leninism, with the ruling party legitimizing its power as the "only rightful interpreter of the values and the beliefs" to guide the nation (Joseph, 2010, pp. 129-130). Under the communist leadership in the reform era, productivity has been highly emphasized and the social relations and the collective identity of labour in a production system are gradually blurred (Florence, 2009, p. 29; Castells, 2010a, pp. 473-476). Zhao argues that the Chinese state attempts to build a "socialist market economy," and it would be a mistake to regard China as "an openly committed neo-liberal capitalist social formation" (Zhao Yuezhi, 2008, pp. 5-8). Following the five generations of Chinese political leaders, the official ideologies stemming from Marxism-Leninism have influenced and also shown the transitions of the CCP and the PRC. In the fast-changing Chinese society, there are multiple ideologies, including patriotism, nationalism, neoliberalism, consumerism, and democracy, that are likely to play their roles in the Chinese politics (Joseph, 2010, pp. 159-162).

In this research, I delve into the concept of power in the Chinese context, looking at it from two aspects: internal communication power within the Party and the state; and external communication power in international relations. The internal communication power represents tension among different social actors in the state. First, based on the observation of central/provincial/local governance of the Chinese state, Castells holds that the power of the Party is balanced by "power-sharing and wealth distribution between national, provincial, and local elites" (Castells, 2010b, p. 336). Applying the notion of "technocracy" from Jean Meynaud (1969) in the Chinese context, Zheng Yongnian (2008) suggests that the Chinese political elites have realized the power of science and technology. The reform policy carried out by the central government has led to the technological empowerment to both the state and society. Both the state and commercial media outlets in China have embarked on technological innovation. However, Zheng adds that if the policy reforms are led by the CCP itself, then the political changes do not necessarily indicate the empowerment of society or the loosened control of the Party (Zheng, Yongnian, 2010). This means, for instance, that reforms of media organizations such as media commercialization and the going-out strategy do not entail the Party's weakening media control. The bargaining power of the media organizations,

in fact, hinges on the trust they get from the CCP, and to a large extent is determined by the nature of a media outlet (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, pp. 148-149). Parallel to Castells' argument that politics are eventually media politics, one can say that, in the Chinese context, media are also political media. For example, Daniela Stockmann points out that Chinese media practitioners tend to "keep discipline" and "stand behind China's foreign policy" (Stockmann, 2013, p. 95), and Hugo de Burgh expounds the close relationship between media personnel and the CCP, giving the example of two Chinese state media editors holding official ministerial ranks (De Burgh, 2003, p. 24). According to Michael Schoenhals, formalized language with its restricted code in vocabulary, style, syntax, and trope is a form of power "bearing upon all aspects of Chinese politics" (Schoenhals, 1992, pp. 1-3). Stating that ideological elements may indeed influence writers to "agree to calling leaders' utterances 'opinions' rather than 'instructions' and the year 1949 the 'founding of the nation' rather than 'liberation'," Schoenhals further argues that the CCP circulars and its various explicit instructions under the bureaucratic apparatus play a greater role in shaping the political discourse than ideology (Schoenhals, 1992, p. 51).

Second, external communication power in international relations takes form in two ways: the image of China that the government intends to present to other countries, and the image of China that is viewed by other countries. My research mainly focuses on the Chinese government's external communication with Western European and Northern American countries. The image of China thereby refers to the representation constructed by a mix of programmers and switchers, namely the government, the Party, the state media, academics, and other social actors. For instance, with the advent of the new communication technologies, agenda setting is "negotiated among various socio-political-economic powers" (Yu, Haiqing, 2011, p. 4). The making of China's image is not just to counter the "China threat" theory and the penetration of American soft power, but also to consolidate Chinese values, such as harmony between humans and nature (Zhao, 2008, p. 181; Needham and Wang, 2004).

The government's image-making integrates with China's own soft power construction, highlighting China's peaceful rise in the international environment. Chinese former President Hu Jintao adopted the term "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*, 和平崛起) in 2003 to promote the government's foreign policy. The term implies that "China has been pursuing the pathway of peaceful rise since the initiation of the reform and opening-up period, and will not change

course as it seeks to build a ‘well-off society’ by further integrating with the international community” (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007, p. 295). Concerning the terminology appropriateness and its implications for the Taiwan issue, the Chinese leadership eschewed “peaceful rise” and decided to favour “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*, 和平发展) in 2004 (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007, pp. 302-309). Examining the evolution of the concept of peaceful rise, Glaser and Medeiros conclude that “the leadership’s final decision to use the term ‘peaceful development’ reiterated the core goal of reassuring other nations that China is not a revisionist state that will destabilize the international system as it revitalizes itself” (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007, p. 309). However, as for the United States and Western European countries, the image of China, in terms of its political reform, economic rise, and military expenditure, is not merely reckoned as a peaceful rise. For example, American journalist David Brooks comments that the rise of China eventually is “a cultural one” that has the power to impact American society’s very own identity (Brooks, 2008). With the global expansion of the Chinese official media outlets, the state-run China Radio International owns the majority share of more than 33 radio stations around the world, through which Beijing intends to send out China-friendly messages (Qing and Shiffman, 2015). Furthermore, untangling the intrinsic relations among various state and social actors, Dan Schiller suggests that China should neither be viewed as a developing country that attempts to change the global communication system nor as a threat to America’s political discourse (Schiller, 2005, p. 79). Under the going-out policy, the central government intends to improve its discursive power and international influence by engaging in the global governance of cyberspace (CAC, 2016a). Therefore, Chinese external communication power is in a dynamic from both within and outside the state. The external communication strategies coincide with the government’s foreign policy and are implemented through the state media outlets, such as Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, and the *People’s Daily*.

Castells underlines that power is based on the control of communication, and the process of gaining power generates counter-power which attempts to break through such control (Castells, 2009). In China, though both internal and external communication power meet with their counter-power, eventually it is the dominant discourses that exercise power. The cultural values in China, as forms of expression of power, are decided by whoever holds that power. Media as communication tools are not neutral. Technologies, in Langdon Winner’s words, are “ways of building order in our world” which contain deliberately or inadvertently intended

possibilities for “many different ways of ordering human activity” (Winner, 1980, p. 127). As Winner argues, “to say that some technologies are inherently political is to say that certain widely accepted reasons of practical necessity—especially the need to maintain crucial technological systems as smoothly working entities—have tended to eclipse other sorts of moral and political reasoning” (Winner, 1980, p. 133). As Evgeny Morozov contests, “the view that technology is neutral leaves policymakers with little to do but scrutinize the social forces around technologies, not technologies themselves” (Morozov, 2012, p. 297). As shown by Schoenhals’ research on Chinese political discourse, official language in the Party circulars, as bureaucratic means of ensuring uniformity of expression, is more of “saying the right thing at the right time” (Schoenhals, 1992, pp. 51-52). According to Castells, media in fact are “direct instruments of state power” under authoritarian states, and even in other political systems that place an emphasis on the autonomy of the human mind media are not neutral (Castells, 2009, p. 94; 1997, p. 335).

Among media scholars, there have long been different discourses regarding the functions of media. In my research, media refers to the organizations that spread mediated information such as the Chinese state media outlets, rather than the container or carrier in which that information is transmitted, such as the medium of TV or newspaper. I will elaborate on these discourses by analysing the functions of mass media and digital media, and their convergence.

Marshall McLuhan distinguishes media between “hot media” like radio that is low in the audience participation and “cool media” like TV that needs to be completed by the audience, and he further argues that communication media function as “the motor of history,” extending and individualizing the human sensorium, and consciousness (McLuhan, 1964). Mass media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, create linkages between the public and the policymakers by providing the main source of political information and public opinion (Lippmann, 1922; Castells, 2010b, p. 382). On the one hand, scholars underpin the media’s functions as a forum for presenting ideas from all social groups and as a watchdog of the government. In this way, media carry social responsibilities and should be self-regulated while providing an open forum for the exchange of ideas (Blanchard, 1977). Some later theories stress media’s responsibilities for national developments, cultural autonomy, and international relations (McBride et al., 1980; Altschull, 1984). On the other hand, scholars also criticize mass media for largely expressing the discourse of authority, or of the “governing class” (McQuail, 1994, p. 74; Siebert et al., 1956; Lippmann, 1922). For instance,

through the 1968 “Chapel Hill study” of the local public’s perception of the most important election issue, McCombs and Shaw point out the agenda-setting function of news media which have the capacity to influence the salience of issues in public opinion (McCombs, Shaw, 1972). Mass media have the capacity of “signalling the events” and organizing the audiences in accord to the authority (Lippmann, 2012).

Compared to mass media, digital media—in particular news websites, online blogs, and social media—carry multi-faceted functions. Scholars anticipated mass media and their “unifying cultural power” being gradually replaced by digital media, and the latter becoming the vehicle of political propaganda through their “socially stratified differentiation,” rather than just “sending a limited number of messages to a homogeneous mass audience” (Castells, 2010a, 2010b; Sabbah, 1985; Kamarck and Nye, 2002; Murphy and Fong, 2009). Digital media function through their multiplicity of sources, and individualize the relations between senders and receivers, which hereafter leads to the segmentation of the audiences (Sabbah, 1985, p. 219; Damm, 2009, pp. 83-95). Rephrasing McLuhan’s expression that “the medium is the message” (1964), Castells argues that in the information age, “the message is the medium” (Castells, 2010a, p. 340). That means the functions of a medium are shaped by the messages and sources it contains.

In China, the messages on the internet sent by the state media explicitly carry the government’s political agenda, which determines one of the major functions of the internet as an online platform or a tool for the central government to disseminate policies towards its target audience online (Castells, 2009, p. 281). In this respect, scholars regard the state media outlets as the “pedagogic media” (Murphy and Fong, 2009, p. 46).

Through technological innovation, mass media and digital media constantly interact by bringing together their information sources and their multiple functions, as well as their producers and consumers. Henry Jenkins describes these interactions as a “convergence culture” (Jenkins, 2006). “When old and new media collide,” media consumers can access information in a much broader context, and the power relations between the producers and the consumers create a new space (Jenkins, 2006, p. 270; Yu, Haiqing, 2009, p. 3). Scholar Yu Haiqing adopts historian Philip Huang’s (1993) concept of a “third realm” to describe the intermediated space and then applies this concept to the relations of state and society, the official and unofficial in China (Yu, 2009, pp. 34-35). Notwithstanding, it is worth

underscoring that mere technological achievement does not necessarily mean broader information access.

The media environment in China has also been shaped by cultural convergence. Chinese state media outlet Xinhua News Agency has cooperated with commercial websites and explored its commercial potential. The chair of Xinhua.net, Zhou Xisheng, said that this could be seen as a B2B (business to business) environment for internet news. Since Xinhua is not originally a business enterprise, Xinhua.net seems to be one step towards its commercialization. Chinese media scholar Peng Lan comments that “the old media are explorer, and the new media are advertiser” (Peng, Lan, 2005, p. 211), meaning that mass media could integrate with digital media technologies and expand their targeted audiences, and reversely, digital media could benefit from the connections introduced through mass media. With political institutions embracing the ICTs under the guidance of the central government (Hartford, 2005; Castells, 2009), the monopoly of Xinhua as information source has been challenged by social media such as the microblog Weibo (Stockmann, 2013, p. 79). Based on the comparison between official media outlets and non-official news websites, Stockmann argues that an official media outlet like Xinhua occasionally obtains political information from nonofficial news websites and newspapers (Stockmann, 2013, p. 144).

The state media outlet Xinhua is regarded as “pedagogic media,” since the content and the messages are worked out and processed through top-down administrative fiat. Murphy and Fong argue that state media outlets are often neglected in Chinese communication studies. However, state media outlets reinforce the existing hierarchy in society, as the media production and distribution legitimize the authorities’ decisions in the system, and also “discourage individuals and institutions from deviating from the ideology promoted by their superiors” (Murphy and Fong, 2009, pp. 46-48).

With state media outlets incorporating digital media technologies, led by the central government, discourses on ICTs in the academic sphere, especially in English-speaking countries, have changed from the earlier “liberation discourses” that so-called “China-watchers” deployed from the late 1990s to the “control discourses” popularized after 2000. In the liberation discourses, the internet is expected to bring technological freedom and democracy (Qiu, Jack Linchuan, 1999/2000; Damm and Thomas, 2006, pp. 1-11; Chase et al.

2006, pp. 64-101).⁹ While the early liberalization discourses remain still very much alive, with the Chinese government's media reform, scholars also draw attention on the influence of the Chinese government. The control discourses regard the authorities influence as "censorship" or "control" (Tsui, Lokman, 2001; Hughes and Wacker, 2003, pp. 139-161).¹⁰

However, regarding the emancipation of the ICTs in developing countries, Arora (2012) criticizes the assumptions that users in emerging markets are "inherently different" from those in the developed countries. Arora attests that users' activities online from both developed and developing countries are largely "heavily leisure-oriented" (Arora, 2012, p. 94), as the ICTs as tools of empowerment for utilitarian causes may be "retooled for 'less noble' purposes" for pleasure (Arora, 2012, p. 99). Therefore, measuring the ICTs' usage in emerging markets merely from pragmatic ends would be "exoticizing" their users (Arora, 2012, p. 94). In a similar vein, Herold argues, "the Internet accessed and used by people living in the People's Republic of China is at least as rich and diversified as the Internet accessed by people elsewhere—and just as irreverent and apolitical" (Herold, 2015, p. 28). Using the term "netizens" to describe China's internet users implies that ICT usage is primarily political and "that online spaces serve the function of a public sphere making the emergence of a civil society in China possible" (Herold, 2015, p. 21). However, sinologist Manya Koetse argues that its equivalent term in Chinese "网民" (*wangmin*) tends to "lack the more political implications of the term 'netizen' in English," and Chinese organizations and individuals widely use it to describe the internet users (*What's on Weibo*, Koetse, 2018).

Chinese media scholars including Zheng Yongnian and Zhang Xiaoling argue that the focus on government control is too pessimistic and consequently ignores the technical ability from other social forces (Zheng, Yongnian, 2008; Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011). In other words, the

⁹ These scholars critically discussed the implications of "e-governance" and social networks in China. According to Damm and Thomas, even though the state "wishes to exert control over internet use, it is attracted by the potential offered by the internet for economic gains and for government reform ... Economic gains can accrue from the modernization of ICT, and government reforms can be achieved through the introduction of e-government, which is said to offer greater transparency" (2006, pp.6-7). According to Chase, Mulvenon and Hachigian, though technology alone is "unlikely to motivate political change in China," it can be "perhaps a catalyst, for political movements," and in the long term, it is possible "to imagine a situation in which the spread of information technology, ... will contribute to gradual pluralization of the system" (Chase et. al, 2006, pp.93-94).

¹⁰ Tsui holds that "China has the perfect ingredients ready for a digital Panopticon. There is a decentralized structure of self-censorship. There is a little public awareness or legal protection of privacy." (Tsui, Lokman, 2001, p.44) According to Hughes and Wacker, the development of the ICTs "urged the government to intensify control, examine and screen unhealthy contents, and promote national culture in the network environment ..." (Hughes and Wacker, 2003, pp. 139-161).

earlier liberalization discourses are brought into sight. Zheng examines the political changes brought about by information technology from three perspectives: the impact of the internet on the state, the impact on society, and the impact on state-society relations. Zheng proposes that the internet empowers both the state and society with its effects of decentralization and that ICTs are more likely to promote “political liberalization” than “political democratization” (Zheng, Yongnian, 2008, p. 11). Political democratization requires no control over the flow of information, but political liberalization, consisting of political openness, transparency, and accountability, can be promoted by the internet-based collective actions. Nevertheless, with a touch of a neo-liberal perspective, Zheng’s argument indicates that once the forces of domination take a step back and there is an absence of control over information, the political system will go through democratization. Zhang suggests that policymaking is affected reversely by the media outlets in terms of “representing their own economic interests in terms of general public interests” (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 126). In addition, Chinese discourses also emphasize the internet’s impact on China’s economic development by networking among different social groups. However, it is worth noting that other scholars meanwhile contend the ICTs are eventually “toys for the middle class” and distinguish “the interacting and the interacted” (Damm and Thomas, 2006; Castells, 2010a, p. 371).

Discourses on Chinese media show the different perspectives from within and outside China. The heated academic debates about media organizations eventually revolve around the power of media. Media organizations provide “the space of power-making” where various political and social actors compete (Castells, 2009, p. 194). As Judy Polumbaum notes, the state media in China are in a “directive mode” following Party “propaganda” discipline (Polumbaum, 1990, p. 53), and voices of China are often expressed through and for the authorities. With an intention to expand its international presence, the Chinese government aims to cultivate a positive national image through the state media outlets. For instance, the official documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stress the importance to create “a favourable public opinion environment” for China (MFA, 2014a, 2016c). Whether China’s efforts in soft power construction have been effective or not is a matter of ongoing debate among scholars.

2.3 The Notion of Soft Power

Joseph Nye refers to “soft power” as the capacity to “shape the preferences of others” and to make societies “want what you want” by cultural penetration and ideological persuasion (Nye,

2004, p. 5). David Shambaugh analyses how the Chinese government has been trying to increase its soft power (Shambaugh, 2013). To cultivate a national image through a cultural approach, the Chinese government has adopted a going-out strategy. Since 2002, the Report of the Party's 16th National Congress highlighted the importance of "soft power" in the global context (The 16th National Congress, 2002). The Chinese government has thereafter started a "cultural system reform" (*wenhua tizhi gaige*, 文化体制改革) to develop its "comprehensive national strength" (*zonghe guoli*, 综合国力).

Chinese foreign policy incorporated the concept of "peaceful rise" under Hu Jintao's leadership. For instance, the state media Xinhua News Agency, reportedly receiving up to RMB 15 billion (U.S. 2.19\$ billion) from the government (Lam, 2009), has taken the initiative to report on political issues involving China's foreign affairs, with the ambition to "break the monopoly and verbal hegemony" of English media from more developed countries (Yu, Sophie, 2010, p. 1). Xinhua reports are encouraged to promote Chinese cultural values, such as the concepts of "harmonious society" and "well-off society." Xinhua has been tasked with organizing international conferences as well as launching websites for international organizations. For example, Xinhua.net played a leading part in reporting on international events such as the APEC Forum, the China-Russia Year, and the China-Africa Cooperation Forum Beijing Summit (Xinhua.net, 2011).

Nye points out that compared to democratic systems, the Chinese political system has made it easier for the government to exercise its soft power (Nye, 2004, p. 16). The reason is that the soft power resources in China are managed by the government whereas this is not the case in a democratic system. Some scholars consider China's soft power to have emerged with the symbolic Beijing Olympics in 2008 (Keane, 2011, p. 16), and that the government's efforts in harnessing communication technologies for the projection of soft power are remarkable (Li, Xiguang, Zhou, Qingan, 2005, p. 242). However, the effectiveness and improvements of Chinese soft power construction have received far more criticism than approval among scholars.

Scholars explain that Chinese soft power has not been as effective as it was expected to be (Li, Mingjiang, 2008; Huang, Chin-Hao, 2013; Chu, Yingchi, 2013), mainly due to the following reasons. First, the understanding of the term "soft power" often simply combines

any non-military elements, without a nuanced understanding of sources of power. According to Breslin, China's future rise has been "taken for granted by many," which led other countries, in Southeast Asia and Europe, to "develop policies based on an understanding of China's future power," an "imagined power" shaped by perceptions (Breslin, 2011, p. 14). Second, the Chinese government has held onto the traditional cultural legacies that have overly emphasized ideological persuasion (Xu, Yao, 2007, pp. 48-49; Barr, 2011, p. 86). Third, to construct a positive national image as a peacefully rising power, the government has focused on countering the "China threat" theory through the state media outlets. However, its very own state media outlook cannot be presented as open and transparent in spite of the going-out media policy. The monopoly of the state media was created deliberately, in order to provide a single version/interpretation of events (Zhao, Yuezhi, 2008, pp. 24-25). Therefore, the non-official media outlets in China, even though having proliferated in recent years, tend to embark on commercialization, so as to maintain their market share in order to generate operational funds. Consequently, this media mechanism affects the credibility of the central government and weakens its international influence (Sun, Wanning, 2010; Huang, Chin-Hao, 2013; Chu, Yingchi, 2014).

In China's soft power construction, the government continues to search for new concepts, values, and ideologies that could improve the national image and strengthen national identity. The Party has applied neo-liberal management strategies to the state media. According to Zhao Yuezhi, "the art of public relations and image making" that is borrowed from the American model has been incorporated as "the Party's propaganda objectives" (Zhao, Yuezhi, 2008, p. 39). For example, the government has started proactive news reporting especially when covering negative events such as SARS in 2003 and the Xinjiang riots in 2009. By adopting a "pro-people" media policy in 2004, the central government has also initiated news briefings and a spokesperson system in the foreign ministry, to project an image of people's government. However, by maintaining the nationalistic discourse that equates patriotism with supporting the Party, market reform in the Chinese media industry in fact reinforced the existing power structures rather than "democratizing" the society (Brady, 2008). In the examination of the media discourse of Sino-American relations, Stockmann observes that the state media have to keep a positive tone and avoid controversial topics as potential sources of domestic or international tension, thus "harmonizing bilateral relations" (Stockmann, 2013, p. 100).

According to Thompson (1990), ideologies can shape the ways that meaning is constructed. Opposed to confining the term ideology to dominant social thought, Eagleton defines ideology as “the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life” that could challenge or confirm a particular social order (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 28-30 5-6). By deciphering the dominant ideologies, intellectuals can expose the symbolic violence and reveal the dominant discourses (Bourdieu, [1996]/1998). The discourses of the Chinese state media convey the dominant ideologies of the power holders. Yet, some scholars criticize that the study of official discourses and the state media are neglected in the academic discourses both within and outside China (Zhao, Yuezhi, 2008, p. 37; Murphy and Fong, 2009, p. 48).

Media discourse plays a crucial role in power-making. The media’s language is scrutinized as “a site of power, of struggle and also as a site where language is apparently transparent” (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p. 6). On the one hand, the state media outlets often act as pedagogic media, fulfilling the Party’s expectation of “educating individuals about values and self-cultivation” (Murphy and Fong, 2009, pp. 46-48); On the other hand, through the communication networks, the media producers and consumers can create “counter-narratives that challenge, appropriate and accommodate the dominant ideology” (Yu, Haiqing, 2009, pp. 34-35). In the Chinese context, the authorities’ political communication strategies have been applied to the digital networks. Through examining the cases of Chinese online discourses on Sino-Japan relations and the East China Sea conflict, Schneider explicates how “the CCP has been highly successful at integrating the web into its existing mass-communication paradigm” under “the cultural governance system” (Schneider, 2015a).

In the making of power, media discourses have two-way effects on both domestic and international politics. According to Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, through expressive forms of discourse, mass media can certainly strengthen the feeling of fellowship and connect social groups, by presenting moments of “mechanical solidarity.” Internationally, media can provide new resources for diplomacy with the “personalization of power” during media events (Dayan & Katz, 1992, pp. 111, 192). The media agenda on public diplomacy in many ways overlap with China’s soft power construction. Furthermore, Chinese media policies heavily coincide with the government’s internal and external communication strategies.

2.4 Internal and External Communication

To improve its mass communication strategy, the Chinese government has renamed the previous CCP Propaganda Department into the Publicity Department (PD), and also switched to “public relations” (*gonggong guanxi*, 公共关系) rather than “propaganda” (*xuanchuan*, 宣传) in official discourse. As the actual administrative centre of the propaganda system, the PD changed its name in English so as to “avoid any negative connotations that the word ‘propaganda’ might have in foreign languages” (Schneider, 2016, p. 194). However, a change of nameplates does not necessarily imply a corresponding change in actual practice and thinking. The term “propaganda” (*xuanchuan*) does not carry a negative connotation for native Chinese speakers, as its meaning is similar to “persuasion” in English (Stockmann, 2013, p. 13).¹¹ To understand the reasons behind this change, scholar Chu Yongchi observes that the disadvantages of using the term “propaganda” lay in its association with dogmatism in the media system during the Mao period, instead of the diversity in today’s Chinese media (Murphy & Fong, 2009, Chu, Yingchi, pp. 110-120). Switching to the term “publicity” rather than “propaganda” is considered by the government to be more modern in terms of political expression (Castells, 2009, p. 279). The Publicity Department processes information and connects with the state media, universities, as well as other cultural institutions, and is thus responsible for the government’s internal and external communication. In my research, when referring to the government’s policies on media, I use the term “internal/external communication” instead of propaganda or publicity, in order to avoid the ambiguous connotations of these other terms.

Based on Roland Barthes’ (1978) theory that the process of communication involves the production and consumption of signs, Castells adds that symbolic communication, based on production, consumption, experience, and power, eventually generates cultures and collective identities (Castells, 2010a, pp. 15, 372). He further contends that reality is formed by symbols, and in the network society, the communication system generates “virtuality” (Castells, 2010a, pp. 372-373). Communication technologies can enhance the state apparatuses’ ability to

¹¹ It is also worth noting that the term “education” and “commercial advertising” can also be referred to as “propaganda” in the Chinese contexts. In the interpretation of Western Europe and Northern America, propaganda holds its negative connotation through its origins among the Roman Catholic Jesuits. In academic journals within China, the terms “internal communication” and “external communication” are often applied to describe what appear in academic journals outside China as “internal propaganda” and “external propaganda.”

exercise power and surveillance, and they can also empower social groups to counter such control (Anthes, 1993; Betts, 1995). It is also worth noting that there are cases where the relationship between the two is not antagonistic. In fact, the two sides could also collaborate to tackle various social issues (Svensson, 2016). Therefore, to analyse the mechanism of a communication system and to decode the signs in a communication process, it is indispensable to explore the roles which the actors in the system are playing. In Marxist theory, the nature of media is determined by ownership. Similarly, Bourdieu ([1996]/1998, p. 16) notes that “it’s important to know that NBC is owned by General Electric, that CBS is owned by Westinghouse, and ABC by Disney ... and that these facts lead to consequences through a whole series of mediations.”

Communication in China after the late 1970s has gone through the stages known as marketization, conglomeration, and capitalization, initiated by Deng Xiaoping’s sweeping reforms, which allowed marketization of the mass media. According to the media policy in 1978, the government withdrew direct subsidies and granted more operational freedoms to media organizations on the local level (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 38). Chinese former President Hu Jintao emphasized the importance to ensure “an objective and friendly media environment” for China’s economic developing period (Li, Mingjiang, 2008). Later in 2011, during the 6th Plenary Session of the CCP’s Central Committee, Hu advocated that it was important to strengthen the Core Socialist Values within China, so as to counter the threat of being “westernized” by the media from abroad (Wong, Gillian, 2012). In 2012, Xi Jinping has led a major publicity campaign to disseminate the Core Socialist Values that “lays out the CCP’s vision through four goals at each of the national, societal and citizenship levels” (Gow, 2017, p. 93). Through “increased state intervention in civil society,” this campaign underlines “the primacy of cultural power over economic development, that is, of the superstructure over the economic base” (Gow, 2017, p. 109). The state-led media reform was launched as part of the government’s progressing communication strategies. According to the state media outlet Xinhua, the objective of internal communication is to “guide” public opinion, consolidate Party leadership, and also to learn from “excellent foreign culture and advanced technology” (*guowai youxiu wenhua he xianjin jishu*, 国外优秀文化和先进技术), but meanwhile “resisting decadent culture” (*diyū fuxiū wenhua*, 抵御腐朽文化) (People.cn, 2002). In addition, the internal communication strategies were expanded into a five-year plan for “deepening” reform, including establishing domestic cultural production through media conglomeration and also

improving media organizations' operational system through continued capitalization and new communication technologies (Zhao, Yuezhi, 2008, pp. 101-103).

If internal communication shapes the view of China by those sharing the same language and culture, then external communication shapes the views of the country by "others." As Barr argues, the notion of imagined communities is formed in both ways (Barr, 2011, p. 38). Since 1961, China has pursued a media policy that aims "to treat the external communication and internal communication differently" (Li, Yanbing and Jing, Xuemin, 2010). Since 1998, the Chinese government started to enhance the capacity of media outlets in terms of external communication. As a response, the 24-hour satellite English Channel CCTV News, CCTV-9, and CCTV International were launched in 2000 (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 108; Zhao, Yuezhi, 2008, p. 160). On the central level, during the 1990s, to improve its communication strategies abroad, the government upgraded the Foreign Propaganda Office, known as the State Council Information Office overseas, assigning it the task to "project China to the world in a positive light" (Shirk, 2007, p. 95). Former minister Zhao Qizheng, from the State Council Information Office, comments that China needs to counter the undesirable image of "an undemocratic society" (Xu, Yao, 2007, pp. 93-94). In 2009, the Chinese Foreign Ministry established a Public Diplomacy Office, aiming to "issue rebuttals to distorted overseas reports about China and influence the policy decisions of foreign countries" (Barr, 2011, p. 29). In terms of the external communication, Xinhua plays an important role in "equating Chinese people, the state, and the nation as a whole," in order to support the government's position (Stockmann, 2013, p. 92).

The media content reveals, to a large extent, the interests of those who finance them (Altschull, 1984). In this respect, the content of Xinhua News Agency reflects the communication strategies of the Chinese government. In this research, "content" refers to all forms of messages sent by the media that shape the construction of social reality, historical aspects, and social values. Content, including news narratives, policy reports, and images, as well as social media messaging, provides knowledge that can make up a kind of political consciousness among individuals. In discourse analysis, van Dijk (1983, 1985) and Bell (1991) developed the analysis of news content through empirical research on the syntax of narratives. According to Bell, a news report consists of an abstract, attribution, and a story that describes one or more media events with actors and actions (Bell, 1991, p. 169). Xinhua's content is under supervision of the Publicity Department and is often designed by the editorial board in

advance, in terms of the topics, the tones, and the “must-carry news” (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 85; De Burgh, 2003; Stockmann, 2013, p. 79). Overall, the content from non-official media outlets in China tends to contain less political content compared to the official media outlets (Stockmann, 2013). When reporting on international issues or China’s foreign affairs, Xinhua has a monopoly on providing news, and the journalists of non-official media outlets echo the Xinhua reports and support the position of the government by staying in line with the foreign policy (Stockmann, 2013, p. 79, p. 92). Based on the case study of Chinese media reports about the United States, Stockmann concludes that the news content between the official and non-official media outlets varies in tone (Stockmann, 2013, pp. 168-169). For example, Xinhua tends to adopt more emotional and positive expressions than the commercialized newspapers. In other words, Xinhua’s content contains the ideological positions that serve the government’s mass communication strategy.

If Xinhua’s content reflects the interests of the government, then the production of its content shows the mechanism of PRC media policymaking. Noting that media policymaking is not transparent, scholars—including Zhang Xiaoling (2011), Stockmann (2013) and Brady (2008)—emphasize the factors that influence this production, such as an administrative framework, timing, media events, and shifts in leadership, as well as the personal decisions of the officials.

In 1983, the Chinese Ministry of Radio, Film, and Television issued an important media policy, Document No. 37, which initiated the four-tier (from central to local) media structure (Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 39). This state policy resulted in decentralized media control and also media marketization, in order to strengthen the Party’s communication power. Thus, the four-tier media structure is applied through a top-down media system. Xinhua plays the role of the leading national media outlet, and its news production follows strict regulations. For instance, Xinhua is encouraged to avoid reporting on problems that cannot be solved or issues that could be attacked from media abroad (Yan, Lianjun, 1996, pp. 20-22, quoted in Zhang, Xiaoling, 2011, p. 180.), and this is the case particularly during national holidays like the Chinese Spring Festival, or during sessions of the National People’s Congress and the National People’s Political Consultative Conferences (the so called “two meetings,” *liang hui*, 两会). In addition, when there is a shift of the political leadership, news content is more strictly controlled, and Xinhua reports become a reference for other media outlets to be “on

the safe side” (Brady, 2008, p. 96; Stockmann, 2013, p. 79). After the 1990s, media reform in China went through a transition in order to adapt to an environment in which both mass and digital media interacted. The production and distribution of news has been integrated with digital communication technologies. The 18th National Congress in 2012 and the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee in 2013 demonstrated the importance of social media platforms for discussions on political and social issues. Political institutions at all levels of government have increased their internet presence, providing new opportunities for citizens to submit letters and petitions online (Hartford, 2005). Through observing the fundamental functioning of social media in Chinese local bureaucracy, Schlaeger and Jiang (2014) argue that official microblogging both shapes and reflects the e-government management of social tensions and conflicts, and identifies a fragmented political structure. Creating opportunities and challenges to Chinese local governments, microblogging could potentially be “a battering ram to spearhead reforms; a virus introducing unexpected consequences; and a reinforcer of authorities’ existing power, that is, politics as usual” (Schlaeger and Jiang, 2014, pp. 190-191). Thus, official microblogs do not launch radical political changes in Chinese society, and they overall “reinforce existing power structures” (Schlaeger and Jiang, 2014, p. 206). In a similar vein, through researching online feedback from citizens, Goebel holds that the political risks are often exaggerated as the internet “offers more opportunities for autocrats than for opposition groups” (Goebel, 2015, p. 21). According to Stockmann’s observation, websites of commercial entities such as Sina (*xinlang*, 新浪) and Tencent (*tengxun*, 腾讯) are less controlled than governmental websites such as Xinhua.net and *China Daily* that are sponsored by official media outlets. Xinhua.net is allowed to publish its own reports on major national events and tends to republish articles from commercial websites, to obtain information about politics (Stockmann, 2013, p. 144).

In Dayan and Katz’s analysis on the nature of media events, what the audience receives is in fact “the end product of political, aesthetic, and financial bargaining,” engaging in a “negotiation” process among the actors which are independent from one and another (Dayan and Katz, 1992, p. 55). The media production in China is also a process of negotiation, but the actors are not necessarily independent from each other. In fact, media production in China demonstrates the power relationships between the dominant and the dominated, in other words, between the interacting and the interacted-with. Media production carries a variety of socially determined goals, and “is organized in class relationships that define the process by

which some human subjects, on the basis of their position in the production process, decide the sharing and uses of the product in relationship to consumption and investment” (Castells, 2010a, p. 15).

2.5 Conclusion

Chinese media are characterized by complex dynamics. On the one hand, more operational freedom and financial rewards were given to the state media outlets. On the other hand, the media continue to convey the ideological messages of the government’s image-making effort in the international arena. Under the influence of marketization, Xinhua, as part of the government’s apparatus, has been operated through enterprise management to survive international competition. In the sense of embracing marketization on the one hand and consolidating the Party’s political ideology on the other, Xinhua interacts with social media as a contingent communication strategy to fit in with “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Media scholar Zhao Yuezhi (2012) argues that under the influence of neoliberalism, Chinese external communication faces a system overhaul as part of the globalization process. Xin Xin (2012) analyses the transformation of Chinese media through the case of Xinhua and likewise finds that marketization inserts a significant change on Xinhua’s interaction with local and global actors. Under the authoritarian political system, whether social media in China are becoming more reliable and information more accessible to the users than mass media is speculative. More importantly, as Weibo networks are increasingly regulated by government agencies, Weibo’s role in Chinese political communication continues to alter. Thus, media policy in China is likely to play out at this intersection between political communication strategies and market dynamics.

In the culture of convergence, who has the switching power? Who are the ones being interacted with? The trajectory of theories on political communication from within and outside China shows the indispensable role of the media in power-making. With the shift of the Chinese central leadership led by President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, new social values and ideologies are constructed and disseminated through both the state media outlets and the social media platforms. To further examine the mechanisms of the Chinese media system, in the following chapters I will conduct a case study on Xinhua News Agency’s communicative agenda regarding China’s BRI.

Chapter Three Methodology

Political communication in the society we live in today is diverse, fragmented, and fast-changing. To grasp a relatively recent picture of the media mechanism in China, neither a purely quantifying, nor a purely qualifying research approach works. Therefore, empirical studies and data analysis are critical in supporting the theoretical structure of the project. During my research, I applied both quantitative and qualitative techniques for the interpretation of the data. This chapter includes the approaches of how to study the issues that I raised in Chapter Two, explains which materials I chose and how, and outlines which steps I took to analyse the materials.

3.1 Policy Analysis

In order to observe the Chinese government's policies in terms of soft power, media and diplomacy, I accessed the central government's websites. This included both the English and Chinese websites of the State Council of People's Republic of China (SC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the State Council Information Office (SCIO), the Central Publicity Department (PD), Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs/Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), the Ministry of Culture (MC), the former State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT),¹² and Xinhua News Agency.

I accessed 62 related legal and policy papers from these official websites and present them in Chapter Four, where I examine the expressions and terms adopted in the documents. In the following chapter, these documents are categorized based on five main themes, including foreign policy, media policies, cyber security, e-governance and the BRI.

3.1.1 *Soft Power: Ongoing Debates*

In Chapter Two, I raised several questions such as: what is China? What is soft power for China? What is China's voice? Why is it important for the Chinese government to construct a positive national image? In order to best answer these questions, I collected the government

¹² The SAPPRFT is the precursor of the State Administration of Radio and Television (SART), the National Film Bureau, and the National Office of Press and Publication (NOPP) (Ma, Damien and Thomas, Neil, 2018).

policies regarding the strategy of soft power released through the official websites of the central government's departments MFA, PD, MC, SAPPRFT and SCIO. The policies regarding soft power strategy are in the categories of foreign policy and media policies. Since soft power is a foreign policy issue and all foreign policy runs through the State Council, I only collected policy papers from the central government. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that provincial-level entities (e.g. the city of Shanghai) have their own soft power strategy, and that this strategy may diverge in some ways from what the central government plans. The purpose of collecting these policies is to clarify the concepts of soft power from the perspective of the Chinese government. Through understanding how soft power construction is interpreted in China, I can then relate the ongoing debates over the concepts of soft power to the central government's policymaking.

I analysed the official documents according to the key concepts I identified in Chapter Two: soft power, national image, and the government's emphasis on the country's cultural heritage, as exemplified by the terms “文化强国 (*wenhua qiangguo*, strong cultural country)” and “命运共同体” (*mingyun gongtongti*, a shared destiny). From there, I look into the steps and the goals of the policymaking with a comparison between the policy papers and the interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork in 2016. The comparison aims to examine the relations between policymaking and media changes.

3.1.2 Media Policy, Internal, and External Communication

My study examines the current Chinese leadership's handling of media and the government's communicative strategies. My observations focus on the most recent government policies of managing media, how Xinhua is embedded in political practices between the state and the party, and how those policies shape the ways in which Xinhua communicates about politics. The official documents on media policies are collected from both Xinhua News agency's website Xinhua net and from the official government websites, including the websites of the State Council, MFA and MC. Besides official media policies, the Chinese government has documents regulating e-governance and cyber security. I examined the policy papers according to the Chinese government's internal and external communication strategies. The analysis of internal communication is mainly based on the policy documents written in the Chinese language, while the external communication analysis is based on the ones written in

English. In Chapter Four, I examine these alongside the media policies in order to find out the differences in policy implementation between the state media outlets in general, and their expressions through digital media in particular.

Xinhua News Agency is chosen as the object of study because it functions both as a state media outlet as well as a social media actor. Xinhua is embedded in political practices between the state and the party. I use Xinhua's activities on its official site, and its approach to social media, including Weibo for domestic audiences and Twitter for international audiences, as the main examples to demonstrate the impact of the media policies.

Regarding Xinhua's activities on social media, I conduct a combined quantitative and qualitative analysis, to examine its internal communication strategy through its Chinese social media accounts on Weibo and the external communication strategy through its Twitter account, in Chapter Six and Seven. In order to have a clear grasp of the digital media's complex status in Xinhua's media strategy, I also collected the quantitative data about China's Internet and Xinhua's news releases from the CNNIC website (China Internet Network Information Centre).

3.1.3 Foreign Policy

To examine the relations between China's strategic communication and the initiatives of diplomacy, I compared the government's foreign policy with the policy papers on the "Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" initiative (BRI). There are three reasons in this research to analyse the Chinese government's foreign policy by looking at the BRI.

The first reason is that this initiative intends to provide stronger historical ties between China and Central Asian and European Countries. The central government has regarded this initiative as the main diplomatic task since 2015. The second reason stems from an economic perspective. The BRI combines the national goal to develop China's western regions with international projects. The Chinese central government has highlighted the "go west" (*xibu dakaiifa*, 西部大开发) plan to develop the economy of China's northwest region. This region, including provinces such as Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Xinjiang, etc., is regarded as

the country's next potential economic zone. By retracing the ancient caravan routes of the Silk Roads, the government intends to extend its national economic plan to a larger international cooperation with Central Asian countries on projects such as highways, high-speed railways and oil and gas pipelines. The third and final reason has to do with the cultural aspects of the BRI. The emphasis on its historical and cultural background leads to a variety of cultural exchange projects, such as media collaborations on making documentaries that explore history, religions and arts of the various regions. As an approach to demonstrate China's "harmonious rise" and to counter China Threat theories, the BRI is less about filling in the cultural gaps among the countries "along the road," and more about being open towards these differences. By accepting cultural differences and showing the will to reach mutual understanding, the Chinese government aims to strengthen its diplomatic and economic influence.

State policies on the BRI are collected from both Xinhua net and Chinese government websites. Xinhua net is the main source of authoritative news for the nation's websites on major conferences, policies and events. The main source of the diplomatic policies is the BRI special report webpage on Xinhua net (Xinhua net, BRI). Xinhua's reports on this initiative form the crucial part of the case study in my research.

Diplomatic policies, such as those on the BRI, can be found, generally speaking, on the websites of the State Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the policy documents on Xinhua net and the ones on the official government websites may be highly repetitive of each other. This is because Xinhua net has been entrusted to launch and operate the Chinese Government website (gov.cn). To avoid overlap, I collected the diplomatic policies from the main source website, Xinhua net, and supplemented these with the related policies from the government's official websites.

3.2 Interview and Access

The data gathering stage of my project includes a series of semi-structured, qualitative interviews with scholars, policymakers and media practitioners, in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the government's various policies on internal and external communication in practice. I used the responses from my respondents as an additional source to further examine how the government and the state media outlets construct the official discourses. I keep my

respondents anonymous due to two reasons: some of them required me to not disclose their names; and I am not certain in what way certain sensitive content might affect the professions of those in China when they are brought into connection with disclosing such content. For the purposes of this research, I divided the respondents into three groups. Group “A” consists of academics, group “M” of media workers and group “P” of policymakers. The results of these interviews are discussed in Chapter Four.

In the group of academic respondents are 11 scholars, in academic fields ranging from Chinese media, social media, communication theory, and intercultural communication to media policy and contemporary politics. This group of respondents covers different geographic regions, as its members are part of various universities and academic institutes inside and outside China. I interviewed them about the issues of the BRI, to provide a theoretical framework in interpreting effects and processes of China’s news media and China’s image issues.

The second group of respondents consists of 15 media practitioners, including journalists, news editors, and producers, of whom 12 work in Chinese state media outlets, and three in international media organizations based in Beijing and Shanghai. Through my personal contacts with the journalists and editors working in Chinese state media outlets, I was kindly put in touch with their co-workers from different branches of the news agency, three among whom are part of the 15 respondents. They are journalists who have been working for the state media outlets in the overseas bureaus. In order to include respondents from various sources, I approached the journalists who have worked in both the domestic and the overseas bureaus of Xinhua News Agency. These include Xinhua’s Beijing bureau, the Xinhua media studies centre, the Xinhua European bureau, and the Xinhua London bureau. The interviews with this group provide insights on how Chinese traditional mass media outlets perform and operate on social media platforms, and how Xinhua may target domestic and international audiences differently, according to its external and internal communication rationales.

The third group consists of seven Chinese policymakers. Four of them have or had been working in the Communication Departments in local governments in Beijing and Xi’an, and two have been working for Chinese embassies in Europe. The seventh group member is an official from state media, who participated in drafting the current media policy. The interviews with the policymakers are invaluable for the examination of both Chinese media

policies and foreign policies. I compared the opinions from this group of respondents to the responses from the other two groups.

In China, doing fieldwork often requires remaining flexible when interviewing. The edited volume *Doing Fieldwork in China* (Heimer and Thogersen, 2006) explains why: as Thogersen suggests, “a more flexible strategy with different communicative approaches for different types of interviews” enables the interviewer to understand the stories in the “dialogue-type interviews” (Thogersen, 2006, p. 121). I recorded the interviews with the consent from my respondents, and otherwise I switched to note-taking when asked. To make sure the recordings and field notes are not accessible by third parties, I use Leiden University’s SurfDrive for storage.

During my fieldwork, my identity as a PhD researcher outside China, as a teaching assistant working for a Chinese university in Xi’an, and as a former journalist working for Xinhua News Agency overseas bureau, enabled me to connect with respondents from within and outside China. Being able to communicate in both Chinese and English also contribute a great deal to the quality of the interviews. The nature of the interviews, and how I accessed the respondents, is further elaborated upon in the section “Qualitative Interviews” in Chapter Four.

3.3 Case Study of the Belt and Road Initiative

The reasons to choose the BRI as main case study stem from the nature of this initiative itself. The official adoption of the term “Silk Road” is to suggest its chronological and geographical advantages. Reinvigorating the historical trade roads presents the strategies of the Chinese government’s diplomacy in the coming years. In order to move the international projects with Central Asia and Europe forward, external communication through the media is essential. Xinhua News Agency is an important player in promoting the BRI. In a cross-disciplinary study of media and foreign policy, the case study needs to provide insights in both fields. Therefore, the significance of this case study in the BRI is that it tightly combines the research in China’s media policies with its foreign policy.

Through correspondence with media practitioners, media scholars, and policymakers, I conducted a series of in-depth, qualitative interviews regarding China’s media policy and foreign policy in 2016. The interviews form a major part of the empirical data in this research.

They particularly include issues related to the BRI, as it is the case study I focus my research on.

An important goal of this case study is to reveal how digital media function in the context of China's changing foreign policy and communication strategies. Therefore, it has a specific focus on the relations between microblogging and policymaking in the case of the Belt and Road discourse.

This case study draws attention to the importance of the discourse in political communication under the impact of digital media. China, with its traditional mass media system of the reform and opening-up period, is now turning into a highly mediated society. My research relates different media theories to the findings of the case study to examine the trend of Chinese digital media, its influence on Xinhua's communicative strategy, and China's foreign policy. It opens up avenues of future research into other news organizations' presence on digital media platforms.

3.4 Incorporating Digital Methods

My research includes a comparative analysis of the BRI discourse on Weibo and Twitter. Through gathering larger data on the issue, this part of the research is to find out who the active players in shaping the online discourse of the BRI on social media platforms are.

To extract data from Weibo, I used the Chinese software program Founder Zhisu Big Data Platform (Founder, 方正智思互联网大数据平台)¹³ to collect relevant posts, by searching on the keywords “一带一路” (*yidai yilu*), and its equivalent term “belt and road” in English, from 1 December 2012 to 1 February 2016. Founder provides an automated sentiment analysis in the search results. In addition, I also used Founder's intelligent analysis function to find the relevant messages in the latest month at the time of research, from 1 June to 1 July 2017. Founder collects online messages from Sina Weibo, Wechat, blogs, mobile clients, domestic and international online forums, and news websites.

¹³ Founder Platform, 智思互联网大数据平台, http://103.240.16.90/c_login.jsp; Founder Introduction, <http://www.founder.com.cn/BigData/ProductIntroduction/index/show/691/>

On Twitter, I conducted research through queries written in the software programming language Python, using Twitter's API (application programming interface) to search tweets containing the keywords "Belt and Road." In this way, I collected and analysed tweets for a period of a month: from the 1st of June to the 1st of July in 2017.¹⁴ In order to explore this topic and find out who the main users are, the analysis of tweets containing the keywords "Belt and Road" also includes a brief explanation of social media conventions, like the use of "#" hashtags and "@" addresses.

To conduct a sentiment analysis for the collected tweets, I combined manual labelling with machine learning in Python. To examine the tone of the messages, each message is given an "attitude" score: A positive message receives a 1; a neutral message scored a 0; a negative message is given a -1. I identify a "positive," "neutral" or "negative" tone based on the following qualitative considerations:

The messages showing the Chinese government's good deeds, positive national image, or international affairs favourable for China are positive. See the following examples:

1. Britain key partner of China in #BeltandRoad Initiative, which has huge potential for cooperation: ambassador... <https://t.co/ZrtS7vYGYB>;
2. Century-old port of entry on China-Kazakhstan border regains shine due to #BeltandRoad Initiative... <https://t.co/bcB0QW8YXF>;
3. China can share its experiences & expertise in sharing economy with #BeltandRoad countries, accelerate their eco growth. <https://t.co/CF3hGAzQC0>.

The messages stating the facts, announcing the specific projects and related government policies are neutral (see the examples below).

¹⁴ I access Twitter data through registering an application on its website for developers (<http://apps.twitter.com/>) and then obtain a consumer key, consumer secret, access token, and access token secret. To keep these tokens, I create a separate config file. After setting up Python 2.7.13, I install several Python libraries to access Twitter's REST API data. In doing so (in particular, installing the libraries Tweepy and NLTK [Natural Language Toolkit] through Pip [Python's package management system], and using Tweepy's OAuthHandler method), I follow the detailed instructions provided by Vivek Wisdom and Rajat Gupta on how to use Python for Twitter data analysis (Wisdom and Gupta, 2016). To gather the required data from the stream of tweets, I construct a query "beltandroad" that specifically matches on the key phrase "belt and road." I then create a directory "data" to store the query results. With the instruction "python twitter_stream_download.py -q beltandroad -d data," I am able to capture the query results in a JSON file called "stream_beltandroad.json." Following the instructions on text pre-processing and analysis provided by data scientist Marco Bonzanini (2015), I use tokenisation as described in his blog and save the clean data as a text file.

1. @XHNews en #Periscope: LIVE: Join us to talk to PwC senior partner David Wu on Chinese economy, #BeltandRoad #AMNC... <https://t.co/gDLyobvEH1>;
2. #Indonesia Consul General in Shanghai @snmauludiah talked about trade and cultural exchanges. #BeltandRoad Initiati... <https://t.co/npnzMEDXaF>;
3. Ambassador Shyam Saran, discussing #BeltandRoad and #CPEC at ICS conference <https://t.co/Z3UEQUZnzF>.

The messages showing the diplomatic standoffs with other countries or events that could be deemed as potential threats by the government, I regard as negative. Examples are demonstrated below.

1. @SBGroup's rather pessimistic take on #Africa & #BeltAndRoad ends w/ good call for action <https://t.co/s0IF7hAoaZ> HT @RichardHumphri1;
2. "They" used to talk about 'ending poverty' remember that? What happened? Oh yeah, the #wealthtransfer <https://t.co/tt62s9ACLa>;
3. @ps_raghavan on #BeltandRoad: "For a multi-trillion \$ project, only 29 heads of states attended #OBOR – Glass is half empty than half full."

By using a coded attitude score, I follow Lutgard Lams, who uses a similar coding approach in a media discourse analysis of the corpus comprising the Chinese official newspapers, including the *People's Daily* and *China Daily* (Lams, 2010). I also consulted Daniela Stockmann's work in which she also uses a codified approach to conduct a cross-examination on the tone of the Chinese international news. Stockmann's conclusion has to do with sentiment results, showing that the Chinese government leads the trend for the state media to "massage public sentiment by shifting news reporting in a more positive (or less negative) direction" (Stockmann, 2013).

To test whether Stockmann's results also apply to the case of the BRI, I compared the result of the attitude score to the government's media policies and communication strategies. It is worth mentioning that user accounts from the Chinese state media outlets—such as Xinhua and CCTV—are very probably more inclined to distribute positive messages about the BRI. Therefore, I sharply observed in what cases or circumstances Xinhua sent negative messages with respect to this initiative on social media. This gave me the opportunity to analyse what may have changed in China's media agenda. For example: is adopting criticism and showing certain diplomatic standoffs, while at the same time still reporting on the efforts made by the government, an attempt to improve Xinhua's credibility?

3.5 Discourse Analysis

In order to conduct a fitting analysis of the discourse of social media messaging, I adopt textual methods from the field of linguistics. Considered by many as one of the founders of modern linguistics, De Saussure first studied language through its structure. According to his methods, the first step is to study how languages work in social situations, then look into the structures of languages, and at last analyse the conventions and arbitrariness that lie within languages (Saussure, 2011 [1959]). Roland Barthes holds that languages are comprised of signs with their signifiers (word / image) and signified (connotations), and convey the social relations of their context (Barthes, 1972). This holds especially true for media studies: it is vital to examine the language and its tone used for news distribution and social media messaging through the relations surrounding its textual meaning.

In the case of Chinese media, the kind of language adopted by the state media outlets is very carefully constructed. By analysing the relations surrounding the textual meaning of the expressions and metaphors, the research aims to reflect the power relations between the lines. Since 2010, China's president Xi Jinping urged Chinese officials to avoid "empty words" and political jargon in their speeches. The changes happening in the language are to fill the gap between the traditional ways of communication and the means of digital media. For example, the sudden application of the popular terms "gei li" (给力, awesome) and "dian zan" (点赞, like) by the government is outdated as the Chinese internet users already stopped using them.

Morozov comments that the language of propaganda is subject to the "creative changes" (2012, p. 131). These "creative changes" reveal that the relations surrounding a certain textual meaning are adaptive and dynamic. As Yu mentions, "creativity" has a wider application in the examination of media and cultural transformation in contemporary China (Yu, Haiqing, 2009, p. 3). Yu examines the complex and dynamic relationships between media structure, agents, and messages across their multifaceted embodiments. By exploring how different types of media spectacles highlight the creativity, pragmatism, resourcefulness, and predicament of these agents in manipulating media production, circulation, consumption, and representation, she investigates how creativity and articulating their identity, subjectivity, citizenship, and ethics (Yu, Haiqing, 2009).

In my research, the textual analysis focuses on language adopted on social media platforms Weibo and Twitter. By studying the power relations in the Chinese social system, the purpose is to reveal how language is used in different perspectives in the case study.

Anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup forms her argument in the article *Hunger and the Hardness of Facts* based on the assessment of relative hard and soft facts (1993, pp. 727-739). In the article, she presents the standard conceptions of hunger and famine as something out of order, over a discussion of the human experience of pain, to a more general discussion of the assessment of the relative hardness of facts. In the case of my research, the legal and policy papers gained from internet access and case study provide the hard facts, and the open interviews provide the soft facts. Based on the assessment of hard facts and soft facts, my research initiates the discourse analysis on power relations behind the state media and government policies.

3.5.1 *Quantitative Analysis*

As a critical part of discourse analysis, my case study on Xinhua's reporting on the BRI requires a quantitative analysis, which provides a general picture of Xinhua's role on social media platforms. Combining both textual and digital research methods, I zoom in on the specific case of Xinhua's presence on Weibo and Twitter. The case study discussed in Chapter Six examines Xinhua's promotion and depiction of the BRI through its Weibo and Twitter accounts. I collected data on Xinhua's news distribution on these two social media platforms from December 2012 to January 2016. By comparing and analysing, first in a quantitative study, the Chinese and English social media messages related to the BRI, I examine the government's strategy in strengthening its foreign relations.

The case study examines whether Xinhua performs different functions toward national and international audiences on different platforms, and if so, where the strategic differences lie in these posts. In this respect, I intend to explore how Xinhua conceptualizes international news and internal and external communication on social media, how social media messaging differs from Xinhua's traditional ways of communication, and—if Xinhua carries over the government's diplomatic missions to Weibo and Twitter—how effective they are in doing so.

Xinhua's English account on Weibo distributes a large number of international affairs posts. In order to improve the result credibility of the quantitative study, I collected both Chinese and English posts from Xinhua's seven different accounts on Sina Weibo.

The selected seven accounts are Xinhua net (*Xinhuawang faren weibo*, 新华网法人微博) and Xinhua net English (*Xinhuawang yingwen ban*, 新华网英文版) set up by Xinhua net; China Scoop (*Zhongguo dujia baodao*, 中国独家报道) and Xinhua iReport (*Xinhua wo baodao*, 新华我报道) set up by Xinhua's Overseas Department; Xinhua International (*Xinhua guoji*, 新华国际) from Xinhua's International Department; Xinhua Viewpoint (*Xinhua shidian*, 新华视点) from a news program on TV, jointly produced by Xinhua's Domestic Department, its Audio and Video Department, and Heilongjiang (*Heilongjiang*, 黑龙江); and finally China Net Affairs (*Zhongguo wangshi*, 中国网事) set up by Xinhua's online news program. Among the seven accounts, Xinhua net English and Xinhua iReport post in English, and the other five accounts post in Chinese. The seven accounts have the most followers among Xinhua's accounts on Weibo, and these accounts consistently report on the government's BRI throughout the research period.

I initially collected Xinhua's posts by searching on the hashtags #Silkroad, #BeltandRoad, #丝绸之路 (*sichou zhilu*, Silk Road), and #一带一路 (*yidai yilu*, Belt and Road), but I found that there are large amounts of posts relating to this topic without a hashtag. Therefore, I switched to collecting Xinhua's posts by keyword searches in both Chinese and English, including "Silk road," "Belt and Road," "丝绸之路" (*sichou zhilu*, Silk Road), and "一带一路" (*yidai yilu*, Belt and Road). Since this initiative involves economic projects from within and outside China, the case study also leads to a discussion as to whether and how Xinhua differentiates in reporting on these domestic and foreign projects to domestic and international audiences. The following examples of the posts contain the keywords "丝绸之路" (*sichou zhilu*, Silk Road) in Chinese:

【背景：郑州国际陆港】位于国家郑州经济技术开发区内，铁路港、公路港、空港、海港“四港一体”，定位为国家铁路一类口岸、多式联运服务中心、中欧班列货运中心、智慧物流信息中心，是郑州市打造丝绸之路经济带重要节点城市和中欧铁路物流核心载体的核心载体。via 新华视点 2014-5-10 19:24 来自 微博 weibo.com (Translation: Background: Zhengzhou international land port is located in Zhengzhou Economic and

Technological Development zone. Combining the railway port, highways port, airports and seaports, the land port is set as a national railway port, a multimodal transport service centre, a China-Europe freight centre and an information logistics centre. It is vital when making Zhengzhou the node city in the Silk Road Economic Belt and the core carrier of China-Europe railway logistics. Via Xinhua news point 2014-5-10 19:24)

#早安, 中国# 【“海上丝绸之路”讲述中国往事】肯尼亚东部印度洋沿岸是中国古代“海上丝绸之路”重要一环。据中国史书记载, 郑和率船队七下西洋, 访问了亚非 30 多个国家, 远及麻林地 (肯尼亚马林迪) 和慢八撒 (肯尼亚蒙巴萨港)。那里出土的 12 世纪以来中国古瓷及碎片, 讲述着数百年中非贸易繁盛往事。2014-5-10 08:51 来自 微博 weibo.com (Translation: #Good morning, China# The “Maritime Silk Road” tells about China’s past. The east of Kenya along the coast of the Indian Ocean is an important part of China’s ancient “Maritime Silk Road.” According to historical records in China, Zheng He led the fleet to the Western Seas and visited more than 30 countries in Asia and Africa, as far as the Ma Lindi (Malindi, Kenya) and the port of Mombasa, Kenya. The ancient Chinese porcelain and debris from the 12th Century tell about the flourishing Sino-African trade in the past. 2014-5-10 08:51)

【习近平参观德国杜伊斯堡港】国家主席习近平 29 日下午来到位于德国西部北威州的杜伊斯堡港参观, 推动丝绸之路经济带建设。习近平表示, 中方提出建设丝绸之路经济带倡议, 秉承共同发展、共同繁荣的理念, 联动亚欧两大市场, 赋予古丝绸之路新的时代内涵, 造福沿途各国人民。网页链接 2014-3-30 06:56 来自 微博 weibo.com (Translation: Xi Jinping visits Duisburg port in Germany. On the 29th, President Xi Jinping arrived at the Duisburg port in Germany. The visit is to promote the construction of the Silk Road economic belt. Xi Jinping says, by adhering to the concept of common development and common prosperity, China’s initiative to construct the Silk Road economic belt is to create linkage between the Asian and European markets, to explore new meaning for the ancient Silk Road, and to benefit the people from the countries along the road. Webpage link 2014-3-30 06:56)

【习近平在印度尼西亚国会发表演讲】中国愿同东盟国家加强海上合作, 使用好中国政府设立的中国—东盟海上合作基金, 发展好海洋合作伙伴关系, 共同建设 21 世纪“海上丝绸之路”。(据文字直播) 2013-10-3 11:56 来自 享拍微博通 (Translation: Xi Jinping made a speech at the Indonesian National Assembly. China is willing to strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries, to make good use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund established by the Chinese government, to develop a good ocean partnership, and to jointly build the 21st Century “Maritime Silk Road.” 2013-10-3 11:56)

On Xinhua’s Twitter account, the tweets are distributed in English. All Xinhua’s tweets are collected from its account “New China” (@XHNews). Similar to Xinhua’s posts on Weibo, there are tweets about the Belt-and-Road topic with and without hashtag. I therefore conducted keyword searches on Twitter, too, for key phrases including “Silk Road,” “Belt and Road,” and “One Belt One Road.” However, there were no results for the phrase “One Belt One Road” from the account New China, and there was only one tweet from Caixin’s account and one tweet from CCTV’s account at the time of research. Xinhua is consistent in using the term “Belt and Road” throughout.¹⁵ Examples of the collected tweets are presented below:

China Xinhua News@XHNews Apr 1 China’s Xinjiang ready to serve as a “core area” on Silk Road Economic Belt <http://xhne.ws/7Z2zX> pic.twitter.com/SwC1fOFRoI

¹⁵ The term “一带一路” translates also as “One Belt One Road” and some media outlets use this translation.

China Xinhua News@XHNews Mar 31 “Belt and Road” initiatives will bring huge benefits for Asia and rest of the world #Silkroad <http://xhne.ws/EQ2xG> pic.twitter.com/TeUUarKZak

China Xinhua News@XHNews Mar 23 Nepal sees China’s Belt and Road as chance for Asia #SilkRoad <http://xhne.ws/PjPS5>

China Xinhua News@XHNews Mar 23 Spotlight: China’s land-sea #SilkRoad initiatives to benefit Russia (file pic) <http://xhne.ws/JKJmH> pic.twitter.com/0cI30kPC2a.

There are cases where both the terms “Silk Road”(“丝绸之路” in Chinese) and “Belt and Road” (“一带一路” in Chinese) occur in the same post or tweet. To avoid counting these records twice, I inserted the posts or tweets from each of Xinhua’s accounts on Excel sheets and removed double occurrences. On Xinhua’s New China Twitter account, the keyword search yielded 111 tweets on “Silk Road,” and 85 tweets on “Belt and Road.” After I removed seven double occurrences of the same tweets, 189 tweets remained from the New China Twitter account. Using the same approach on Xinhua’s seven accounts on Sina Weibo, I collected 28 English posts from Xinhua net English, 71 English posts from Xinhua iReport, 151 Chinese posts from Xinhua net (*Xinhuaawang*, 新华网), 20 Chinese posts from China Scoop (*Zhongguo dujia baodao*, 中国独家报道), 86 Chinese posts from Xinhua International (*Xinhua guoji*, 新华国际), 68 Chinese posts from Xinhua Viewpoint (*Xinhua shidian*, 新华视点), and 10 Chinese posts from China Net Affairs (*Zhongguo wangshi*, 中国网事).

I reverse-sequentially numbered the tweets and posts in Excel on different worksheets according to each account. For the Xinhua net account on Weibo, the latest post on January 4th 2016 is coded as the 1st post and the earliest post on March 6th 2013 is coded as the 151st post; for the twitter account New China, the latest tweet on January 4th 2016 is coded as the 1st tweet and the earliest tweet on September 4th 2012 is coded as the 189th tweet.

After collecting the data, I employed both a categorization and a key word analysis as quantitative methods. First, I divided the number of messages relating to the BRI according to different areas of categorization. For each of these areas, I calculated a percentage that expresses the number of messages in each category, over the total period of data collection. The first categorization is based on the subject/theme of the post or tweet. The categories are as follows: diplomacy, economy, culture, reviews, and other. These categories are mutually exclusive. For example, the posts and tweets on economic conferences, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) and the Boao Conference, fall only into the economy

category. This way, it is possible to analyse which perspectives of the BRI Xinhua emphasizes more, and how Xinhua portrays this on social media in their internal and external communication.

The second categorization is a chronological one. I divided the messages according to a timeline with intervals of every half year. Ania Loomba suggests this approach in *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses* to enable a “comparison across temporal and spatial boundaries,” meant to connect seemingly disparate contexts (2013, p. 147). Based on the debate of using comparative methods to “provincialize Europe,” Ania Loomba criticizes that “the perspective remains narrow while claims are enlarged,” as development of “global” paradigms posits “a hierarchical relation between the entities being compared or simply exclude large chunks of reality from its domain.” In order to avoid such a hierarchical relation, I combined Loomba’s approach with my own research method. Applying temporal boundaries in categorizing the data enabled me to examine the news agenda of Chinese state media over time.

The third categorization is based on geopolitical regions. I divided the posts and tweets that form the research data are into messages concerning Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and Western Europe. This categorization is to bring the spatial component of comparison that Ania Loomba proposes, into practice. By categorizing the quantitative data according to spatial boundaries, a comparison of the Chinese government’s relations and foreign policies with different geopolitical regions becomes possible. With respect to the case study, this categorization maps the BRI in different geopolitical regions.

The purpose of these categorizations, and the relative percentage count of messages in each, is to establish whether Xinhua favours certain stories over others in reporting the BRI on social media. The percentages in the first categorization, for example, show whether Xinhua emphasizes the economic, diplomatic and/or cultural perspective more in terms of social media messaging, or whether the messages regarding these three perspectives are equally distributed.

Following an analysis based on categorization, I collected and analysed key words in both Chinese and English. In this part of the research, I used the software tool Yoshikoder 6.5.0 and CNCORPUS.org (*yuliaoku zaixian*, 语料库在线). The open source software Yoshikoder can

recognize simplified Chinese characters and helps to identify keywords from the original text. I followed the guide from Stockmann (2010) on using Yoshikoder to analyse both English and Chinese text in the chapter “Information Overload? Collecting, Managing, and Analyzing Chinese Media Content.” CNCorpus.org is an online software for analysing Chinese texts which consists of up to 100,000 characters. It is developed by Xiao Hang and hosted by the Institute of Applied Linguistics at the Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyubu yuyan wenzi yingyong yanjiusuo*, 教育部语言文字应用研究所).

I applied Yoshikoder’s word count function for both the English text and Chinese text, in order to recognize the keywords and expressions.

See the screenshot below:

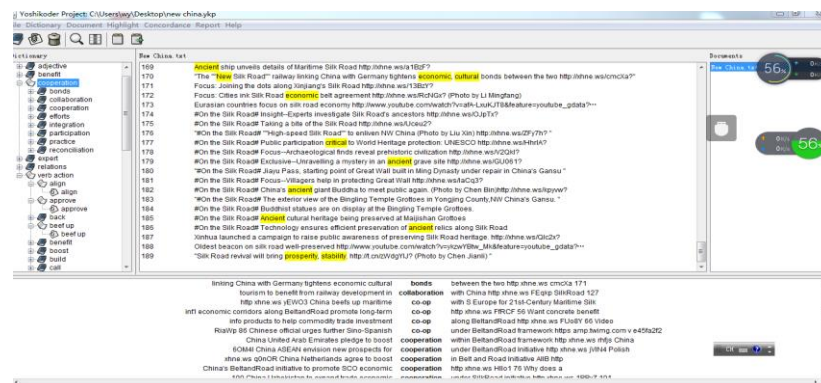


Image 3.1 Analysing the English text in Yoshikoder

Due to the language characteristics of Chinese, the words/(terms, *ci*, 词) can be formed by single, double, or multiple different characters (*zi*, 字). For instance, the combination of several characters that contain different meanings can create a new meaning of their own, depending on where the context requires the word to start and end. Therefore, for the Chinese text from Weibo, I used both Yoshikoder and CNCorpus.org to collect the keywords.

After applying the word count function from these two software programs, I manually cross-examined the different word frequencies. The differences mainly result from a different identification in the following cases: (a) CNCorpus.org recognizes the Chinese names and Yoshikoder does not, thus names such as 习近平 (Xi Jinping) are counted as one word by CNCorpus.org and as three words by Yoshikoder; (b) the translations of foreign names in

Chinese often consist of different characters based on the pronunciation in the original language and Yoshikoder does not recognize the combination of the characters as foreign names, while CNCorpus.org only identifies certain names of the foreign countries' presidents or premiers, such as “普京” (Putin) and “莫迪” (Modi); (c) not all names of places from within and outside China are recognized by either software; (d) CNCorpus.org can recognize certain terms, if not all, that have been frequently used but shortened in news writing are such as “申遗”(shen yi, application for world heritage) and 小华 (xiao hua, Xinhua News Agency's nickname in Weibo), but Yoshikoder does not recognize these terms; (e) both programs do not always recognize terms from official political language such as 首访 (shou fang, usually referring to the President's first visit abroad), 愿景 (yuanjing, envision), 互联 (hu lian, to connect with each other), 互通 (hu tong, to communicate with each other) and 外方 (wai fang, the foreign country), etc. Therefore, I manually identified all the names of persons and places, particular terms in news writing, and official language in the Chinese text.

See the screenshots below:

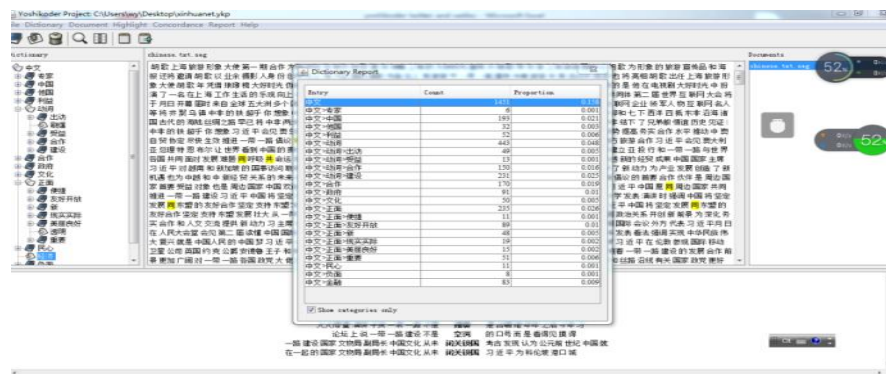


Image 3.2 Analysing the Chinese text in Yoshikoder



Image 3.3 Analysing the Chinese text in CNCORPUS.org

After collecting the words from both the Chinese and English texts, I exported the quantitative results from Yoshikoder and CNCORPUS.org into Microsoft Excel sheets for further comparison.

In order to analyse the context of the keywords and -phrases, I reverted to an analysis conducted through Yoshikoder's concordance functions. After eliminating functional words, I identified the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that describe the topic of the BRI with high frequencies. Due to the different corpus sizes of messages in Chinese and English, I calculated relative percentages for these keywords, in order to compare them across the different social media accounts.

The comparison of the keywords is to observe whether Xinhua chooses to post certain messages to certain audiences, whether national, international, or both, and to compare whether the general pictures of China's diplomacy depicted by the two languages are the same.

3.5.2 Rhetorical Patterns

In a previous pilot study, conducted for a seven-day time span in 2013, I was able to observe that Xinhua's Weibo messages tend to emphasize sovereignty issues when reporting on Chinese diplomacy with the United States and Japan, and economic cooperation when dealing with Europe and Africa. This preliminary research also showed that Xinhua's international relations coverage on Weibo has a strong focus and tone: more than half of the messages are about the military, especially covering the military situation in North Korea and the

Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, with a relative negative tone. Among all the international news items on Xinhua net, the messages and tone on Weibo are the direct result of choices made by Xinhua editors to post certain messages. Therefore, the question becomes: what are the discursive patterns in Xinhua's communication choices?

To address this question, a qualitative content study of representative Weibo and Twitter messages related to the BRI complements the quantitative analysis as discussed above. This qualitative analysis addresses the way in which messages are categorised and disseminated by Xinhua. In Chapter Seven, I analysed the recurring linguistic and rhetoric features in some of the categories of Weibo posts and tweets that are discussed in Chapter Six.

In this qualitative analysis, I first compared similarities and differences among the keywords and -phrases with regard to their meanings and usages. The analysis aims to explore the variations between those Chinese and English keywords that might have similar meanings.

To compare the Chinese and English textual structures, I analysed both texts in terms of grammatical features and rhetorical and literary figures. For instance, I compared pronouns such as “我” (*wo*, I), “我们” (*women*, we), “你们” (*nimen*, plural you), “他” (*ta*, he) and “他们” (*tamen*, they) in the Chinese texts with pronouns used in the English texts. I then compared the nouns that convey the sense of “self” or “in-groups” to those referring to “others” and “out-groups.” This is to examine the differences between Xinhua's messages on Weibo and Twitter in terms of reporting perspectives and tones.

Following this step, I examined certain rhetorical figures that are employed in both English and Chinese texts. To find out the intentions and functions of using rhetorical figures such as metaphors, symbolisms, personifications, and parallelisms, I discuss their occurrences in the corpus of examined posts and tweets in Chapter Seven. This analysis includes speeches from the Chinese central government that are related to the BRI, especially from president Xi Jinping. This is to examine whether government officials' speeches have certain impacts on political discourse on the issue, and if they do, then what the impacts would be. These speeches were delivered during president Xi's visits abroad.

Finally, as the collected tweets and posts are often furnished with images, I also conducted a visual analysis of these images by categorization and comparison. These images include

pictures of politicians, cultural heritage, and infrastructure, as well as infographics. The categorization I use has the following five categories relevant to the case study: pictures of politicians; pictures of the Belt and Road projects; pictures of cultural activities and heritage; infographics; and other pictures. The visual analysis aims to find out what visual elements are used, and what they symbolize in the Belt and Road discourse.

3.5.3 *Relating the Analysis to Ongoing Debates*

The analysis in this research is theoretically buttressed by a thorough review of the relevant literature. I consulted interdisciplinary works in both Chinese and English, covering studies on media, public opinion, communication, and sociology. Regarding the debate on digital media's influence, scholar Clay Shirky, in his book *Here Comes Everybody*, holds optimistic views, yet scholars including Evgeny Morozov (*The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*) and Sherry Turkle (*Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*) are on the pessimistic side. My study aims to engage in the broader debate by examining the digital media use from the Chinese case.

One of the important questions in the theories and debates of media studies is whether new technology creates change, whether the Internet is “neutral,” and what the analytic focus of a technology transfer should be. For example, in Morozov's opinion, knowing everything about a given technology still tells us little about how exactly it shapes a complex modern society (2012, p. 288). Schaniel (1988) suggests that “the analytic focus of a technology transfer” should not be on the transferred materials. According to Schaniel, “the process of adopting and adapting introduced technology as a cultural relative does not imply that introduced technology does not lead to change, but the change is not pre-ordained by the technology adapted” (Schaniel, 1988, p. 496). Furthermore, “the process of technological adaptation is one where the introduced technology is adopted to the social processes of the adopting society, and not vice-versa” (Schaniel, 1988, p. 497). For the case study of the digital media technology in China, I interpret this as that the media technology is adapted by the government according to its interests, values, and traditions.

My research also aims to contribute in a methodological sense to media studies. Media studies cannot be separated from media and digital methods. By adopting digital research tools and methods in the discussed case study, my research contributes to understanding the use of

digital methods in new media studies. I connect the methods I used in this research to different methods and theories from media scholars such as Richard Rogers, Florian Schneider, Daniela Stockmann, and Lutgard Lams. For example, in Richard Rogers' *Digital Methods*, the purpose of online methods is not to upgrade the search engine, but to think along with the new online devices and to analyse digital objects such as tweets, retweets, hashtags, usernames, etc. In this respect, Rogers' digital methods provide insights in media theories and arguments opposing technological determinism. The purpose of his method is not to complicate the methods themselves, or to innovate the technology, but to make use of the techniques to analyse the culture lying behind them. After all, it is human beings who use, and receive information/communication/messages/etc. from, media devices. As Rogers points out, the principle of digital methods is to "build upon the existing, dominant devices themselves," and then perform "cultural and societal diagnostics" (Rogers, 2013, p. 3).

3.6 Conclusion

Drawing from a set of literature on multiple methods, this chapter spells out the major practical concerns, research scope and work steps. Throughout my research, I adopted a mixed method design. To examine political communication in China's online sphere, I argue that it is necessary to include qualitative and quantitative combined methods. In the entire research effort, the quantitative method provides a general picture of Xinhua's activity on Weibo and Twitter, and its role in the online discussion of the BRI. The qualitative method allowed me to scrutinise Xinhua's communicative strategies, its perspectives, worldviews, and the various discursive nuances. Reviewing the government policy documents and conducting in-depth interviews allowed me to explore the various facets of the media policymaking process and to further understand the intentions and functions of Xinhua's discursive patterns. Finally, by relating my analysis to the ongoing scholarly debate over media, power, and discourse, I aim to minimise my own subjectivity and in turn contribute my research findings to our understanding of China's contemporary political communication.

Chapter Four

Policy Reviews and Fieldwork

This chapter starts with a review of the legal and policy documents from the Chinese central government's websites, and from the website of the Xinhua News Agency. By examining the expressions and terms adopted in these documents, I intend to relate this official language with the discourse on the social media platforms to conceptualize how the official language influences social media language. I then go on to present the results of the interviews I conducted in 2016. I connect the review of the policy papers and the interviews to examine the interplay between policymaking and media changes.

4.1 Policy Reviews

The current Chinese leadership constantly upgrades the governance policies and proactively adjusts the roles and responsibilities of the central and local administrative agencies. In a reorganisation for the media governance architecture in September 2018, the former State Administration of Press, Publication, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) has been split up into the State Administration of Radio and Television (SART), the National Film Bureau, and the National Office of Press and Publication (NOPP). The SART is now a ministerial institute directly under the State Council. The National Film Bureau and the NOPP are now under the leadership of the Central Publicity Department (Ma, Damien and Thomas, Neil, 2018). In addition, the China Media Group (*Zhongyang guangbo dianshi zongtai*, 中央广播电视总台)—including China Central Television, China Radio International, and China National Radio—has been relocated from the State Council and is now also under the Central Publicity Department (CCTV, 2018a). In doing so, the leadership is taking a more active role in supervising the communication mechanism through the CCP's agencies. To enhance both internal and external communication power, the government continues to make efforts to enforce the necessary institutional changes. To understand the context of policymaking and policy changes, I will examine a range of the government documents in detail.

I reviewed the legal and policy documents that are available from the official websites in the year of 2016. The latest documents are issued in 2016, and the earliest document dates back to 2000. In its cultural governance, the CCP maintains its power of supervision and control. As

Schneider points out, there are two important types of government institutions in the Chinese broadcasting sector (Schneider, 2016). The first are government agencies that directly control the sector: the MIIT and the SAPPRT under the SC (Schneider, 2016, pp. 195-196). The second are government agencies that are “indirectly linked either to cultural production or to specific policy issues” (Schneider, 2016, p. 197). This most prominently includes the MC. In addition, depending on a topic’s relevance, it can also include the State Ethnic Affairs Commission or the Ministry of Education, providing “their consent when content touches on their area of expertise” (Schneider, 2016, p. 197). Schneider argues that “the role of the state and the Party has changed from institutions that govern cultural content in a straight-forward fashion to agencies that now mainly use soft controls and market mechanisms to influence the wider framework in which cultural production takes place” (Schneider, 2016, p. 189). In order to analyse the content of the government policy documents, it is necessary to understand the relations of these governmental departments. The hierarchical relations are illustrated in the diagram in figure 4.1 below:

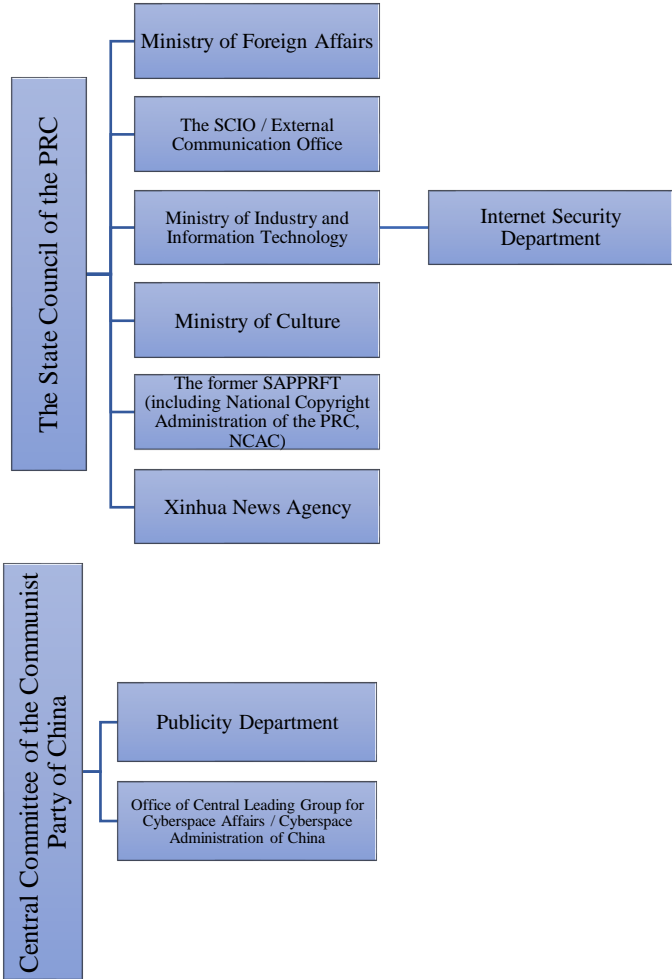


Figure 4.1. Hierarchical relations of the Chinese governmental departments

From 2011 till 2014, the Office of Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs / Cyberspace Administration of China was named the State Internet Information Office, which was established within the SCIO. In 2014, the Chinese government separated this office from the SCIO and renamed it Cyberspace Administration of China.

The 62 documents are written in either Chinese or English, and some of them are overlapping in terms of content.¹⁶ I categorized these documents into five main areas: foreign policy, media policies, cyber security, e-governance, and the BRI.

There are 14 documents on foreign policy (see Table 4.1). Nine are written in Chinese, and five in English. These documents were released by the MFA and the SCIO from 2014 to 2016. The topics include China's position papers at the UN General Assembly and China's military strategy, as well as China's foreign policy towards the European Union, African countries, Arab countries, and ASEAN countries.

Foreign Policy	Government Organizations	Year of Issue
2015 年后发展议程中方立场文件 (China's 2015 Position Paper)	MFA	2015
中国对非洲政策文件 (China's Africa Policy Paper)	MFA	2015
落实中国—东盟面向和平与繁荣的战略伙伴关系联合宣言的行动计划 (Implementation of the Joint Declaration of China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity)	MFA	2016
中国对阿拉伯国家政策文件 (China's Arab Policy Paper)	MFA	2016
China's Arab Policy Paper (English)	MFA	2016
中国对欧盟政策文件 (China's Policy Paper on the EU)	MFA	2014
China's Policy Paper on the EU (English)	MFA	2014
第 69 届联合国大会中方立场文件(Position Paper of the PRC at the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly)	MFA	2014
中国关于联合国成立 70 周年的立场文件(Position Paper of the PRC at the 70th Anniversary of the UN)	MFA	2015
第 71 届联合国大会中方立场文件(Position Paper of the PRC at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly)	MFA	2016
Position Paper of the PRC at the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (English)	MFA	2015
Position Paper of the PRC at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (English)	MFA	2016
《中国的军事战略》白皮书 (China's Military Strategy White Paper)	SCIO	2015

¹⁶ To make these resources accessible in English, scholar Rogier Creemers has translated many of the original policy documents from Chinese to English on his website (<https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com>).

China's Military Strategy (English)	SCIO	2015
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Table 4.1 Documents on foreign policy

In the category of media policies, I collected 13 documents all in Chinese (see Table 4.2). Released by the SCIO, the MC, the SAPPRFT, and the CPD, these documents are about administration of “the blacklist” in the cultural market, cultural reform and strategy for the 12th five-year plan, responsibilities and staff establishment in SAPPRFT, supervision and protection of intellectual property, etc.

Media Policies	Government Organizations	Year of Issue
中宣部、新闻出版广电总局发通知：严格规范党报党刊发行工作 严禁报刊违规发行 (Notice on Tightening Regulations of the Party Periodicals Publication from the PD and the SAPPRFT)	PD, SAPPRFT	2013
中宣部通知要求认真学习宣传贯彻习近平总书记重要讲话精神 (Notice on the Study of the Spirit of Important Speeches of the General Secretary Xi Jinping from the PD)	SCIO	2016
全国环境宣传教育工作纲要(2016—2020 年) (Outline of National Environmental Publicity and Education Work)	Wenming.cn (hosted by PD and Civilization Office of the Central CPC)	2016
国务院办公厅关于贯彻落实全国知识产权保护与执法工作电视电话会议精神任务分工的通知 (Notice on Implementation of the National Intellectual Property Protection and Law Enforcement from the General Office of the State Council)	State Council	2010
国务院办公厅关于进一步加强政府网站管理工作的通知 (Notice on Further Strengthening the Administration of the Governmental Websites from the State Council)	State Council	2011
国家新闻出版广电总局主要职责内设机构和人员编制规定的通知 (Notice on Main Responsibilities of the Internal Organizations and Staffing Management from the SAPPRFT)	State Council	2013
文化建设“十一五”规划 (The Eleventh Five-year Plan of Cultural Construction)	Information Centre of MC	2006
文化部“十二五”文化科技发展规划 (The Twelfth Five-year Plan of Cultural and Scientific Construction)	Information Centre of MC	2012
文化部“十二五”时期文化改革发展规划 (The Twelfth Five-year Plan of Cultural Reform and Development)	Information Centre of MC	2012
文化部关于成立文化部网络安全和信息化领导小组的通知 (Notice on Establishing the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs from the Ministry of Culture)	Information Centre of MC	2014
文化部关于加强网络表演管理工作的通知 (Notice on Strengthening the Management of Internet Performing Programmes from the Ministry of Culture)	Information Centre of MC	2016
文化市场黑名单管理办法 (Measures on Administration of “the blacklist” in Cultural Market)	Information Centre of MC	2016

第十六届中国网络媒体论坛发布《贵阳共识》(The 16th Chinese Internet Media Seminar on the Guiyang Consensus)	CAC	2016
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Table 4.2 Documents on media policies

There are 20 documents on cyber security, two of which are written in English (see Table 4.3). These documents are collected mainly from the websites of the SC, the NPC, Cyberspace Administration of China, the MIIT, and Xinhua News Agency. The content ranges from the administration of the internet information service and Li Keqiang's policy on Internet-Plus, to the Cyber Security Law.

Documents on Cyber Security	Government Organizations	Year of Issue
中华人民共和国网络安全法 (草案) China's Cyber Security Law (draft)	NPC	2015
中华人民共和国网络安全法 China's Cyber Security Law	NPC	2016
中央网络安全和信息化领导小组成立 (Establishment of the Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs)	Xinhuanet	2014
互联网信息服务管理办法 (Measures of Internet Information Service Management)	CAC	2000
互联网新闻信息服务管理规定 (Measures of the Administration of Internet Information Services)	CAC	2005
互联网治理 (Internet Governance)	MFA	2015
网络和信息安全 (Network and Information Security)	MFA	2015
信息安全国际行为准则 (Information Security International Code of Conduct)	MFA	2015
联合国大会第六十九届会议临时议程项目 91 从国际安全的角度来看信息和电信领域的发展 (Provisional Agenda on Item 91 in the Sixty-ninth Session of the General Assembly of the UN, Exploring the Telecommunications Development from the Perspective of International Security)	MFA	2015
互联网等信息网络传播视听节目管理办法(Measures of the Administration of Internet Information Audio-visual Programs)	CAC	2004
信息网络传播权保护条例(Regulations on the Protection of Information Networks)	CAC	2013
关于加强国家网络安全标准化工作的若干意见 (Suggestions on Strengthening the Standardization of National Cyber Security)	CAC	2016
国务院关于修改〈信息网络传播权保护条例〉的决定 (Decisions on Revising the Regulations of the Rights of Cyber Communication from the State Council)	State Council	2013
国务院关于推进物联网有序健康发展的指导意见 (State Council Guiding Opinions concerning Facilitating Systematic and Healthy Development of the Internet)	State Council	2013
国务院办公厅关于加快高速宽带网络建设 推进网络提速降费的指导意见 (State Council Guiding Opinions concerning Accelerating the Construction of High-Speed Broadband Networks and Stimulating the Increase of Network Speeds and Reduction of Costs)	State Council	2015
工业和信息化部关于加强电信和互联网行业网络安全工作的指导意见	MIIT	2014

(Guidance on Strengthening Cyber Security in Telecommunications and Internet Industries from the MIIT)		
通信网络安全防护管理办法 (Measures of Ensuring Communication Networks Security)	MIIT	2016
全国人民代表大会常务委员会关于加强网络信息保护的決定 (Decisions on Strengthening the Protection of Online Information from The Standing Committee of the NPC)	MIIT	2012
Internet Plus Services to Provide Convenience	State Council	2016
Simplified Procedures for Administrative Services	State Council	2016

Table 4.3 Documents on cyber security

In the category of e-governance, there are 13 documents, and three of them are in English (see Table 4.4). These documents are mainly from the websites of the SC and the CPD. They include the promotion of government services via Internet-Plus, plans for an internet-based government service system, and guidelines for strengthening thought work through internet channels.

Documents on E-governance	Government Organizations	Year of Issue
国务院关于“十二五”国家政务信息化工程建设规划的批复 (State Council Approval Concerning the Twelfth Five-year Plan on Government Affairs Informatization Project Construction)	State Council	2012
关于进一步加强和改进新形势下高校宣传思想工作的意见 (Leading Opinions concerning Strengthening and Improving the Current Thought Work in Higher Education)	Central Committee, State Council	2015
中央党内法规制定工作五年规划纲要(2013 - 2017 年) (CCP Outline of the Five-year Plan for the Formulation of Laws and Regulations)	The Central People's Government	2013
中宣部等关于 2013 年深入开展“三项学习教育”活动的意见 (Central Publicity Department Leading Opinions concerning Deepening “Three Studies Education” in 2013)	PD	2013
中方发布《中国落实 2030 年可持续发展议程国别方案》 (China Releases the National Plan for Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda)	MFA	2016
《关于培育和践行社会主义核心价值观的意见》印发 (Distribution of Guiding Opinions concerning Educating and Implementing Socialist Core Values)	Central Committee	2013
国务院关于落实《政府工作报告》和国务院第一次全体会议精神重点工作部门分工的意见 (State Council Leading Opinions concerning Implementing the Government Work Report and the First Plenary Meeting on Division of Labour for Major Departments)	State Council	2013
国务院办公厅关于印发当前政府信息公开重点工作安排的通知 (Notice on Regulation of Government Information Transparency in the PRC)	State Council	2013
全国政务公开领导小组《关于开展依托电子政务平台加强县级政府政务公开和政务服务试点工作的意见》 (Leading Opinions concerning Improving the Transparency of the Government Affairs at the County Level with the Aid of E-governance and the Pilot Government Services)	State Council	2011
中央宣传部、国务院国资委关于加强和改进新形势下国有及国有控股企业思	Central	2010

想政治工作的意见 (Leading Opinions from the PD and the State Council on Strengthening the Thought Work in the State-owned and State-controlled Enterprises)	Committee, State Council	
China to Step up Efforts to Promote Internet-based Governance	State Council	2016
Premier Li Calls for Improving Government Services via Internet Plus	State Council	2016
State Council to Further Promote Openness in Government Affairs	State Council	2016

Table 4.4 Documents on E-governance

There are two documents on the BRI (see Table 4.5). “Media Consensus of the International Seminar on the Belt and Road Initiative” (*yidai yilu guoji yantaohui meiti gongshi*, “一带一路”国际研讨会媒体共识) was drafted in Chinese by the SCIO. “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building a Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” (*tuidong gongjian sichouzhilu jingjidai he ershiyi shiji haishang sichouzhilu de yuanjing yu xingdong*, 推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动) is issued in both Chinese and English by the NDRC, MFA, and MoC, with the authorization of the State Council.

Documents on the Belt and Road Initiative	Government Organizations	Year of Issue
“一带一路”国际研讨会媒体共识 (Media Consensus of the International Seminar on the Belt and Road Initiative)	SCIO	2016
推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动 (Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road)	National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce	2015

Table 4.5 Documents on the Belt and Road Initiative

The media policies and government documents on e-governance mainly function as guidelines for the government’s internal communication, whereas the documents on cyber security apply to both internal and external communication. Implemented in the BRI, the government’s communicative strategies revolve around its foreign policy.

The media policies aim to construct a “strong cultural country” (*wenhua qiangguo*, 文化强国) and a “cultural China” (*wenhua Zhongguo*, 文化中国) by advocating the “socialist core values” through media outlets and strengthening the mainstream ideology within China (PD, 2013a, 2015, 2016; MC, 2006). With their regulatory function, the former SAPPRFT and the MC

have specific licensing powers (Schneider, 2016). The SCIO and the former SAPPRFT are responsible for content management (Creemers, 2016).

The documents on e-governance provide the guidelines for managing the government's websites, sharing government information, and responding to the public's concerns. The government intends to build "an integrated online government service platform" by 2017 and "a nationwide 'Internet Plus governance' system" by 2020 (The Central People's Government, 2011a, 2011b, 2013d; SC, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). The measures for publicising official information and decision-making mainly aim to improve the internal communication.

The policies on cyber security are to develop an "Internet Superpower" (*wangluo qiangguo*, 网络强国) through regulating the administrative licensing within China and controlling the information flow from both within and outside China (CAC, 2016a; MIIT, 2014). For instance, the MIIT and its provincial subordinates are in charge of the internet industry (Creemers, 2016).

The media policies and e-governance documents are implemented mainly by regulating the staff from the state-owned mass media and the government officials. For instance, the media policies aim to strengthen social and public surveillance (The Central People's Government, 2010); to guide public opinion by spreading the "main melody" (*zhuxuanlv*, 主旋律) and "positive energy" (*zhengnengliang*, 正能量) (PD, 2016; CAC, 2016b); and to avoid "content that may harm society" (MC, 2016a, 2016b). Compared to this, the documents on cyber security are more targeted at private sectors and individual internet users (CAC, 2000, 2004, 2013; MIIT, 2012; 2016; NPC, 2015, 2016). This may be due to the fact that most Internet enterprises are private, rather than state-owned, and therefore the regulations focus on the role and obligations of Internet service providers (ISPs), Internet content providers (ICPs), etc. (Creemers, 2016). For instance, compared to its draft version (NPC, 2015), China's Cyber Security Law has tightened the restrictions towards the ISPs and ICPs through laws, social responsibilities, and social moralities, and has specified penalties for breaking the law (NPC, 2016).

In the foreign policy documents and the documents about the BRI, there are more similarities than differences. First, similar terms are adopted. For instance, terms such as "互利共赢" (*huli*

gongying, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation), “合作” (*hezuo*, cooperation), “命运共同体” (*mingyun gongtongti*, a shared destiny) appear in both foreign policy documents since 2012 and in documents about the BRI, and have been highlighted as the main concepts. Used in the contexts of economic cooperation, information exchange, and political consensus, these terms indicate the government’s intentions to improve its overall foreign relations.

Second, the communication strategies and the descriptions of foreign relations are similar. In the document “*Media Consensus of the International Seminar on the Belt and Road Initiative*” (SCIO, 2016b), the government emphasizes media cooperation and openness among all countries, by “finding common interests,” “respecting diversity,” “delivering positivity,” and “telling new stories.” In the foreign policy documents (MFA, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2015f, 2016c), in order to develop the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” with the European Union (EU), Arab states, African countries, and ASEAN countries, the government also stresses the importance of media cooperation. However, the means of cooperation vary according to different partnerships. China and the EU will “strengthen interactions and exchanges between government departments, support the institutional building and deepening of regular China-EU media exchanges” (MFA, 2014a), and use “new media tools” for information exchange. China-Arab media cooperation will be enhanced through business exchange, news exchange, and personnel training as well as through establishing “a long-term China-Arab exchange mechanism of think tanks” (MFA, 2016a). China-Africa media cooperation aims to ensure the government departments’ communication, strengthen the cyber space administration, continue the information exchange, and encourage media digitalization in African countries (MFA, 2015f). China and ASEAN countries will continue communication in the mainstream media and cooperate through online news exchange, news reporting, and personnel exchange (MFA, 2016c). In spite of the different measures, the ultimate goal for media cooperation is to create “a favourable public opinion environment” for China and its partners’ relations by letting the public “better understand each other’s policies, ideas, development goals, strategic orientation, and cultural achievements” (MFA, 2014a, 2016c).

Third, the government’s foreign policies and relations with different regions can be seen in the BRI. The government holds different views towards different partners. In the Policy Paper on the EU, by emphasizing the common interests with the EU and recognizing the differences

between the two cultures, the government holds that “with no fundamental conflict of interests, China and the EU have far more agreements than differences” and as the “two major forces for world peace,” they share a “strategic consensus on building a multi-polar world” (MFA, 2014a). In the policy papers on Arab and African countries, through highlighting the friendship and history with these countries, the government states the importance for cooperation. In both policy papers, the government qualifies the relations with these countries as “brothers, friends and partners no matter what happens on [sic] the world arena” (MFA, 2016a, 2015f). For instance, “Over two thousand years ago, land and maritime Silk Roads already linked the Chinese and Arab nations. In the long stretches of history, peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, learning from each other, mutual benefit and win-win results have always been the main themes of exchanges between China and Arab countries” (MFA, 2016a). In the Policy Paper on the ASEAN countries, the government refers to the relationship with the ASEAN countries as “neighbours” and indicates the importance of economic collaboration, cultural exchange, and political dialogue (MFA, 2016c). In addition, the cooperation projects with different partner countries in the foreign policy documents are in line with the projects in the BRI, and the initiative is also mentioned in each policy paper. Overall, the terms and expressions in the policy papers show that the government maintains a closer attitude towards the Arab countries and African countries than the EU and the ASEAN countries. Regarding the Arab countries and African countries as “friends and “brothers” may imply that the government perceives its relations with these regions as already “developed and mature” partnerships, and the relations with the EU and ASEAN countries as the ones yet “to be developed and explored.” In its foreign policy towards the ASEAN countries, China intends to ensure its leading position in the region. In its foreign policy towards the EU, China emphasizes on the collaboration with the EU with respect to global governance.

The policy papers show that the government intends to enhance its international communication power through institutional changes. The responsibilities for local communication have been transferred from the central to the local administrative levels, and the tasks for international communication are to be carried out by the central government level. This means that, for internal communication, the government is to adopt differentiated measures towards the domestic audience, in order to promote the public opinion work; in terms of external communication, the government aims to implement a more centralized strategy to strengthen China’s “voice.” A marked outcome of centralizing external communication is the change of the administration level for the China Media Group that

includes the state television and radio stations. As of April 2018, CCTV no longer is a vice-ministerial unit under the SAPPRT, and the China Media Group has become a ministerial-level institution under the PD (Ma, Damien and Thomas, Neil, 2018). However, the centralized management of external communication does not necessarily mean that the same tone and a monolithic “voice” are used towards all international audiences. The nuances of the relations with different geopolitical regions potentially influence the tones and attitudes held in China’s communication.

4.2 Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interviews serve as a reality check on whether the government’s external and internal communication policies have any effect on the media industry, and if so, how influential the changes are.

From December 2015 until June 2016, I conducted 33 interviews with scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners. These interviews took place in different cities across different regions. Five of them were held in Leiden and The Hague in the Netherlands, and the remaining 28 interviews were held in China. In the period January to April 2016, I conducted 12 interviews in Beijing, four interviews in Shanghai, two interviews in Hangzhou, and ten interviews in Xi’an. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I keep my respondents anonymous. However, I divided them into three identifiable groups, each group indicated by a letter code. Group “A” contains academics, “M” has media workers, and “P” has policymakers. Table 4.6 shows a more detailed overview of the respondents in each category.

A (Academics)	M (Media workers)	P (Policymakers)
A01 Beijing, 01.2016 radio and communication	M01 Leiden, 12.2015 contract journalist	P01 The Hague, 06.2015 international law
A02 Beijing, 02.2016 communication and digital media	M02 Leiden, 12.2015 editor	P02 The Hague, 12.2015 public diplomacy
A03 Beijing, 02.2016 external communication	M03 Beijing, 01.2016 financial journalist	P03 Leiden, 12.2015 internal communication
A04 Beijing, 02.2016 media studies and politics	M04 Beijing, 01.2016 new media analyst	P04 Beijing, 01.2016 media policy
A05 Beijing, 03.2016 soft power and cultural studies	M05 Beijing, 01.2016 Guangming Daily journalist	P05 Beijing, 03.2016 external communication
A06 Shanghai, 03.2016 public diplomacy and soft power	M06 Beijing, 01.2016 English news editor	P06 Xi’an, 04.2016 local media policy
A07 Hangzhou, 03.2016 communication studies	M07 Beijing, 02.2016 producer/journalist	P07 Xi’an, 04.2016 retired official/cadre

A08 Hangzhou, 03.2016 culture and discourse analysis	M08 Shanghai, 03.2016 former journalist/PR officer	
A09 Xi'an, 03.2016 language and comparative culture	M09 Shanghai, 03.2016 chief correspondent	
A10 Xi'an, 03.2016 journalism	M10 Shanghai, 03.2016 journal editor	
A11 Xi'an, 04.2016 journalism	M11 Xi'an, 03.2016 former TV journalist	
	M12 Xi'an, 03.2016 former journalist from Lanzhou	
	M13 Xi'an, 04.2016 former editor at Beijing Review	
	M14 Xi'an, 04.2016 former journalist from Reuters	
	M15 Xi'an, 04.2016 internet administration	

Table 4.6 Respondents in three groups

My interviews with the policymakers indicate that policymaking consists of three main stages. First, officials formulate a policy in general during their term of office—based on policy demands and external events as well as on their personal education and professional experiences. Then, in the second stage, a process of compromising takes place, as the policy has to go through many meetings with officials from other departments. Last, to adopt a new policy, high-ranking officials from the central government have to take responsibility for it. According to my respondents, the last stage is deemed the most critical part, as a person has to be confident and powerful enough to take on the task.

In terms of media policy, the policymaking process concerns the state media outlets. For instance, Xinhua's media study centre, located in Beijing, formerly a journalism school, plays a major role in the making of media policy for the central government. On a regular basis, the news workers and technicians from the media study centre are assigned to Xinhua's other departments to work on specific projects for periods lasting between one to six months. Eventually they provide analysis reports to the media study centre and the Central Publicity Department. One official from the media study centre says:

We have daily meetings and also weekly meetings. When our staff attends the weekly meeting, they will hand in the reports with data and analysis from their work in Xinhua's other departments. In addition, we also submit the reports to the central government [sic] leaders,¹⁷ including the officials

¹⁷ In this quote, "the central government leaders" are from the Central Publicity Department, not the first and foremost government officials. The fact that my respondent did not make that distinction shows that, in practice, the interlocking directorates between party and state bodies make the distinction between the two sets of

from the Central Publicity Department, SAPPRT, Chinese Journalists' Association, etc. We provide them with short- and long-term research results according to the meetings they are about to organize. Our job is to update the central government leaders with the situations and issues before the meeting and we also participate in media policymaking. (P04)

Policymaking in China goes through many procedures and involves players from different institutions. As digital media platforms provide more channels for political expression and discussion within and outside China, which might not always be in favour of the government, the government is facing more challenges in legislation and policymaking in terms of creating a favourable public opinion environment. Two of my respondents who take part in policy consultations for the SC and the Information Council comment that the central government leaders are very up-to-date with the information and are open to collect information from all sources, but they are missing policy advice and the expertise on how to use the information (A05; P01).

In order to implement and promote its policies, the government has adopted various measures and intends to adjust the ways of communication. One example is that the government and the state media have changed certain expressions and terms in the official language, such as the name change from “Propaganda Department” to “Publicity Department,” and changes in the Chinese translation of the term “social media,”¹⁸ from “社会化媒体” (*shehuihua meiti*) to “社交媒体” (*shejiao meiti*) to “自媒体” (*zimeiti*). In addition, in its latest foreign policy pronouncements, the government introduced the concepts of “互利共赢” (*huli gongying*, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation) in 2014 (*People.cn*, 2014) and “命运共同体” (*mingyun gongtongti*, a shared destiny) at the 18th National Congress of the CCP in 2012 (*People.cn*, 2017a). In terms of external communication, the government has introduced expressions such as “building an international discourse system” (*dazao rongtong zhongwai de huayu tixi*, 打造融通中外的话语体系) and “expressing China’s position, voice and opinions” (*duiwai chuanbo Zhongguo lichang, Zhongguo shengyin, Zhongguo guandian*, 对外传播中国立场、中国声音、中国观点).

organizations meaningless to many practitioners. Such an idiosyncrasy implies a difference between how policymakers and practitioners talk about the policymaking process in my interviews.

¹⁸ In English, the term “social media” can also refer to “social network sites (SNSs),” see (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Both the scholars and the policymakers I interviewed voiced their familiarity with these terms. The majority hold that government leaders acquire their sensitivity in international communication and attempt to demonstrate more modern governing methods. Changes of the terms in the official language are meant to construct a new discourse system that supports the government's communicative strategies and emphasizes China's peaceful rise. However, a few of my respondents also add that, in an effort to adjust to the "right" language, the government merely changed the expressions rather than the nature of its communication, that is, to ultimately gain power to manipulate and control internal communication, and to create a positive image of the government internationally.

According to the respondents from the state media outlets, state media have a better audience reception in developing countries than in developed countries. The reasons are that the news products from Chinese state media are less expensive than other international news agencies, such as AP and Reuters, and the governments from many developing countries in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa tend to have a more cooperative relationship with the Chinese government.

For instance, with regard to the communication strategy on the government's BRI, Xinhua News Agency is creating the Silk Road database for its reports on political, economic, and cultural topics. A respondent from Xinhua says that this database is eventually to be established as an independent company from Xinhua (M07). As part of China Economic Information Service (CEIS), a company owned wholly by Xinhua News Agency and launched in July 2015, the database is meant to work on a commodity-logic. It is to be developed into a multi-language platform providing information products, consulting services, information search engines, and international trade-related services for companies from within and outside China (Silk Road Database, 2015). "Anchored by a large and still rapidly growing domestic market, and overseen by a strong and capable state," the national capital for information and communications continually supports the business and the state agencies to become "vital actors within a globally mutating digital capitalism" (Schiller, 2014, p. 235). Schiller underlines that huge data centres from the US, as "hubs for the more widely recomposing infrastructure," continue to structure its "capital logic" with profit strategies in communications markets (Schiller, 2014, pp. 113-114). Compared to this, Xinhua also is acquiring digital capital: the monetary value of the data centre.

Through my interviews with media practitioners working in both Chinese and international media outlets in China, it becomes clear that the BRI shows that China is trying to communicate its intentions in Asia in a positive way, while laying the groundwork for commercial profit. However, the state media's communication strategies are ineffective so far. This is, according to my respondents, due to the "dry" content full of "big words" with vague meanings (*da er quan*, 大而全), and "the very old and traditional Chinese approach," meaning a hectoring tone adopted by the state media outlets (M06; M07; M09). A respondent says, "This is like the 'One Hundred Flowers' 30 years ago. Xinhua does not wait for the results, but just writes about it all over the page, by quoting 'an expert's saying that it is a great policy'" (M09).

The following comparisons of the interviews from the three groups are to disentangle the relations of the policymaking, the state media, and digital media in China. To explore the working mechanisms of the state media, I focused on what roles digital media and the state media play in the government's communication strategies, and how effective they are with respect to the media outlets.

4.2.1 *Digital Media in External Communication Policy*

In its media and cyber security policies, the government aims to strengthen its discursive power and international influence by constructing a more centralized external communication strategy. According to the academic respondents, digital media are of vital importance to the government's external communication policy. Internet becomes an important tool for soft power construction and external communication. The central government has established the State Internet Information Office (*hulianwang xinxi bangongshi*, 互联网信息办公室) within the External Communication Office (外宣办) (Xinhua net, 2011b). The development of digital media has popularized the concept of "public diplomacy" (*gonggong waijiao*, 公共外交). Compared to official diplomacy, public diplomacy is different in terms of scale, functions and strategies. External communication that used to be only part of the government activities/behaviour (*zhengfu xingwei*, 政府行为) can now involve public activities. As a well-developed concept in Europe and America, public diplomacy has also been explored and expanded in China. State actors and non-state actors have both been involved in the external

communication with different geopolitical regions. The instruments of public diplomacy include both traditional mass media and digital media. “Public diplomacy” is meant to soften “the rough image of government policies” and strengthen “the image of a country that is moving toward a pluralistic and increasingly empowered society” (d’Hooghe, 2015, p. 133). According to the government’s media and cyber security policies, the pluralistic society that is presented through digital media is to be guided at the official level.

The academics I interviewed tend to agree that digital media have created challenges for the government, especially in restricting unlawful conduct and sensitive topics on the internet. As social media provide platforms for information exchange, spaces for equal dialogue, and investigative journalism, digital media are already decentralizing the government’s voice. A professor mentions that if the government wants to achieve its economic and political goals, then it must adapt to this new discursive environment (A01).

The answers from the policymakers show similarities with the answers from the academics. According to them, the government’s media policy cannot actually keep up with the fast development of information technology. By empowering users against the state and making the public more informed, digital media inevitably create challenges for the government, so goes the argument. A former official says:

The strategy of “keeping people ignorant” (*yumin zhengce*, 愚民政策) that has been adopted in the long history to stabilize the system no longer applies in the current situation with the development of digital media. In fact, the working efficiency of the central government has been slowed down, as any information the government holds, demands more investment and time to ensure its security in cyberspace. (P03)

4.2.2 *National Image Construction*

According to the policymakers, the purpose of external communication is to construct a more positive national image through ideological persuasion on the targeted “three mainstreams” (*sange zhuliu*, 三个主流): mainstream media, mainstream institutions, and mainstream society.

The majority of scholars tends to regard the government’s efforts in constructing a positive national image as unsuccessful, citing three reasons. First, culture has different layers, including material culture, the social system, spiritual culture, and social values. China’s

material culture and spiritual culture are widely accepted outside the country. China's social system and values, however, are not as appealing to the audiences abroad. The work of external communication that is based on promoting Chinese material and spiritual culture will not directly make the Chinese social system and values acceptable and appreciated. Second, the government's project of "external communication capacity" (*duiwai chuanboli gongcheng*, 对外传播力工程), a massive investment, shows that the government sees itself as more of a message sender than as a receiver. The government has been focusing only on unilaterally informing the public, but has ignored the possibility of receiving comments back from the public, and therefore is not familiar with how to deal with those. Third, the government's work on external communication has only involved political interest and sensitivity, based on its own perspective. The government-led communicative strategy to tell China stories has been inconsistent in reflecting the public perspective. Therefore, China's image building has led to the impression that its image building is mostly government propaganda.

Regarding this issue, the policymakers highlight the resources and efforts that the government has invested in image construction. During the interviews, one of the officials reveals that the government uses any resources it could think of for external communication:

Financially, the government can always justify the expense as "maintaining national stability" (*weiwenziji*, 维稳资金), which in fact has no budget limit. However, the fact that the government deploys nearly unlimited resources in its image campaigns might have confirmed the foreign impression that this is a case of a rising power selling propaganda with its newly established wealth. Politically, the official leaders will hold meetings for ideological persuasion at all levels (*dongyuan dahui*, 动员大会), which proved to work very efficiently in China. (P03)

The government's policy and financial backup to expand the scale of official media are to make sure that the official media are known worldwide. However, a lack of concrete plans or directions is probably the reason why the government has not proven successful in image construction. A government official says:

China's core values are well summarized in the "Socialism twenty-four characters,"¹⁹ which can present China's national image. The problem is that the government's external communication policy has not integrated these national values. (P01)

4.2.3 *The Position of the State Media*

With respect to the extent of the Chinese official media's open and critical attitude about news and policy reporting, the respondents from both academic and policymaking institutes hold similar views. They believe that the central government tends to tighten the control on the official media and aims to continue their role as the mouthpieces of the Communist Party, that is, as merely "explaining" or "stating" the government's points of view.

In President Xi Jinping's remarks at the opening ceremony of the Second World Internet Conference in December 2015, he highlighted that "[c]yberspace is not a place beyond the rule of law" (MFA, 2015g). During Xi's visits to official media outlets including Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, and the *People's Daily* in February 2016, he emphasized the importance to control the "orientation" of the media in the information age, including both mass media and digital media. Compared to mass media, digital media are more challenging for the government to control, as digital media make it possible for the audiences to become both producers and consumers. An official from a local Internet Supervision Office says that the PD and the Information Council are "controlling the digital media by collaborating with the commercial media companies in China, and local staff working in the Internet Supervision Office regularly go to the commercial media companies like Tencent and Sina to gather information and data" (P06).

My interviews with the academics demonstrate that the Chinese official media are constantly balancing government control and news workers' professionalism, and the media's openness and ability to criticise vary on different topics and issues.

From the interviews with the policymakers, it becomes clear that the government's ideological control through the media is reinforced through concepts of "national security"

¹⁹ The Core Socialist Values include national goals of prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony; social goals of freedom, equality, justice and the rule of law; and individual values of patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship. The CCP issued guidelines in 2013 bolstering the Core Socialist Values and pooling positive energy to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation (China Daily USA, 2013).

(*guojia anquan*, 国家安全) and “national interest” (*guojia liyi*, 国家利益). An official from Beijing who participates in media policymaking says:

The openness of the Chinese media is a political issue rather than a matter of communication, as this is a much smaller issue within national security and national interests. It is not about when the Chinese media will be open; it is about the competition between China and other countries. (P04)

In addition, controlling the media is often in the government officials’ own interest. A former official from the Central Party School comments:

China has a long tradition in ideological control and media is always a battlefield. Any government official who is not alert on controlling media will face losing his/her position. For instance, Hu Yaobang’s “three tolerances” policy (*Sankuan fangzhen: kuanhou, kuanrong, kuansong*; “三宽”方针: 宽厚、宽容、宽松) was to promote democracy and freedom, which soon made him lose power in the central government at the time. (P03)

This former official’s responsibility in the Central Party School was to train younger officials who were competing for higher positions. Before getting promoted, these young officials were obliged to study full time in the Central Party School for six months to one year, during which they needed to be on job leave from their original positions, go to classes, and go for field work in different regions. This is to train their “Party loyalty” (*dangxing*, 党性).

Therefore, even though Chinese officials can express liberal opinions in non-official circumstances, they are restricted by their position in terms of what they say in their official capacities. Media policy is in fact guarded and shaped through different levels of administrative departments.

During my interviews with scholars and media practitioners, they frequently use the term “the position of the media” (*meiti daoxiang*, 媒体导向) and “national interest” (*guojia liyi*, 国家利益). While the policymakers compare the control over the state media to securing the national interest, the scholars and media practitioners tend to normalize the media’s position under the same notion: national interest. One respondent from the Communication University of China holds that media would not have their value if they were not to work for politics, and the

Chinese government expands its influence through the media just like any other government (A01). According to Maria Repnikova (2017), the relationship between Chinese journalists and the government is an uneasy partnership. In media politics, journalists negotiate their space for investigative reporting through standing by the government's position and agenda. Government officials treat investigative reporting as a feedback mechanism on their end (Repnikova, Maria, 2017).

Based on the responses from the journalists, the connections between the position of the media and national interest are often placed in three contexts. First, all media have a position. Every media organization has its interpretation that is based on its worldview and Chinese media generally all promote the government's agenda. Second, there is competition between Chinese and English media in terms of the power to influence international public opinion (*guoji yulun*, 国际舆论). According to the respondents from the official media outlets, Chinese media often face a hostile public opinion environment that is dominated by the mainstream English-language media outlets from Western European and Northern American countries. Protecting the national interest for news workers means guarding against "Western universal values" (*xifang pushi jiazhi guan*, 西方普世价值观)²⁰ and "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*, 和平演变).²¹ Third, to maintain a system that is highly efficient and considered suitable for Chinese society is of national interest, and this often applies to the current system run by the government. As the government never sets itself apart from the Communist Party, media serving the Party and the state are presumed to serve the national interest.

However, these news workers' perceptions of the national interest do not equal government interest. They do not always agree with the government's control over the media and internet access, but they tend to agree with the government's efforts to have a different voice to tell China stories. The framework for making sense of politics is primarily the nation, and the media in China are by default "nationalist."

²⁰ Universal value refers to a common value applicable for many human beings in terms of social behaviour, emotion, morality, etc. According to Schwartz, "values" are "conceptions of the desirable" that influence people's choices and events (Schwartz, 1992). Proposed in the 1990s, Asian values became a political ideology among the countries in Southeast and East Asia in terms of societal and cultural common values, which contrasted with the European universal values (Langguth, 2003, pp.25-42).

²¹ The concept of Peaceful Evolution was introduced by John Foster Dulles, former US secretary of state, during the Cold War in the 1950s. The marketization of Chinese media is often referred to as the "peaceful evolution" against the Party and the state (Lee, Chin-Chuan & Pan, Zhongdang, 2000, pp.95-104).

4.2.4 Xinhua's Interpretation of the Government's Guidelines

Xinhua News Agency, as the state medium, adjusts its communication strategy largely to the central government's policies. In terms of what the government's guidelines are and how Xinhua interprets and implements them, my respondents from the group of media workers, including journalists, editors and producers, provide their insights based on their work experiences.

The respondents working in the state media mention that the government's national policies provide the guidelines for news production. However, for foreign correspondents and domestic journalists, their understanding towards these guidelines tends to vary.

One respondent comments that journalists working at the Xinhua Overseas Bureau feel enough freedom as the news organization is not yet well developed in terms of international news reporting, and almost any news packages they submit from abroad will be published somewhere at some point (M01). However, the reason that the overseas correspondents feel free might be that they have implemented the guidelines from Xinhua's headquarters in Beijing in a fitting manner.

Four other respondents, who worked as foreign correspondents in London, The Hague, Riyadh, and Zurich, mention that before they could become foreign correspondents, they needed to apply for the positions of assigned foreign correspondents and meet the headquarter's requirements for foreign language and independent reporting. Once they were assigned to the overseas bureaus, their work relations (*gongzuo guanxi*, 工作关系) would be transferred from Xinhua to the Foreign Affairs Bureau (*wai shiju*, 外事局) until they returned to their original departments. The Foreign Affairs Bureau, set up by Xinhua's Communist party group and the headquarter, is in charge of the foreign affairs management, foreign correspondents' annual assessment, and inspections of Xinhua's foreign bureaus (Xinhua News Agency, Foreign Affairs Bureau).

According to them, the government's foreign policies provide the guidelines for foreign correspondents. For instance, when reporting on the conflicts between Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia, and India and Pakistan, they need to strike a balance between the specific incidents, the government's foreign policy, and international public opinion. Based on these

factors, they then decide whether to adopt a neutral tone or a critical opinion towards the parties involved. One editor from Xinhua and a journalist from Guangming Daily (*Guangming Ribao*, 光明日报) both mention that when it comes to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, they would just provide figures and data, without providing any comment on or criticism of either side. As Russia is China's diplomatic partner, it becomes a very sensitive topic. When reporting on the relations between India and Pakistan, they simply cannot criticize either Pakistan or India. When handling cases like this, the correspondents tend to keep a distant tone in reporting. "Not directly choosing a stance is also a stance; not making a comment is also an attitude," the respondent from Xinhua puts it (M06).

The news packages from foreign correspondents need to be sent first to Xinhua's headquarters in Beijing. The Editorial Department from Xinhua, called "big radio" (*da guang bo*, 大广播)²² by the news workers, will collect and edit the news packages for broadcasting or posting online. A journalist comments that the top-down system decides the importance of the news. For instance, top leaders' activities are deemed the most important news.

While the guidelines for foreign correspondents are about understanding the government's foreign policy, the guidelines for domestic news workers are more about political correctness. One journalist from Xinhua's headquarters in Beijing says that the bottom line in terms of reporting style and content is already decided by the position of Xinhua, that is, as the mouthpiece of the Party and the state (M03). When journalists are hired by the state media, the first course they are required to attend is politics. As foreign correspondents submit their news packages from abroad, the information will be filtered and processed before they reach the domestic audiences. An English news editor from Xinhua says, "All media express their government's opinion, including Xinhua. Media should have the responsibility to guide their audience to a positive and correct direction" (M06).

The domestic journalists and editors in my interviews mention that the most common and efficient way to be in tune with the government's guidelines is through "political education"

²² The name "big radio" may have originated when Xinhua News Agency established the Yan'an Xinhua Radio Station (*Yan'an Xinhua guangbo diantai*, 延安新华广播电台), which is the former body of China National Radio (CNR) (*zhongyang renmin guangbo diantai*, 中央人民广播电台) and China Radio International (CRI) (*Zhongguo guoji guangbo diantai*, 中国国际广播电台) (Xinhua News Agency, Xinhua history). Journalists from CNR can access Xinhua's "big radio" to directly select and edit news for CNR's radio program (Li, Haiming, 2013).

and the monthly and weekly meetings. These meetings are held at different levels, such as meetings among the department leaders (*lingdao*, 领导) and meetings for all staff. The meetings inform them what is considered to be important and sensitive news, and senior editors will also give advice to journalists on the tone and phrases in news writing. In February 2016, President Xi Jinping visited Xinhua and held meetings with the directors of Xinhua, addressing the importance of news media in terms of news reporting, communication strategies, and orientation of public opinion. After these meetings, Xinhua's directors in turn organized meetings in each department with journalists and editors to inform and pass on the messages from the earlier meetings.

With the development of the internet, more players are engaged in and shaping the government's guidelines on the media. The PD can directly order the media outlets to leave out certain details in reporting or not to report on certain news entirely (M13), and also hires staff from other institutions including research institutes and universities throughout China. Then the PD sets up a "reading group" (*yuebing xiaozu*, 阅兵小组) to check on the media outlets by reviewing the news content online (M05).

4.2.5 Xinhua's Performance on Social Media Platforms

Xinhua has increased its presence on social media platforms such as Sina Weibo, Weixin (Wechat), Twitter, Facebook, etc. Through social media, Xinhua aims to communicate with its audiences more directly. In my interviews with journalists and editors, they see Xinhua's strategy of attracting audiences through interactions on social media as a success.

In order to understand Xinhua's communication strategies on social media platforms, I inquired of staff from Xinhua as to who is posting and tweeting for Xinhua on Weibo and on Twitter, who Xinhua's target audiences on these social media platforms are, if there are different communication strategies, and how interactive Xinhua has been when it comes to communicating with its followers.

From the interviews, I learned that Xinhua's headquarters in Beijing set up the new media centre (*Xinmeiti Zhongxin*, 新媒体中心) to specialize in managing the news and tweets distribution on social media platforms. Xinhua organizes a team, consisting of one to two

hundred journalists from different departments, to update Xinhua's Weibo and Twitter accounts.²³

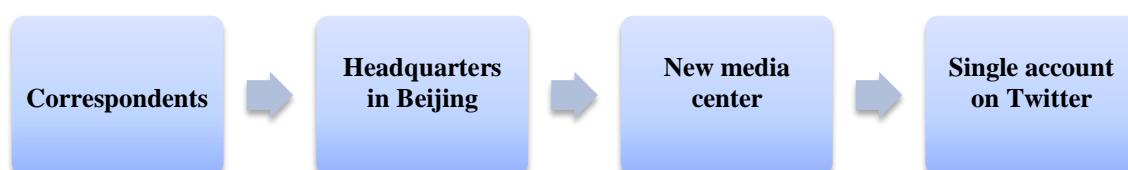
On Twitter's platform, journalists from all news bureaus submit what they regard as important news every day to Xinhua's headquarters in Beijing, and then the team working on social media will select and post the feeds on Twitter.

A foreign correspondent reveals that Xinhua rewards journalists through its promotion system if they get the news out faster than AP and Reuters. Xinhua's foreign correspondents are encouraged to register on Twitter and to retweet the messages from Xinhua's Twitter account "New China." Even though Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are blocked in China, the staff from Xinhua's new media centre as well as the international news office in the media study centre have access to log on to these sites. However, journalists from other domestic departments do not have authorized access to Twitter.

"The fact that Twitter and Facebook are not registered in China," says one correspondent, "is a matter of business and law. As foreign companies, if they want to join the Chinese market, then they are obliged to obey our local laws. For us, we use these social media to keep in touch with our colleagues abroad. In this way of management, Xinhua intends to form a more centralized voice" (M07).

Currently, Xinhua only hires contracted foreign journalists and editors to polish the language and there are very few cases where foreign experts write news for Xinhua.

Therefore, there are filtering procedures before Xinhua tweets on Twitter. International news will first go through the foreign correspondents' personal choices, and then through the selection by the team of the new media centre. This process, as I distill it from the interview data, is illustrated schematically in the following diagram.



²³ These journalists' work relations would still be at their original departments. According to my respondents, their work at the new media centre is only temporary and usually lasts about three to six months.

In the case of Weibo, Xinhua relies on Weibo to reach a broad audience. By reposting news on Weibo, Xinhua acquires a network with its online followers and so reaches the audiences on social media. One analyst from Xinhua’s media study centre comments: “Social media have redefined the traditional media like Xinhua, in every part of news production and distribution, and Xinhua leads, supervises, and guides public opinion on Weibo (M04).”

In order to increase the number of followers on Weibo, Xinhua sets up different accounts according to the functions of departments. According to the respondents, these accounts have not much connection with each other, as this is more of a strategy to increase the total number of followers in competition with other state media outlets, such as CCTV and the *People’s Daily*. These different state media outlets compete with each other for the share of the budget from the central government on internal and external communication. According to a respondent, Xinhua puts a lot of emphasis on follower numbers when assessing the impact of the *People’s Daily*, Xinhua, and CCTV on social media platforms such as Weibo, Twitter, and Facebook (M04). To manage its many accounts on Weibo, Xinhua’s team in the new media centre will supervise all its accounts, in order to make sure the content does not contain political mistakes.



The difference between Xinhua’s International Department (*Guojibu*, 国际部) and Xinhua’s Foreign Affairs Department (*Duiwaibu*, 对外部) is that the former reports international news in Chinese to domestic audiences and the latter is responsible for distributing news to international audiences, mainly in English, but also in other languages. Therefore, the foreign correspondents send back the news packages to the International Department before they are broadcasted to Chinese audiences. In terms of how Xinhua reaches out to the target audiences, there are different communication strategies on Weibo and Twitter.

First, Xinhua’s accounts on international social media platforms (including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube) have all changed their names to “New China.” This new name,

commented on by Xinhua journalists, is a literal translation of Xinhua's Chinese characters “新华,” in order to provide a name easier for international audiences to remember. Setting up all these accounts under a uniform name, “New China,” also symbolizes a more modern and centralized way of management in Xinhua. In contrast to this, Xinhua has set up different accounts on Weibo, with different focuses according to department. For instance, Xinhua Viewpoint (translated from 新华视点) and China Net Affairs (translated from 中国网事), set up by Xinhua's domestic department and the online news program, provide information on what happens in China. Xinhua International (新华国际) and Xinhua iReport (新华我报道) that are set up by the international department and the overseas department, mainly distribute international news. This is to attract larger audiences who are interested in different types of news. Second, in order to study the international target audiences, the international news office will study popular articles on Twitter and then send them to each bureau and individual journalist with comments on why these articles are shared by many followers. With domestic audiences on Weibo, Xinhua's staff can directly get information and users' data from the Weibo company to observe and analyse what interests different groups of audiences.

My respondents from Xinhua tend to agree that there are differences in Xinhua's external and internal communication strategies. Xinhua's external communication strategies are to centralize China's voice for international audiences. Even though the strategy to counter the impression of China being a monolithic and totalitarian regime would be to let more different voices speak, the approach of “centralize the strength, centralize the voice” (*jizhong lilian, tongyi fasheng*, 统一力量, 集中发声) is widely acknowledged among my respondents from Xinhua. Xinhua provides news about what is happening in China as well as reviews from Chinese media on events happening abroad. The editors' choices are based on the government's foreign policy to not interfere with other countries' domestic affairs, and to keep a balance between conflicting powers. For internal communication, Xinhua plays the role of the mouthpiece of the Party. The principle is to repost positive stories and the policies and decisions of the Party to domestic audiences. However, in reports on disasters and major international events, Xinhua does not distinguish between internal and external communication. The journalists will be very proactive in providing lots of facts and data for objective and factual reports. Noticing that the social media platforms have speeded up the spread of news within and outside China, the journalists also see the tendency that the line between Xinhua's internal and external communication strategies is getting blurred.

Based on my respondents' perceptions of what constitutes international news for Xinhua, there is a tendency to select more international occurrences that relate to China or relate to more developed countries. From Xinhua's administrative perspective, the most important distinction in international news is: news related to China, and news not related to China. From the journalists' reporting perspective, however, the most important distinction is between emergencies and daily events. Xinhua's news workers often have to decide between Xinhua's news values and their own journalistic values. One editor says:

We use common journalistic values when reporting on international events that do not involve China. These values are accuracy, timeliness, and audience rate. However, as editors, we have to choose very selectively when it comes to events involving China and especially the negative comments about China. As the news written by foreign journalists also contains their opinions and positions, we will decide if it is necessary to keep the negative comments or omit them, based on our judgment of whether they are abusive or constructive criticism. If they are abusive, then there is no need to pass them on to the audiences. (M10)

This argument of selecting what to report to domestic audiences is not uncommon among the Xinhua editors. The yardstick for judging what is or is not "abusive" is based on the editors' interpretation of national interest. On the one hand, the idea of "letting people hear what is being said about China by others" was originally a task assigned to the newspaper *Cankao Xiaoxi* (参考消息) by Chairman Mao. According to Mao, receiving "criticism" was to "give a vaccination to the Chinese people" (*gei Zhongguoren zhongniudou*, 给中国人种牛痘). On the other hand, the central government also guides the media outlets to "spread positive energy" (*chuanbo zhengnengliang*, 传播正能量) throughout society. This is partially because, according to my respondents, journalists are better trained to assess such news, whereas the domestic audiences are not necessarily prepared and "the quality of the people" (*renkou suzhi*, 人口素质) is still quite low. One editor from *Cankao Xiaoxi* adds: "even if we report negative news from abroad, what is the use and how does it contribute to the people?" (M06).

Most of the journalists in the interviews mention that Xinhua as the state media outlet is not trying to compete in international news coverage with English media such as AP and Reuters, but to have a different voice to tell China stories. This means that there is potentially a target conflict here between journalists and policymakers. The policymakers view discourses as

effectively a zero-sum game between competing nations, meaning that they would be in favour of replacing the one-sided stories about China that the foreign media tell with equally one-sided stories about China that the authorities have approved. This is a rather different approach than the agenda of most journalists: to assure diversity in news reports about China or any other topic. The target conflict may lead to different understandings of “information,” “news,” and “discourse” between journalists and policymakers.

4.3 Conclusion

The government’s external and internal communication policies have significant effects on the quickly developing media industry, particularly on the management styles and working environment for the news workers in the state media outlets. However, the changes in the media industry do not necessarily contribute to a successful national image building that is in favour of the central government. Digital media have raised both challenges and opportunities for the government and have shaped its communication strategies. On the one hand, the government is formulating new policies and rules to regulate online activities of both state and non-state actors and to catch up with the “empowering network society” (Castells, 2010a); on the other hand, digital media have become the instruments for the government to guide public diplomacy, to facilitate e-governance, to develop means for cyber security, and to reach target audiences through different media platforms.

The yardstick of what is right, what is positive, and what is to be avoided or omitted in news reporting and social media messaging relies on the news workers’ judgments of national security and national interest. The notion of national interest is often referred to as “the big picture” (*daju*, 大局) in the policy papers, which indicates the government’s overall aim to maintain stability and to ensure its “peaceful rise.” Therefore, “national interest” in terms of internal and external communication includes ensuring cyber security, keeping a safe and stable environment for domestic public opinion, improving China’s foreign relations, and constructing a positive national image. Rather than always being in line with the government’s interest, the news workers’ interpretation of national interest is in the broader framework of nationhood in which they define their national identity of being Chinese. In this framework of nationhood, which is larger than the nation-state, news workers from the state media outlets interpret the government’s guidelines, negotiate for more space of reporting,

and even push for media change. The government's directions for a de-centralized internal communication are to ensure the state media outlets' leading position in the pluralistic media platforms. Compared to this, the steps to form a centralized voice in external communication are intended to make the media adapt to more nuanced and changing foreign relations. However, the question of whether this centralized voice, together with a unified story, will ever be convincing to foreign audiences, who expect debate and conflict, still remains.

Hassid's analysis of the typology of contemporary Chinese journalists identifies four types of journalists. These include "mouthpieces" of the Communist Party who tend to work for "old-line CCP papers"; "American-style professionals" who are committed to neutral and independent reporting; "advocacy professionals" who aim to push for policy change; and "workaday journalists" who are usually freelance or contract news workers and do not necessarily hold a professional ethos (Hassid, 2011). In his opinion, both "mouthpieces" of the Communist Party and "American-style professionals" do not represent and dominate the Chinese news environment; it is in fact the "advocate professionals" who cover the sensitive events and engage in policymaking and media change. In this regard, my respondents tend to share similar features with the "advocate professionals" identified in Hassid's analysis. These "advocate professionals," some of whom were possibly "old-line CCP reporters" or "American-style professionals" before, have demonstrated their will to push for policy change over time. By accepting my requests for interviews, these journalists and editors are open to share their opinions and answer my questions. They have shown a passion for working in the media industry and yet are concerned about telling good China stories to the outside world. My interviews with policymakers, academics, and media practitioners indicate that there are strong currents in China's media that push for policy changes. However, my respondents also express that in order to ensure domestic stability, the process of institutional and media change will take a long time.

Chapter Five

Online Players in the Belt and Road Discourse

In this chapter, I identify the active players that shape the discourse of the BRI on social media platforms. By observing various official and individual accounts' performances on Sina Weibo and Twitter, I examine the online discourse regarding this initiative from within and outside China, to explore its online sentiment, and to find out whether certain actors could have an impact on Xinhua News Agency's communicative strategies. This chapter presents the online data gathered from Weibo and Twitter over the BRI and describes my observations of the active players during a specific time period. These data and observations provide the possibility to explore an idea of the main topics over the BRI, which ties into the specific topic analysis of Xinhua in Chapter Six and the analysis of rhetoric devices in Chapter Seven.

During the research on Weibo, I used the Founder Zhisi Big Data Platform (Founder) to collect and analyse Weibo messages. Founder provides an archive search for messages (possibly, but not necessarily) within a set period. My Founder analysis is both an archive search within a specific time period, and a month-long capturing. I compared the results of the real time capturing in the same month from both Weibo and Twitter. I collected topic-related posts from Weibo by searching for the keywords “一带一路” (*yidai yilu*) and its equivalent term in English (“belt and road”). In addition, with the aid of Founder, I examined online messages about the BRI distributed through other media channels, such as news websites and online forums. On Twitter, I used the software programming language Python and Twitter's API (application program interface) to search for tweets containing the keywords “belt and road.” In this research, my Twitter analysis was only capturing the tweets in real time for a month. Python is a programming language that is developed by Guido van Rossum that can be used for data analysis and visualization. It is an open coding language and is widely used among academics from within and outside China.

Because the field of digital humanities is still very much in development, selecting these two digital research methods also functions as a step in examining and comparing different research methods and environments. Weibo and Twitter have caught the attention of many researchers in digital humanities before, and the data from these two social media platforms have already been the subject of wide explorations in social behaviour, online public opinions,

and sentiments. However, because the nature of data on both platforms is volatile, what used to be valid research methods some years ago can already be outdated in the fluid and fast-changing world of online data analysis, and online data does not remain accessible forever (Li, Yuan et al., 2015; Meeks, 2018). In order to properly examine the current public discourse on the BRI, the following research focuses on data that were visible to the general audience during the time of research.

5.1 Analysis through Founder

During my second fieldwork trip to Xi'an, China in 2017, I had opportunities to access the media lab in the Journalism Department at Xi'an International Studies University and to incorporate Founder into my research on Weibo messages. Founder does not require Weibo's API, as it is designed for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of large amounts of data, and for the analysis of news, bulletin boards (BBS), blogs, Weibo and Weixin.²⁴ In addition, it provides an automated analysis on networked public opinion. Founder targets a smaller group of users than Python, and works through paid user accounts that are issued by the Founder company. Bearing the same name as its product, Founder is a data company established by Peking University, that mainly caters to domestic research needs rather than to international ones. As Schneider says, with the analytical programs created by companies, it is crucial to be aware of the "limitations and biases that are built into [their] mechanics" (Schneider, 2015b, p. 88). Therefore, it is worth pointing out that Founder's algorithms are not entirely transparent, and there is little information on how the intelligent analysis works. In addition, Founder does not include Twitter (which is why I resorted to Python) and several other international news websites and social media. This is because the Chinese Government restricts access to these. Founder is, however, a very good research tool for messages from Weibo, Weixin, and other Chinese blogs. In this case, Founder as an analysing tool itself provides a perspective of the internet data analysis in China.

The analysis through Founder that I conducted consists of data collection, sentiment analysis, information types' analysis, and user analysis. In the following steps, I started with a search, through Founder's filter functions, for the archive messages that contain the keywords “一带—

²⁴ Weixin (微信), which is named "Wechat" in English, is a social media mobile application developed by Tencent. It is worth mentioning that English WeChat and Chinese Weixin work slightly differently, most notably when it comes to censorship (See Ruan, L., Knockel, J., Ng, J. Q., and Crete-Nishihata, M., 2016).

路” on Weibo from 1 December 2012 till 1 February 2016. I chose this particular period as my quantitative and qualitative combined analysis in Chapter Six and Seven focuses on the messages in this period. It is worth noting that this approach only retrieves the posts that still exist. If something is deleted by the user or censored by Weibo (Li, Yuan, et al., 2015), it would not be shown through Founder. According to Li et al., the deleted messages “are mostly politically sensitive. These topics are currently not allowed to discuss publicly by the authorities. In Sina Weibo, these sensitive topics are simply deleted” (Li, Yuan, et al., 2015, p. 550). On the one hand, it is hard to gauge the impact of this on my data, which poses a setback for drawing conclusions from quantitative analyses; on the other hand, these are the messages that the government allows within their image-making strategy, which conveys a perspective from the government.

The search resulted in 302,335 messages that contain the keywords “一带一路.” According to an automated sentiment analysis on these messages, 55.15% of these messages are positive, 24.74% are neutral, and 20.11% are negative. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 give a graphic representation of these results.

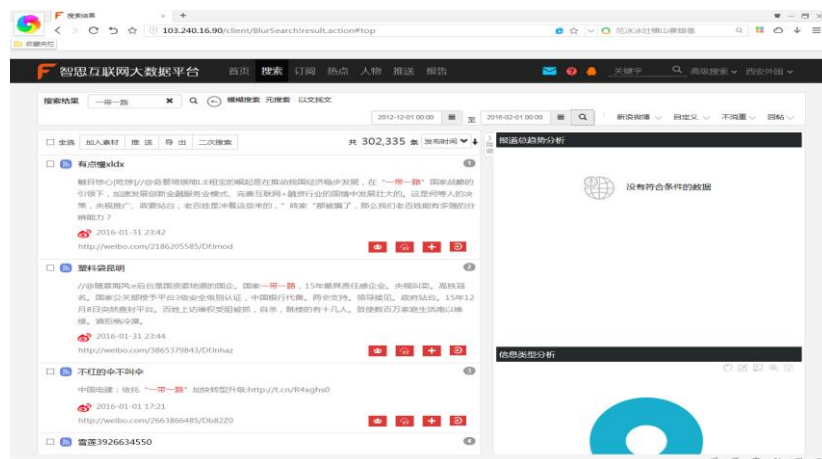


Figure 5.1 Search result in Founder, for Weibo posts containing the keywords “一带一路,” from 1 December 2012 to 1 February 2016

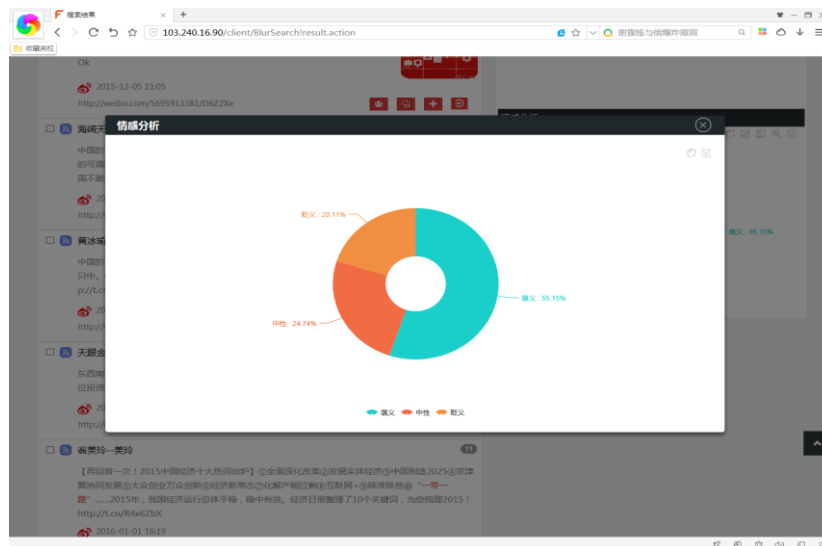


Figure 5.2 Sentiment analysis in Founder, for Weibo posts containing the keywords “一带一路,” collected from 1 December 2012 to 1 February 2016

To limit the analysis to a manageable, representative sample of posts, I examined the latest 500 Weibo posts in the collection more closely. The result includes both official accounts as well as individual users’ accounts (see examples in Appendix 2). The official accounts are registered by the departments of the central and local governments, state-owned enterprises, state media outlets, and commercial media corporations in China. The search also returns results that are posted from several international media accounts.

For a broader observation of different media channels, I used Founder’s intelligent analysis function to find the online messages in the last month of research, with the keywords “一带一路.” In this period, from 1 June to 1 July 2017, Founder collected additional messages from Weibo, Weixin, blogs, news aggregators,²⁵ domestic and international online forums, and news websites. According to the results, the total number of messages with the keywords “一带一路” is 628,858 in this period, and the number of messages with the English term “belt and road” is 3935. I then marked the messages with either the keywords “一带一路” or “belt and road” as group 1 and group 2, respectively. See figures 5.3 and 5.4.

²⁵ A news aggregator is an application program. It reads articles on Usenet, a distributed discussion system that sorts the content. A news aggregator can be used as a client that connects to a news server.

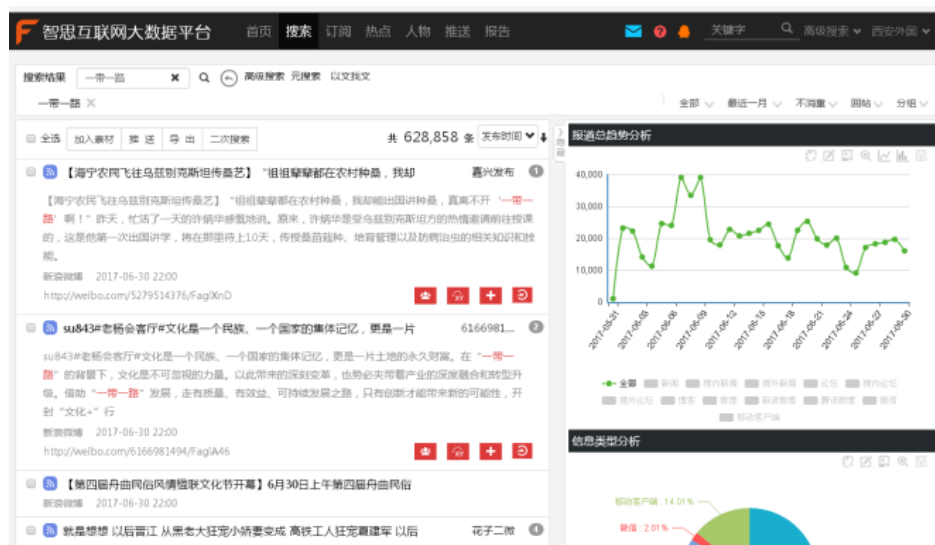


Figure 5.3 Group 1: search result in Founder with keywords “一带一路” from 1 June to 1 July 2017



Figure 5.4 Group 2: search result in Founder with keywords “belt and road” from 1 June to 1 July 2017

Founder’s analysis of information types shows that the majority of the messages in group 1 were distributed by news websites, Weibo, and online forums. News websites and Weibo distribute the most messages in group 2. The results (see figures 5.5 and 5.6) show that 26.95% of the messages in group 1 are from Weibo, compared to 27.15% in group 2; and 48.38% in group 1 are from news websites compared to 62.24% in group 2. According to this

result, there is hardly any difference in the relative number of messages distributed by Weibo on either key phrase.

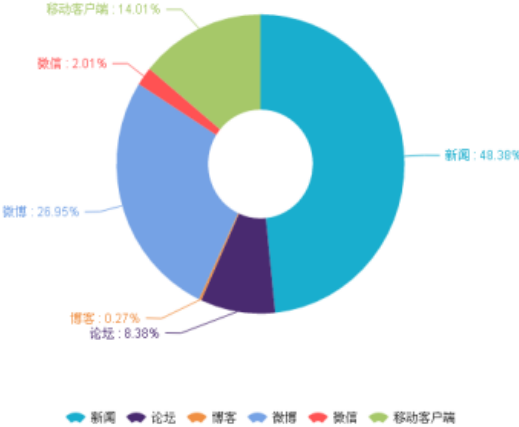


Figure 5.5 Message distribution in group 1

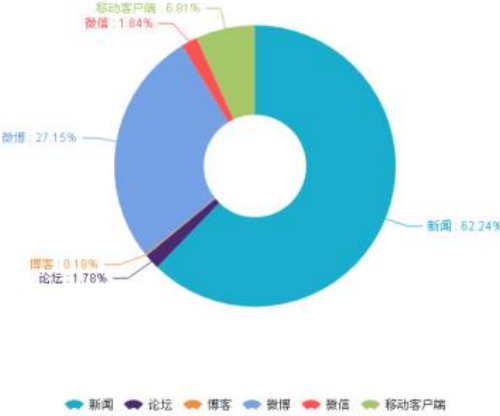


Figure 5.6 Message distribution in group 2

The sentiment analysis in Founder (see figures 5.7 and 5.8) shows that 53.86% of the messages in group 1 are positive, 26.34% are neutral, and 19.80% are negative. In comparison, only 12.40% of the messages in group 2 are positive, 81.02% are neutral, and 6.58% are negative.

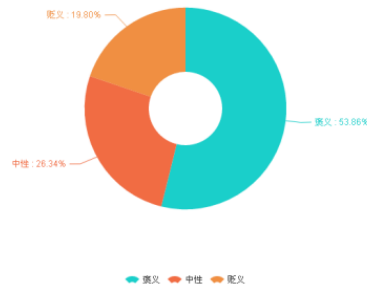


Figure 5.7 Sentiment analysis on group 1

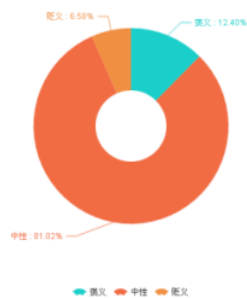


Figure 5.8 Sentiment analysis on group 2

In addition to showing the message distribution over the various media channels, such as Weibo, news websites, and UseNet news aggregators, Founder shows the leading players that distribute the most messages on the BRI topic.

In group 1, the accounts that distribute the most posts on Weibo are Zibo neimu, Justice lawyer, Justice call, and Justice lawyer 609; the accounts that distribute the most messages through news websites are East Wealth, Tianya, NetEase, and iFeng News; the top accounts with the most messages through news aggregators are UC Headline, *China Youth Daily*, Today's Headline, and VIVA. See Table 5.1.

Weibo	Amount	News websites	Amount	News aggregators	Amount
淄博内幕(Zibo neimu) ID5893679918 http://weibo.com/u/5893679918?is_all=1	981	东方财富网 (East Wealth) eastmoney.com	13561	UC头条 (UC Headline) new.uc.cn	35770

正义律师法制(Justice lawyer) ID6047033631 http://weibo.com/u/6047033631?is_all=1	902	天涯社区 (Tianya) tianya.cn	11827	中国青年报 (<i>China Youth Daily</i>)	8167
正义使命召唤(Justice call) ID5977705371 http://weibo.com/u/5977705371?is_all=1	698	网易 (NetEase) www.163.com	7277	今日头条 (Today's Headline) toutiao.com	5430
正义律师 609 (Justice lawyer 609) ID6039345700 http://weibo.com/u/6039345700?is_all=1	641	凤凰新闻 (iFeng News) news.ifeng.com	6630	VIVA 畅读 (VIVA) http://www.vivame.cn/	2501

Table 5.1 Most active accounts in group 1

In group 2, the accounts that distribute the most posts on Weibo are Sina professional fan, Beijing Hour, m-rq, and Mabel-Wen; the accounts that distribute the most messages through news websites are 4-traders, the *People's Daily*, *The Economic Times*, *China Daily* and All Africa.com; the accounts with the most messages through news aggregators are Today's Headline, *Guardian*, *The Times of India*, *Shanghai Daily*, and VIVA. See Table 5.2.

Weibo	Amount	News websites	Amount	News aggregators	Amount
Unknow ID	27	4-traders http://www.4-traders.com/	248	今日头条, (Today's Headline) toutiao.com	43
Xinlang 专业粉 (Sina professional fan) ID 6136509740 www.weibo.com/u/6136509740?is_all=1	17	<i>People's Daily</i> en.people.cn	163	<i>Guardian</i> https://www.theguardian.com/international	31
Beijing Hour http://weibo.com/beijingshour?is_all=1	10	<i>The Economic Times</i> http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/	154	<i>The Times of India</i> https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/defaultinterstitial.cms	27
m-rq ID 2072292277 www.weibo.com/u/2072292277?is_all=1	8	<i>China Daily</i> http://www.chinadaily.com.cn	133	<i>Shanghai Daily</i> http://www.shanghaidaily.com	25
Mabel-Wen ID 2215214895 www.weibo.com/u/2215214895?is_all=1	6	All Africa.com allafrica.com	130	VIVA 畅读 (VIVA) http://www.vivame.cn/	20

Table 5.2 Most active accounts in group 2

The results above show that the messages with keywords “一带一路” in group 1 are distributed mostly through domestic media channels. Among the leading media players (Table 5.9),

China Youth Daily, established by Communist Youth League of China, is the only official newspaper. The commercial online media in group 1 are Tianya, East Wealth, NetEase, iFeng news; the news aggregators include UC Headline, Today’s Headline, and VIVA. It is worth mentioning that these news aggregators do not produce news products themselves, but they provide news information from various online sources by mainly reposting the original news messages verbatim. The original news messages collected on these news aggregators are distributed by both the commercial and the state media outlets. For instance, Xinhua News Agency is often an important source. Xinhua has long enjoyed the authority in reporting in particular “extremely serious incidents” and “all other Chinese media must use the Xinhua report word for word” (Brady, 2008, p. 157).

Compared to group 1, the messages with keywords “belt and road” in group 2 are distributed by both domestic and international media. First, among the domestic media players (Table 5.10), Beijing Hour, which is set up by CRI (Chinese Radio International), *China Daily*, and the *People’s Daily* are all official media; *Shanghai Daily* is a local news media outlet; Today’s Headline and VIVA are news aggregators. The international actors include 4-traders, *The Economic Times*, *All Africa*, *Guardian*, and *The Times of India*.

Table 5.3 lists the most active accounts on Weibo, based on keywords search “一带一路” and “belt and road.”

Search result with keywords “一带一路”			
	Amount		Amount
幽幽 Vin (youyou Vin)	17118	淄博内幕(Zibo neimu)	981
漫步云端 130 (Manbu yunduan 130)	3811	正义律师法制(Justice lawyer)	902
我是你百般呵护的人 (wo shi ni baiban hehu de ren)	2621	正义使命召唤(Justice call)	698
小晴 honey (Xiaoqing honey)	2411	正义律师 609 (Justice Lawyer 609)	641
Search result with keywords “belt and road”			
若时光可以优雅地老去 ruo shiguang keyi youya de laoqu	19	Xinlang 专业粉 (Sina professional fan)	17
Tube News	19	Beijing Hour	10
Beijing Hour	12	m-rq	8
通信业信安资讯” (Tele-comm xinan Info)	7	Mabel-Wen	6

Table 5.3 Individual leading accounts on Weibo

Based on my observation of each account in Table 5.3, with the exception of the accounts of Tube News and Beijing Hour, the leading accounts tend to post repeated messages on Weibo. This led me to analyse the above accounts to ascertain whether or not they might be commercial accounts that aim to promote certain messages. Through observing their profiles, posts, photos, followers, and the accounts they follow in turn, I found several similarities among these accounts (see examples in Appendix 3). First, these top accounts were set up relatively recently at the time of the data collection. Many posts sent from these accounts show repetitive texts, and some accounts appear to be the accounts of certain celebrities' fans. Second, the photos posted by these accounts include images from advertisements, celebrities, and news stories. Therefore, they are likely accounts set up by commercial companies. Third, their followers' profiles show similar features to their own profiles. Lastly, these accounts tend to follow mostly each other, in addition to state and commercial media accounts.

Thanks to the data I gathered with Founder, I was thus able to make some important observations on the Belt and Road Discourse on Chinese social media that I will briefly reiterate. The results from 1 June to 1 July 2017 show that the number of the messages in group 1 is much bigger than the number of the messages in group 2. Compared to group 2, the messages in group 1 are distributed more evenly over Weibo, news websites, and online forums. According to the sentiment analysis, group 1 contains more positive messages than group 2, which means messages in the Chinese language tend to contain positive expressions while messages in English contain a more neutral attitude.

Regarding the players from different media channels, except the unknown IP addresses, the result from group 1 shows that commercial media are the main actors in distributing messages on the Belt and Road topic, and the result from group 2 demonstrate a more even share among the state media, local media, and international media. The fact that news aggregators such as UC Headline and Today's Headline only deliver news from other sources makes it much more difficult to what it means when commercial media produce more messages than state media. However, the results demonstrate the active engagement of the non-state actors in message distribution.

According to my observation of the active accounts on Weibo, those accounts that distribute the most messages do not necessarily produce original messages. They stay active by

repeatedly reposting the same comments, links to online news, and the headlines. By increasing the number of “reposts” under the original messages and links, these accounts can boost the popularity of the original sources on Weibo. Therefore, Founder’s statistic results only provide one perspective in analysing the public discourse online.

5.2 Analysis through Python

For my research on the Belt and Road discourse on Twitter, I used Python to collect and analyse the tweets for a month period, from 1 June to 1 July in 2017, with a keyword search for “belt and road.” I had a Python script running for a month, continuously collecting and storing the tweets that fit the keywords filter. I did not search through the archived tweets due to technical challenges: Python’s REST API only allows for capturing live tweets. The following analysis is to examine the online public discourse of this initiative through identifying active users and keywords, mapping out bigram terms and term co-occurrence, visualising the data, and analysing the online sentiments.

5.2.1 Active Users

By 1 July 2017, the total number of the tweets in the collection was 3803. After I finished the collection, I processed the data to sort user names. I used the code provided by Bonzanini to identify the most common 200 screen names (Bonzanini, 2015).²⁶

The Python scripts I used capture all information of a full tweet, including twitter handles (identifiable by their “@” prefix) of both the twitter account that sends the tweet, and the accounts that are mentioned *in* the tweet, including (but not limited to) the account that sent the original tweet in case of a retweet. This provides the means to gauge the degree of activity, engagement, and influence of the twitter accounts that generated the 3803 tweets I collected. The frequency of a twitter handle, when occurring as sender, directly indicates how active the

```
26 user_names=[]
>>> for line in content:
...     tweet=json.loads(line)
...     screen_name=tweet['user']['name']
...     user_names.append(screen_name)
...
>>> user_names
>>> import nltk
>>> nltk.FreqDist(user_names).most_common(200).
```

respective user is. However, the frequency of a twitter handle (“@”) as a mention (or as the source for a retweet) can mean several things: 1) the account receives a lot of attention, 2) many users comment on its tweets (for example, they criticize it a lot), and 3) it gets used to increase the authority of a statement. In the dataset, Xinhua News Agency’s handle, @XHNews occurs the most (554 times), followed by the *People’s Daily* (PDChina), CRI, and Yicai. The list of the most mentions are:

@XHNews, @PDChina, @CRI_Turkish, @yicaichina, @carlamooney, @sabena_siddiqi, @ZeppLaRouche, @chinascio, @SilkRdFilmFest, @hktdc, @Stratfor, @silkrondemand, @globaltimesnews.

The most active user accounts are shown in Table 5.4. I categorized these accounts into four categories: Chinese media organizations, international media organizations, institutions, and think tanks and advisory firms (See Table 5.4).

1. Chinese media organizations	2. International media organizations	3. Institutions	4. Think tanks & Advisory firms
Xinhua News Agency; Yicai Global (第一财经); ICS Shanghai Live; <i>People’s Daily</i> ; <i>China Daily</i> ; Caixin Global (财新); <i>Global Times</i> ; China Radio International-CRI; <i>ChinAfrica Magazine</i> (中国与非洲).	Channel 1 World; Asia Law Portal; NBRnews (The National Bureau of Asian Research); The Myanmar Times.	Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; Hong Kong Trade Development Council; Invest Hong Kong; The China Mission to the EU; Schiller Institute; Pakistan-China Institute; China Embassy Turkey.	Friends of Europe; Easternational; China Africa Advisory; SriLankan Manpower.

Table 5.4 Actors on Twitter in categories

Among the Chinese media organizations, Xinhua News Agency and the *People’s Daily* are official media. *China Daily*, formerly under the SCIO, is now under the direct administration of the National Office of Press and Publication (NOPP) since September 2018. *Global Times* is under the auspices of the *People’s Daily* newspaper. China Radio International (CRI) was under the administration of the former SAPPRT and after its merger into the China Media Group is now under the direct administration of the PD. The commercial media in this category are Caixin Global, owned by Caixin Media Company Ltd based in Beijing; Yicai Global and ICS Shanghai Live, owned by the Radio and Television Station of Shanghai; and *ChinAfrica Magazine*, established by Beijing Review under the administration of China

International Publishing Group. This shows that more state-owned media than commercial media are active in China in shaping the discourse of the BRI.

Besides the media organizations from China, other players that distribute messages on the Belt and Road topic include several international media organizations, institutions for Chinese studies or Asian studies, the Chinese government agencies with diplomatic missions, think tanks, and advisory firms.

5.2.2 *Extracting Keywords*

The following analyses of keywords, bigram terms, and term co-occurrence are to map out the types of content that are attributed and circulated on Twitter on the topic of the BRI. These analyses show what the users are interested in and what they are saying about the topic. Furthermore, the result of these analyses will be compared to the results in Chapter Six and Seven, in which a quantitative and qualitative combined analysis of Xinhua's messages is carried out. Thus, the following study explores whether similar tropes and rhetorical figures are deployed across different official (social) media channels, and if so, does any of this corroborate or defy the expectations that Xinhua, carrying out the government's diplomatic mission, promotes the BRI in a consistent manner?

To examine the term frequency in the full text from the collection, I used the list of stop words²⁷ from the NLTK corpus and eliminate these words by following the code provided by Bonzanini (2015).²⁸ The result is a list of the most common terms used in the collected tweets. Then I printed out the top 200 keywords.²⁹ Examples of these keywords and their frequencies are the following:

(#BeltandRoad, 2473), (China, 951), (initiative, 597), (@XHNews, 554), (cooperation, 473), (#China, 311), (Chinese, 298), (#OBOR, 295), (@PDChina, 245), (@CRI_Turkish, 217), (Asia, 179), (partner, 171), (economic, 170), (#beltandroad, 166), (join, 150), (@yicaichina, 133), (Europe, 130), (#HongKong, 130),

²⁷ Stop words often refer to the most used words in a language, such as “the,” “is,” “are.” They are usually filtered out before or after processing natural language data.

²⁸ from nltk.corpus import stopwords

```
>>> import string
```

```
>>> punctuation = list(string.punctuation)
```

```
>>> stop = stopwords.words('english') + punctuation + ['rt', 'via']
```

```
>>> terms_stop = [term for term in preprocess(textFull) if term not in stop].
```

²⁹ >>> count_all = Counter()

```
>>> count_all.update(terms_stop)
```

```
>>> print(count_all.most_common(200)).
```


(International, 124), (economy, 123), (key, 121), (construction, 117), (Africa, 116), (countries, 114), (us, 111), (#silkroad, 106), (proposes, 103), (passages, 102), (trade, 102), (ocean-based, 96), (#BeltAndRoad, 96), (Oceania, 96), (#XiVisit, 94), (new, 93), (#filmfestival, 92), (@carlamoooney, 91), (potential, 90), (boost, 89), (region, 86), (eyes, 84), (investment, 82), (Spain, 82), (billion, 81), (grow, 80), (president, 80), (#Chinese, 79), (activities, 78), (fast, 76), (infrastructure, 76), (huge, 73), (@sabena_siddiqi, 73), (@ZeppLaRouche, 72), (transaction, 72), (ambassador, 71), (border, 70), (USD, 70), (@chinascio, 68), (Afghanistan, 68), (Shanghai, 68), (Britain, 67), (#China's, 61), (build, 61), (willing, 61), (support, 58), (expand, 57), (connect, 57), (growth, 56), (#XiJinping, 55), (linking, 55), (projects, 52), (India, 52), (#Singapore, 51), (official, 49), (@SilkRdFilmFest, 49), (important, 49), (media, 48), (development, 48), (@hktcdc, 48), (@Stratfor, 48), (#distribution, 48), (expect, 48), (foreign, 48), (#coproductions, 47), (US, 47), (welcomes, 46), (alliance, 46), (@silkrondemand, 46), (pledge, 45), (#movieproduction, 45), (state, 45), (@globaltimesnews, 45), (closer, 45), (Kazakhstan, 44), (#BRI, 44), (port, 44), (global, 43), (#Pakistan, 43), (area, 42), (building, 42), (#Xinjiang, 41), (Maritime, 40), (project, 40), (Tunisian, 40), (highlighting, 40), (deepening, 40), (opportunities, 39)...

As the terms shown above include those with and without the hashtag symbol “#,” I separated them into a group of keywords only and a group of hashtagged keywords.³⁰ Besides the hashtags directly referring to the BRI such as “#beltandroad,” “#BRI,” “#onebeltonerod,” and “#B&R,” the most used hashtags are:

(#China, 311), (#HongKong, 130), (#AMNC17, 98), (#XiVisit, 94), (#filmfestival, 92), (#CPEC, 90), (#Chinese, 79), (#China's, 61), (#Spain, 58), (#XiJinping, 55), (#Singapore, 51), (#distribution, 48), (#coproductions, 47), (#movieproduction, 45), (#BRI, 44), (#Pakistan, 43), (#Xinjiang, 41), (#railway, 33), (#Mandarin, 31), (#English, 31), (#Initiative, 31), (#India, 30), (#SCO, 29), (#Global, 29), (#Export, 28), (#Thai, 25), (#EU, 23), (#infrastructure, 23), (#fasttrack, 23), (#PM, 23), (#nuclear, 21), (#Leeds, 21), (#Xi, 21), (#EUChina, 21), (#HK, 20), (#Infrastructure, 20), (#Beltandroad, 19), (#china, 19), (#Kazakhstan, 18), (#Bristol, 17), (#BCIM, 15), (#Africa, 15), (#Panama, 15), (#Japan, 14), (#ABP, 14), (#Turkmenistan, 13), (#trade, 13), (#Asia, 13), (#Europe, 13), (#Turkey, 12), (#Hongkong, 12), (#Beijing, 11), (#Nepal, 11), (#transport, 11), (#US, 11), (#Opinion, 10), (#BREAKING, 10), (#business, 9), (#Maritime, 8), (#globaltrade, 8), (#Guangdong, 8), (#Kashgar, 7), (#LiKeqiang, 7), (#investment, 7), (#pakistan, 7), (#UK, 7), (#Putin, 7), (#SriLanka, 7), (#ASEAN, 6), (#Budapest, 6), (#Italia, 6), (#Afghanistan, 6), (#Gansu, 6), (#Mars, 6), (#Shanghai, 6), (#European, 5), (#Chengdu, 5), (#Moon, 5), (#Kenya, 5), (#Shenzhen, 5), (#Globalization, 5), (#Eurasia, 5), (#SpaceExploration, 5), (#Asean, 5), (#Slovakia, 5), (#dryport, 5), (#startups, 5), (#export, 5), (#security, 5), (#railfreight, 4), (#KaisunEnergyGroup, 4), (#Abe's, 4), (#Burma, 4), (#climatechange, 4), (#DeutscheBank, 4), (#Tibet, 4), (#Netherlands, 4), (#maritimecooperation, 4), (#Strategy, 4), (#California, 4), (#chinarail, 4), (#Indonesia, 4), (#Qatar, 4), (#Wuhan, 4), (#geopolitics, 4), (#Tourism, 4), (#lowcarbon, 4), (#economy, 4), (#tecnologica, 4), (#AIIB, 4), (#Kyaukphy, 4), (#XiJinpingInitiative, 4), (#railways, 4), (#geostrategy, 4), (#healthcare, 4)...

A hashtag is the most common way to create a topic on Twitter. If multiple users use the same hashtag over one topic or event, these users can form connections by following one or another or by checking what the others have tweeted over the topic. By using a hashtag, a particular topic can get more public attention and grow into a larger issue with potential social impact either online or offline. In this analysis, the majority of these hashtags are names of different

```

30 >>> terms_hash = [term for term in preprocess(textFull)
...   if term.startswith('#')]
>>> terms_hash

>>> terms_only = [term for term in preprocess(textFull)
...   if term not in stop and
...   not term.startswith(('#', '@'))]
>>> terms_only.
```

areas, countries, cities, and organizations. Within these, China, names of Chinese cities, and provinces cover most of the hashtags. Hashtags with the names of other Asian regions, countries, and cities take second place, followed by those with the names of European regions, countries, and cities. Second, hashtags with the names and the positions of governments' officials appear with high frequencies. Chinese President Xi Jinping's name is mentioned the most, followed by the names of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō. Third, topics on economy, trade and infrastructure projects are emphasized by hashtags such as #railway, #export, #business, etc. The terms of these hashtags are mostly nouns, and are rarely verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They only map out what is generally discussed over the topic, but they do not reflect any further information as in attitudes and actions. To find out the subtopics, it is worth exploring the keywords that are not used as hashtags.

Therefore, the most used keywords without a hashtag are:

(China, 951), (initiative, 597), (cooperation, 473), (Chinese, 298), (Asia, 179), (partner, 171), (economic, 170), (join, 150), (Europe, 130), (International, 124), (economy, 123), (key, 121), (construction, 117), (Africa, 116), (countries, 114), (us, 111), (proposes, 103), (passages, 102), (trade, 102), (ocean-based, 96), (Oceania, 96), (new, 93), (potential, 90), (boost, 89), (region, 86), (eyes, 84), (investment, 82), (Spain, 82), (billion, 81), (grow, 80), (president, 80), (activities, 78), (infrastructure, 76), (fast, 76), (huge, 73), (transaction, 72), (ambassador, 71), (border, 70), (USD, 70), (Afghanistan, 68), (Shanghai, 68), (Britain, 67), (build, 61), (willing, 61), (support, 58), (expand, 57), (connect, 57), (growth, 56), (linking, 55), (projects, 52), (India, 52), (official, 49), (important, 49), (media, 48), (development, 48), (expect, 48), (foreign, 48), (US, 47), (welcomes, 46), (alliance, 46), (pledge, 45), (state, 45), (closer, 45), (Kazakhstan, 44), (port, 44), (global, 43), (area, 42), (building, 42), (Maritime, 40), (project, 40), (Tunisian, 40), (deepening, 40), (highlighting, 40), (opportunities, 39), (along, 38), (promotes, 38), (participate, 37), (Spanish, 37), (Xi, 36), (King, 36), (Felipe, 36), (entry, 34), (regains, 33), (shine, 33), (Services, 32), (Untangling, 31), (Pakistan, 31), (agree, 29), (core, 29), (song, 29), (overseas, 28), (Executives, 28), (Standards, 28), (cooperate, 28), (jobs, 27), (many, 27), (inclusive, 27), (signed, 27), (Premier, 27), (invest, 27), (order, 26), (Committee, 26), (critical, 26), (focused, 26), (future, 25), (participation, 25), (protecting, 25), (bilateral, 25), (arrives, 25), (experience, 24), (influence, 24), (Keqiang, 24), (visit, 24), (backed, 24), (forum, 24), (give, 47), (strengthen, 24), (Local, 24), (ambitions, 23), (mutual, 23), (technology, 22), (sale, 22), (benefits, 22), (ready, 21), (train, 21), (joint, 20), (UK, 20), (policy, 20), (world, 20), (Japan, 20), (leads, 20), (larger, 20), ...

This dataset reflects several major themes and aspects of the initiative. Compared to the previous result, these keywords already reveal certain rhetoric features and sentiments revolving around the BRI. Among these keywords, there are nouns like “partner,” “alliance,” “song,” “ambitions,” and “benefits.” Based on my observation of the collected tweets, these nouns often appear in phrases that use personifications. In addition, the keywords also include adjectives such as “international,” “new,” “fast,” “huge,” “important,” “foreign,” “closer,” “global,” “inclusive,” “critical,” “mutual,” “ready,” “joint,” and “larger.” These adjectives are frequently in tweets to indicate the large scale of the BRI and its international impact. At last,

In order to find out which terms tend to occur together frequently, I listed the most frequently occurring bigrams in my dataset.³¹ In this analysis, a bigram refers to a pair of consecutive written words. These bigrams include hashtags (“#”) and twitter handles (“@”):

(#BeltandRoad, Initiative) 401
(China, #BeltandRoad) 233
(@XHNews, China) 160
(#BeltandRoad, initiative) 120
(#BeltandRoad, construction) 100
(economy, #BeltandRoad) 96
(cooperation, #BeltandRoad) 85
(#BeltandRoad, region) 78
(fast, #BeltandRoad) 75
(@PDChina, China) 71
(@CRI_Turkish, #HongKong) 59
(#Spain, boost) 57
(construction, #XiVisit) 56
(@PDChina, #Spain) 52
(@XHNews, Spain) 47
(#coproductions, #distribution) 47
(@carlamooney, #beltandroad) 46
(@XHNews, Britain) 46
(@chinascio, #China) 45
(Europe, #BeltandRoad) 44
(@carlamooney, International) 44
(#China, eyes) 44
(cooperation, #Singapore) 44

First, the above result shows that the account names of Chinese media frequently appear with the term “China.” For instance, “@XHNews” and “China” appear 160 times together, and “@PDChina” and “China” appear 71 times together. Second, the hashtag “#BeltandRoad” tends to appear with a group of terms including “China,” “initiative,” “construction,” “economy,” “cooperation,” “region,” “fast,” and “Europe.” Third, the hashtag “#XiVisit” appears frequently with the term “construction.” The tweets that form this bigram’s original context convey that Xi’s visits to other countries will bring opportunities to build long term relationships between China and those other countries.

To find out which terms without “#” or “@” occur frequently together, I filtered the most occurring bigrams that do not include twitter handles or hashtags.³² The result is shown below.

(China, cooperation) 301

³¹ >>> bigramFreq=nlk.FreqDist(terms_bigram).most_common(200)

>>> for (term, freq) in bigramFreq:

... print term, freq.

³² >>> for ((term1,term2), freq) in terms_max[:200]:

... print term1, term2, freq.

(Initiative, cooperation) 207
 (China, Initiative) 202
 (China, economic) 110
 (Asia, Europe) 108
 (economic, passages) 102
 (Asia, economic) 101
 (construction, cooperation) 101
 (economic, proposes) 99
 (China, proposes) 98
 (Africa, economic) 97
 (Africa, China) 97
 (Asia, passages) 96
 (Europe, economic) 96
 (economic, ocean-based) 96
 (Africa, Oceania) 96
 (Africa, Asia) 96
 (ocean-based, passages) 96
 (Oceania, Europe) 95
 (economy, partner) 95
 (Europe, passages) 95
 (Chinese, economy) 95
 (partner talk) 95
 (cooperation, eyes) 84
 (grow, fast) 75
 (activities, grow) 75
 (region, transaction) 72
 (key, partner) 71
 (huge, potential) 70
 (Britain, key) 67
 (cooperation, ambassador) 66
 (China, Afghanistan) 64
 (boost, cooperation) 61
 (partner, China) 54
 (expand, cooperation) 54
 (connect, Asia) 52
 (potential, cooperation) 52
 (passages, connect) 51
 (infrastructure, official) 49
 (closer, cooperation) 45
 (linking, Asia) 45
 (pledge, closer) 45
 (proposes, build) 45
 (alliance, support) 45
 (International, alliance) 44
 (China, welcomes) 41
 (media, eyes) 40

This dataset shows different matches of words with the names of regions. The term “China” occurs frequently with verbs “proposes” and “welcomes”; “Asia” occurs frequently with verbs “connect” and “link”; and “Europe” and “Africa” often occurs with “economic,” “Oceania,” and “passages.” By observing the above words in their original contexts, we see that words such as “closer,” “pledge,” “alliance,” and “welcomes” are often used in personifications and metaphors. This suggests that when displaying the Chinese government’s intentions of cooperating and connecting with other countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, they

adopt rhetorical figures such as personifications and metaphors throughout. This is to stress an open and friendly intention from the Chinese government leaders. This result shows similarities to the result in Chapter Seven on the analysis of these rhetorical figures.

There are many more ways to analyse the data through various dimensions. For instance, I could also examine the selected keywords to tease out the subtopics that revolve around the keywords. These specific analyses are too broad to fit within the scope of this dissertation, but I provide a relevant example nonetheless, to show its methodological merits, as I also aim to explore methodologies in Digital Humanities. With the NLTK library's function on term co-occurrences, I was able to find out which terms appear frequently together with a specific term.³³ In this way, I could observe the main topics related to this term. For instance, I was able to find out which terms frequently appear together with "China." The result is shown below:

(cooperation, 317), (Initiative, 288), (economic, 128), (Europe, 104), (proposes, 103), (Asia, 101), (passages, 100), (Africa, 97), (Oceania, 96), (ocean-based, 96), (build, 81), (region, 80), (potential, 77), (key, 77), (activities, 75), (grow, 75), (fast, 75), (partner, 72), (transaction, 72), (billion, 72), (hit, 71), (huge, 70), (ambassador, 70), (Britain, 70), (USD, 69), (Afghanistan, 67), (Chinese, 65), (boost, 63), (willing, 61), (construction, 60), (Spain, 54), (expand, 54), (infrastructure, 53), (connect, 51), (official, 49), (pledge, 45), (closer, 45), (linking, 45), (media, 44), (welcomes, 43), (Xinhua, 42), (state, 41), (Tunisian, 40), (eyes, 40), (deepening, 40), (highlighting, 40), (countries, 37), (participate, 27), (invest, 27), (projects, 26), (overseas, 26), (President, 25), (Premier, 25), (Felipe, 24), (King, 24), (participation, 24), (Spanish, 24), (Li Keqiang, 23), (strengthen, 23), (signed, 23), (agree, 22), (fields, 22), (US, 22), (investment, 19), (cooperate, 19), (foreign, 30), (join, 18), (Tajikistan, 17), (innovative, 17), (high-end, 17), (Japan, 17), (bilateral, 17), (Wang Yi, 16), (Minister, 15), (effort, 14), (joint, 14), (solo, 14), (PM, 14), (Trump, 14), (XHNews, 14), (forum, 13), (trade, 13), (area, 13), (conditionally, 12), (ready, 12), (Japanese, 12), (risks, 11), (growth, 11), (central, 10), (policy, 10), (highway, 10), (networks, 10), (UK, 10), (Communist, 9), (global, 9), (overstretch, 9), (strategic, 9), (border, 9), (aggressive, 9), (European, 9), (stance, 9), (Central, 9), (Nation's, 9), (anti-national, 9), (development, 9), (push, 9), (Business, 8), (industrial, 8), (new, 8), (Sri Lanka, 8), (agreements, 8), (promotes, 8), (diplomat, 7), (Russian, 7), (German, 7), (Maritime, 7), (Berlin, 7), (visiting, 7), (Kenya, 7), ...

This result shows that the terms that appear the most frequent with "China" are the names of countries and regions such as "Europe," "Asia," and "Spain," as well terms describing China's diplomatic relationships with different countries, including "partner," "connect," and "link." An in-depth observation of term co-occurrence for a certain keyword provides a prism through which the intrinsic relations of different topics could be revealed. Thus, a major advantage of using the programming language Python is that it could be tailored to specific analysis based on the goal of the research. In this study, through the analysis of keywords,

³³ >>> print("Co-occurrence for %s:" % search_word1)
>>> print(count_search.most_common(200)).

bigram terms, and term co-occurrence, this analysis provides an overall picture of the online discussion over the BRI on Twitter.

5.2.4 Sentiment Analysis

To conduct a sentiment analysis for the collected tweets, I combined manual labelling for the tweets and Python auto-coding for the high information words.³⁴ During the manual labelling, I first exported the data to an Excel sheet, and eliminated tweets that occur more than once. The overlapping messages occur when a user retweets the messages. Thus, I needed to manually identify the overlapping messages. There are 1240 tweets left in total (see examples in Appendix 4). Then I adopted the labelling method mentioned in Chapter Three and gave each tweet an “Attitude” score of either 1, 0, or -1, that stand for positive, neutral, and negative, respectively. The result is shown below in figure 6.0.

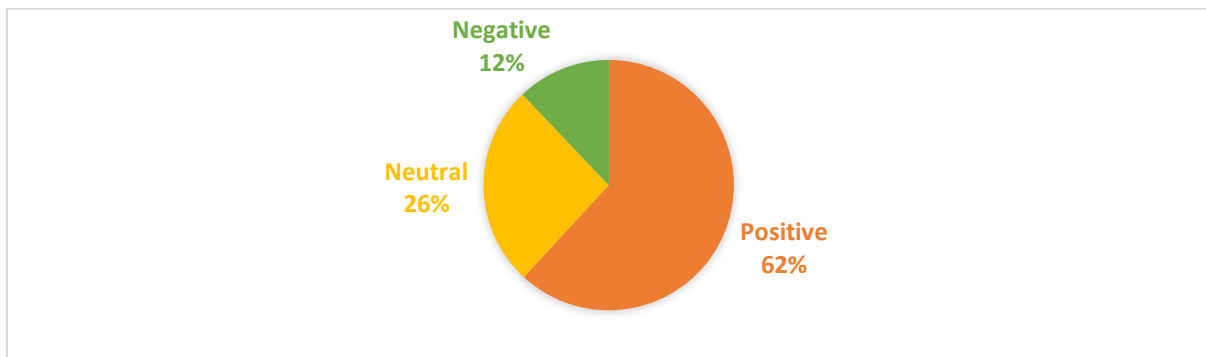


Figure 6.0 Result of sentiment analysis of the tweets

The result shows that 62% of the tweets are positive, 26% are neutral, and 12% are negative. In order to relate these sentiments to the active players and keywords, I conducted a sentiment analysis on the high information words through functions in the NLTK library in Python.³⁵

³⁴ High information words are words that show biases towards a single classification label. They are opposed to words that are common to all labels.

³⁵

```
def high_information_words(labelled_words, score_fn=BigramAssocMeasures.chi_sq, min_score=5):  
    word_fd = FreqDist()  
    label_word_fd = ConditionalFreqDist()  
    #for label, words in labelled_words.items():  
    for label, words in labelled_words:  
        for word in words:  
            word_fd[word] += 1  
            label_word_fd[label][word] += 1  
    n_xx = label_word_fd.N()  
    high_info_words = set()  
    for label in label_word_fd.conditions():
```

By using these functions, my Python script calculated the likely sentiment on the high information words. This process is based on Python's imitation of my judgment during previous manual labelling. The accuracy rates based on different classifiers are 90.56% according to the naive Bayes Classifier, Maxent Classifier and Max Vote Classifier, and 77.36% according to Decision Tree Classifier.³⁶

I categorized the resulting keywords into three groups: a) places; b) organizations and media outlets; and c) keywords. Within each group, the degree of positivity goes from high to low. See Table 5.5.

Places	Python decisions	Result
Europe	1.0 : 0.0 = 5.1 : 1.0	positive
Hong Kong	1.0 : 0.0 = 3.6 : 1.0	positive
Asia	1.0 : -1.0 = 3.4 : 1.0	positive
China	0.0 : 1.0 = 1.2 : 1.0	neutral
Burma	0.0 : 1.0 = 8.0 : 1.0	neutral
Pakistan	-1.0 : 1.0 = 7.9 : 1.0	negative
India	-1.0 : 1.0 = 8.8 : 1.0	negative

Table 5.5 Sentiments of the words related to places

In Table 5.5, in the column of Python decisions, the numbers on the left represent the result of sentiment. Based on the manually labelled attitude score of either 1, 0, or -1, 1.0 : 0.0, 0.0 : 1.0, -1.0 : 1.0 stand for positive, neutral, and negative, respectively. The numbers on the right represent the ratio of sentiment. For example, the first ratio means that the possibility of the term “Europe” from all collected tweets to be in a positive context is 5.1 : 1.0. Analysed in a complete data set, the sentiment of a keyword or a term is a general result based on the

```

n_xi = label_word_fd[label].N()
word_scores = collections.defaultdict(int)
for word, n_ii in label_word_fd[label].items():
    n_ix = word_fd[word]
    score = score_fn(n_ii, (n_ix, n_xi), n_xx)
    word_scores[word] = score
bestwords = [word for word, score in word_scores.items() if score >= min_score]
high_info_words |= set(bestwords)
return high_info_words
high_info_words3 = list(set(high_information_words(labelled_words,min_score=3)))
featuresetsH3 = [(document_features(d, high_info_words3), c) for (d,c) in documents]

train_setH3, test_setH3 = featuresetsH3[:cutoff], featuresetsH3[cutoff:]
nb_classifierH3= nltk.NaiveBayesClassifier.train(train_setH3)
print(nltk.classify.accuracy(nb_classifierH3, test_setH3)).

```

³⁶ These are classifiers that indicate the accuracy of the results used in general statistics.

collected tweets from various accounts. Thus, the sentiment result of a keyword or a term can only be used to provide a general idea and it cannot be representative for all its appearances. The result from Table 5.5 shows that texts that contain “Europe,” “Hong Kong,” and “Asia” tend to be positive; those that contain “China” and “Burma” tend to be neutral; and those that contain “Pakistan” and “India” tend to be negative.

Organizations & Media outlets	Python decisions	Result
XHNews	1.0 : 0.0 = 6.6 : 1.0	positive
PDChina	1.0 : 0.0 = 4.1 : 1.0	positive
ICS_delhi	0.0 : 1.0 = 13.3 : 1.0	neutral
ASEAN	0.0 : 1.0 = 11.6 : 1.0	neutral
CFC_Officiel	0.0 : 1.0 = 8.0 : 1.0	neutral
TheMyanmarTimes	0.0 : 1.0 = 6.9 : 1.0	neutral
ASIFMAnews	0.0 : 1.0 = 6.2 : 1.0	neutral
CPEC	0.0 : 1.0 = 3.6 : 1.0	neutral
NBRnews	-1.0 : 0.0 = 2.6 : 1.0	negative
SCMP_News	-1.0 : 1.0 = 7.5 : 1.0	negative

Table 5.6 Sentiments of the words related to organizations and media outlets

In the second category, organizations and media outlets, the result shows that messages sent or retweeted by Xinhua News Agency and the *People’s Daily* are positive; those sent or retweeted by NBRnews and SCMP_News are negative; the rest are neutral (see Table 5.6). Taking on the external publicity tasks for the government, it is not surprising that Xinhua and the *People’s Daily* would promote China’s BRI and produce positive sentiments towards the initiative. On the contrary, BNRnews and SCMP_News reflect negative sentiments. NBRnews, the account of the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), is a nonpartisan think tank committed to informing about U.S.-Asia policies. Founded by the Senator Henry M. Jackson Foundation and the Boeing Company in 1989, it conducts research on political and economic issues affecting U.S. relations with Asia. In the Belt and Road discourse online, BNRnews represents a reporting perspective from the U.S. Compared to this, SCMP_News is the account of the *South China Morning Post*, which is a Hong Kong based English newspaper. Currently owned by Alibaba Group, it shows a reporting perspective from a commercial media outlet. This allows me to explain the dichotomous views towards the BRI. The contrasting sentiments from these organizations towards China’s initiative show that their affiliations, resources and ownerships may, to a great extent, decide their positions and reporting perspectives regarding a particular issue.

Keywords	Python decisions	Result
President	1.0 : 0.0 = 4.1 : 1.0	positive
beltandroad	1.0 : 0.0 = 4.0 : 1.0	positive
growth	1.0 : 0.0 = 3.9 : 1.0	positive
opportunities	1.0 : 0.0 = 3.1 : 1.0	positive
economic	1.0 : 0.0 = 3.1 : 1.0	positive
politics	-1.0 : 0.0 = 2.0 : 1.0	negative
geopolitics	-1.0 : 1.0 = 3.2 : 1.0	negative
strategic	-1.0 : 1.0 = 3.8 : 1.0	negative
military	-1.0 : 1.0 = 5.4 : 1.0	negative
enterprises	-1.0 : 1.0 = 5.4 : 1.0	negative
risks	-1.0 : 0.0 = 7.4 : 1.0	negative
loans	-1.0 : 1.0 = 7.5 : 1.0	negative
Abe	-1.0 : 1.0 = 7.5 : 1.0	negative
media	-1.0 : 1.0 = 7.5 : 1.0	negative
debt	-1.0 : 1.0 = 9.0 : 1.0	negative
deal	-1.0 : 1.0 = 9.0 : 1.0	negative
land	-1.0 : 1.0 = 9.0 : 1.0	negative
finance	-1.0 : 1.0 = 9.0 : 1.0	negative
banks	-1.0 : 1.0 = 12.6 : 1.0	negative

Table 5.7 Sentiments of the keywords

In the category of keywords in Table 5.7, tweets that contain “President,” “beltandroad,” “growth,” “opportunities,” and “economic” turn out to be positive. The keywords that convey positivity emphasize the economic growth and opportunities brought by the initiative. The rest of the keywords in this category are negative. These words, associated with negative sentiments, often relate to political and financial aspects, such as “geopolitics,” “strategic,” “loans,” “debt,” “finance,” “banks,” which reflects the major concerns towards the BRI.

Overall, the research through Python provides an in-depth analysis on Twitter users, keywords, bigrams, term co-occurrences, and a sentiment analysis. Mapping out the types of content that are attributed on Twitter to the topic of the BRI, the analysis provides a broad context of how various actors may form the online discourse. First, based on the result that shows the most active users, it can be concluded that there are both Chinese and international players in shaping the discourse on the BRI. Xinhua News Agency and the *People’s Daily* are the two leading accounts in message distribution. The analysis confirms my research initiative with two implications: Xinhua, among many Chinese and international organizations, plays an important role in shaping the online discourse regarding the Belt and Road topic; the study of Xinhua’s online activity on social media platforms can open up avenues to understand the government’s communication strategies. Second, the study identifies the general topics and subtopics through the analyses of keywords, bigrams and term co-occurrences. The analyses suggest that the Twitter accounts recurrently use certain keywords, tropes and rhetorical

figures on the topic of the BRI. Comparing the results with the keywords and rhetorical features deployed by Xinhua alone in Chapter Six and Seven, in which I conducted a quantitative and qualitative combined analysis of Xinhua's messages, it shows a high degree of similarity. For example, the Twitter accounts frequently use the keywords such as "cooperation," "development," "benefits," "new," and "mutual," and so does Xinhua; the tropes such as "partner talk", "huge potential", "boost cooperation", "China welcomes" from the results in this chapter also appear later in Xinhua's messages. This corroborates my expectations that Xinhua consistently and steadily promotes the BRI with particular sets of terms and tropes.

The sentiment analysis demonstrates that messages sent or retweeted by Chinese state-owned media are more positive than those by other (international) media outlets or organizations. This study suggests that Xinhua and the *People's Daily* mainly distribute positive messages to promote China's initiative. In contrast, some accounts express negative attitudes towards this initiative. Examples are the think tank NBRnews from the U.S. and the commercial media outlet the *South China Morning Post* based in Hong Kong. The tweets from these accounts may have an impact on Xinhua's communicative strategies in turn, which explains the purpose of the online responses from Xinhua. As a means of counter-negative publicity, Xinhua would distribute tweets (see Table 7.34 in Chapter Seven) and also publish articles to resolve the negative views (Xinhua net, 2015e).

In this chapter, I demonstrated two different digital methods conducted in different research environments. There are advantages and disadvantages to both software tools. Both Founder and Python can collect large amounts of data for analysis. Besides a function for collecting data from social media platforms, Founder also provides the possibility to collect messages about a specific subject from other media channels, such as news websites, online forums and news aggregators. From my research experience with Founder, I observed that Founder is much quicker in conducting a sentiment analysis and finding which accounts are the most active than Python. However, it has certain limitations: it cannot include data from social media platforms that are not freely accessible in China (such as Facebook or Twitter), and it cannot filter repetitive or commercial posts from robot accounts on Weibo.

Compared to Founder, repetitive or commercial posts can be detected and filtered with Python. By letting Python recognize the structure of tweets, including twitter handle, content,

hashtag, time, and location, it allows more thorough research in terms of textual analysis and sentiment analysis. The advantage is that by importing different libraries, Python can provide analyses for specific research cases. For instance, in my research, I could use the NLTK library to analyse keywords, and the Word Cloud function for visualization.

5.3 Conclusion

Despite the caveats, both programmes, Founder and Python, can be fruitfully used to study discourse on Chinese social media. The broad research I conducted through Founder, during a one-month period in June 2017, shows that the online messages with the keywords “一带一路” are mainly distributed through domestic media channels, including the official newspaper *China Youth Daily*; the commercial online media, including NetEase and iFeng news; and the news aggregators such as UC Headline and Today’s Headline. The top players in distributing the online messages with keywords “Belt and Road” include both Chinese and international media organizations such as the *People’s Daily*, *China Daily*, the *Guardian*, and the *Times of India*.

What follows from the research data on Twitter during the same period, is that Chinese official media organizations such as Xinhua News Agency, the *People’s Daily*, CRI, and *Global Times* play major roles in distributing tweets about the BRI in the English language. Chinese commercial media too, including Caixin Global, Yicai Global, and ICS Shanghai Live, are active in message distribution. The top international players include both state and non-state actors, such as media organizations, institutes, think tanks, and advisory firms.

The exploration of these accounts shows that Xinhua, as one of the many players in shaping the public discourse of the BRI, deals with two different discursive environments from within and outside China. In the domestic online environment on Weibo, Chinese media organizations mainly distribute messages on the topic, although several international media organizations also send messages in the English language. This leads me to conclude that for domestic audiences, the Chinese sources are predominant due to language reasons. Restricted within China, Twitter demonstrates a much more diverse online environment with more international accounts from various backgrounds. This partially results from the common use of the English language, and to the wide recognition of the Twitter platform among

international accounts. In other words, Weibo and Twitter are two different playgrounds generating different discursive contexts. This implies that domestically, Xinhua may have to compete for audiences with other official media outlets and commercial media organizations; whereas internationally, Xinhua may focus on positively portraying China's BRI and countering the negative views from various international organizations. This reinforces the argument earlier from Winner that technologies are inherently political with their own "widely accepted reasons of practical necessity" (Winner, 1980, p. 133). Therefore, Xinhua's differentiation of its internal and external communicative strategies accords with the central government's guidelines for one, and is out of the necessity of adaptation for the other.

In addition to providing a crucial and broader context for my research project, this chapter is also an attempt to incorporate and explore different digital methods in the field of political communication. With the aid of Python, the keywords analyses suggest that many of the top keywords identified in this research are the same as those identified by Yoshikoder in Chapter Six. Through a qualitative analysis, Chapter Seven further examines the discursive contexts of the key expressions and the rhetorical figures that Xinhua deploys in both Chinese and English. The analyses of the bigram terms and term co-occurrences in this chapter indicates that similar expressions and rhetorical figures are used in Xinhua's tweets examined later in Chapter Seven. This implies that, as a key player in shaping the public discourse of this initiative, Xinhua consistently deploys a particular set of literary tropes and rhetorical figures on Twitter in its external communicative agenda. The implications inspired by the results of the data sets in this chapter provide as an important lead for me to examine Xinhua's communicative patterns in details.

Chapter Six

Quantitative Outlook

In this chapter, I conduct a quantitative study to examine Xinhua News Agency's activity on the Sina Weibo and Twitter platforms. To analyse Xinhua's communication strategies on these accounts, I collected its posts and tweets on the specific topic of China's BRI from these two social media sites as a case study.

The time span in this research lasts from the first tweet on reviving the Silk Road on 4 September 2012 to the day I finished collecting tweets and posts on 4 January 2016. The BRI, an example of the Chinese government's diplomacy, is the main case in examining Xinhua's communicative patterns.

With this case study, I examine what role the state media Xinhua plays in internal and external communication, and how Xinhua reaches out to the broadest audience possible through social media platforms. It further serves to examine whether Xinhua performs different functions toward domestic and international audiences on different platforms, and if so, where the strategic differences lie in these posts.

I also intend to explore how Xinhua conceptualizes international news and both internal and external communication; whether social media messaging differs from Xinhua's traditional ways of communication; and how effective Xinhua carries on the government's diplomatic missions on Weibo and Twitter.

I collected Xinhua's posts on Weibo through its seven accounts, and Xinhua's tweets from its official Twitter account, New China. I have collected 28 English posts from Xinhua net English, 71 English posts from Xinhua iReport, 151 Chinese posts from Xinhua net, 20 Chinese posts from China Scoop, 86 Chinese posts from Xinhua International, 68 Chinese posts from Xinhua Viewpoint, and 10 Chinese posts from China Net Affairs. On Twitter, I have collected 189 tweets within the parameters of the case study from Xinhua's account, New China, all in English. Among the total 623 tweets and posts, there are 288 tweets and posts in English and 335 posts in Chinese.

6.1 Categorization

I divided the tweets and posts in my case study into different categorizations. In order to make meaningful comparisons, I calculated the frequencies of posts and tweets in each category as a percentage.

6.1.1 Categories by Topic

The first level of categorization is based on which themes the tweets and posts most frequently discuss in the context of the BRI. These are: diplomacy, economy, culture, reviews, and other. This is to analyse from which perspective Xinhua emphasizes the importance of the BRI the most, and whether there is a significant difference in which perspectives Xinhua uses to talk about the BRI in internal and external communication.

To avoid overlap, it is important to clarify the definition of these categories. The category of diplomacy includes the messages on government officials' visits abroad; the visits of officials from other countries in China; international conferences that emphasize the governments' participation; and the political speeches and opinions by officials. Since there are too many messages to reproduce all in full here, I selected several representative examples to illustrate my point. The messages that fall within this category are:

Nr.17 China beefs up maritime co-op with S Europe for 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road strategy <http://xhne.ws/jhuBQ?>

Nr.24 #China, #Netherlands agree to boost cooperation in Belt and Road Initiative, AIIB <http://xhne.ws/Mkhv0?>

Nr.53 Cultural diplomacy brings #China, Italy together on new Silk Road <http://xhne.ws/hZ656?>

Nr.86 Chinese official urges further Sino-Spanish co-op under #BeltandRoad framework <https://amp.twimg.com/v/e45fa2f2-86f1-4319-988e-33fa3d258730>

Nr.157 Xi Jinping welcomes Maldives in maritime Silk Road construction when meeting Abdulla Yameen <http://xhne.ws/vJ9kW>

Nr.34 【习近平会见德国社民党主席、副总理加布里尔】习近平指出，中德建交 43 年来，两国关系保持平稳健康发展。双方高层交往密切，政治互信不断加强。去年，我在访问德国时同默克尔总理达成一致，将两国关系提升为全方位战略伙伴关系，目的就是进一步丰富两国合作内涵，拓展两国利益汇合点，实现互利共赢。(Translation: Xi Jinping Meets German Social Democratic Party Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister Gabriel. Xi Jinping pointed out that since the establishment of China-Germany diplomatic tie 43 years ago, the relations between the two countries have maintained a steady and healthy development. The two sides have maintained close and high-level exchanges, and the political mutual trust has been continuously strengthened. Last year, during my visit to Germany, I reached an agreement with Prime Minister Merkel to upgrade bilateral relations into a

comprehensive strategic partnership. The purpose is to further enrich the connotation of bilateral cooperation, expand the convergence of interests between the two countries, and achieve mutual benefits and win-win results.)

Nr.48 【中俄发表联合声明：将丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设相对接】中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦8日在莫斯科发表《中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明》。中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明（全文）(Translation: China and Russia issue a joint statement: linking the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt with the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union. The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation released in Moscow on the 8th "The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Joint Statement on Cooperation in Economic Alliance Construction." Joint Statement of the Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union (full text).)

Nr.13 【对“一带一路”，各国政党大佬怎么看？】对“一带一路”，各国政党大佬怎么看？据视点君了解，此次会议旨在促进亚洲国家和丝路沿线有关国家政党更好了解中国“一带一路”战略构想并开展相关合作。15日，各国政党大佬们围绕“政治引领：丝路政党新共识”“民心相通：丝路文明新对话”和“经济融合：丝路国家发展新动力”三个分议题进行了深入的交流和探讨。10月15日，中共中央总书记、国家主席习近平在北京会见出席亚洲政党丝绸之路专题会议的外方主要代表。新华社记者黄敬文摄 (Translation: On "Belt and Road," what are the perspectives from the political parties in various countries? On the Belt and Road Initiative, what are the perspectives from the political parties in various countries? According to Xinhua Viewpoint, the meeting aims to promote the understanding of China's "Belt and Road" strategic concept and related cooperation between Asian countries and parties along the "Silk Road." On the 15th, the political parties from various countries conducted in-depth exchanges and discussion on three topics: "Political Guidance: New Consensus for Silk Road Parties," "Public Connectivity: New Dialogue on Silk Road Civilization," and "Economic Integration: New Drive for Silk Road Countries." On October 15 in Beijing, General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee and President Xi Jinping met with representatives from various countries who attended the Asian Political Party Silk Road Special Conference. Xinhua News Agency reporter Huang Jingwen.)

In the second category, economy, the messages are about investments, contracts, banking activities, projects, products, and information services, and about international conferences, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) and Boao Conference. There is some potential overlap with the diplomacy category, among the messages on the international conferences that also involve governments' attendances. Of those, I put the ones with a stronger feature on economic collaboration and investment than on the political significance into the category of economy. Some messages in this category are:

Nr.23 #Europe's 2nd largest port eyes active role in China-proposed #Beltandroad initiative <http://xhne.ws/q0nOR?>

Nr.57 Chinese companies ink 1,401 project contracts along #BeltandRoad in H1 <http://xhne.ws/vjYSh?>

Nr.83 #BankofChina lists 322-mln USD bond for #BeltandRoad initiative on @NasdaqDubai <http://xhne.ws/7ELP4?>

Nr.139 China's 40 billion-U.S. dollar Silk Road Fund, with senior management team seated, to start investment soon:...

Nr.153 Maritime Silk Road expo ends in S. China, deals worth US\$28.6 bln signed <http://xhne.ws/Gwbrv?>

Nr.27 【企业借道“新华丝路”进军“一带一路”市场】“新华丝路”是基于互联网的信息产品，主要包括四类产品：数据库、征信服务、信息咨询和智库服务、交易撮合，通过提供高效便捷、实时实用的经济信息服务，为沿线各国政府和企业搭建商品贸易和投资合作平台。“新华丝路”为“一带一路”投资者提供个性化信息服务 (Translation: Enterprises take the route of “Xinhua Silk Road” to enter the “Belt and Road” market. “Xinhua Silk Road” is an internet-based information product that mainly provides four types of products: databases, credit information services, information consulting and think tank services, and transaction integration. It provides efficient, convenient, real-time and practical economic information services, and it aims to build a platform for commodity trade and investment cooperation for governments and enterprises along the route. “Xinhua Silk Road” provides personalized information services for the “Belt and Road” investors.)

Nr.43 #聚焦 5·18# 【首届海丝博览会暨第 17 届海交会重点“三维”项目签约超 800 亿】5 月 18 日，首届 21 世纪海上丝绸之路博览会暨第十七届海峡两岸经贸交易会重点“三维”项目签约仪式举行。本次签约仪式现场上台重点“三维”项目 59 项，总投资 814.01 亿元，总投资比去年增加 143.56 亿元。海博会福州重点“三维”项目签约 59 项 总投资超 814 亿 (Translation: #Focus 5-18# The first Haisi Expo and the 17th Haihui Meeting focused on “three-dimensional” projects signed more than 80 billion yuan. On May 18, the first 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Expo and the 17th Cross-Straits Trade Fair held the signing ceremony for the “3D” project. At the signing ceremony, there were 59 key “three-dimensional” projects, with a total investment of 81.401 billion yuan. The total investment increased by 14.356 billion yuan over last year. Haibo’s Fuzhou key three-dimensional project signed 59 projects with a total investment of over 81.4 billion yuan.)

Nr.75 【从博鳌论坛看资本市场四大关键词】2015 年博鳌亚洲论坛昨日正式拉开帷幕。分析人士表示，结合官方公布议程安排来看，“一带一路”、三农、“互联网+”、国企改革等四大关键词将成为博鳌亚洲论坛召开期间资本市场关注新焦点，相关概念股也将迎来新的上涨契机。(Translation: From the Boao Forum to see the four major keywords in the capital market. The 2015 Boao Forum for Asia officially kicked off yesterday. Analysts said that in conjunction with the official announcement of the agenda, the four keywords including “Belt and Road,” “San Nong,” “Internet+,” and the reform of state-owned enterprises will become the focus in the capital market during the Boao Forum for Asia. Relevant concept stocks will also see new rising opportunities.)

Nr.100 【习近平：要以创新思维办好亚洲基础设施投资银行和丝路基金】习近平主持召开中央财经领导小组第八次会议时指出，发起并同一些国家合作建立亚洲基础设施投资银行是要为“一带一路”有关沿线国家的基础设施建设提供资金支持，促进经济合作。设立丝路基金是要利用我国资金实力直接支持“一带一路”建设。(Translation: Xi Jinping: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Silk Road Fund should be established with innovative thinking. When Xi Jinping presided over the eighth meeting of the Central Financial Leadership Group, he pointed out that initiating and cooperating with other countries to establish an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is to provide financial support for the infrastructure construction of countries along the route and to further promote economic cooperation. The establishment of the Silk Road Fund is to use China’s financial strength to directly support the Belt and Road Initiative.)

The third category, culture, includes messages about the history of the ancient caravan route known as the Silk Road and the preservation of cultural heritage in the areas this route covered, among which cultural traditions in those areas that are still active until today: food culture, religious activities, and various international cultural activities and festivals. Again, to avoid overlap, I put tweets in this category where culture is the dominant topic. For instance, a tweet based on food export but emphasizing the promotion of Halal food and Muslim culture is put in the category of culture rather than economy; however, a post discussing China’s relationship with African countries from a historical perspective belongs to the category of culture instead of diplomacy. Some messages from this category are:

Nr.2 200+ sculptures made of 150,000 cubic m of snow are on display in NE #China, featuring #SilkRoad cultures #XinhuaTV

Nr.20 Pieces of history! Untold story of legendary Silk Road recorded by thousand-year-old coins <http://xhne.ws/mre8k?>

Nr.67 Cradle of Chinese #kungfu to send monks to tour #SilkRoad for cultural exchange <http://xhne.ws/MupxQ?>

Nr.104 One year after Silk Road UNESCO inscription, preservation continues <http://xhne.ws/cbOQz?>

Nr.109 Beijing Week celebrates Marco Polo's new Silk Road at Expo Milano 2015 <http://xhne.ws/fpAm7?>

Nr.4 【中非的“铁”超乎你想象】中国与非洲相距遥远,但中非关系源远流长。汉朝的丝绸、瓷器通过西域远销地中海海岸,郑和七下西洋四抵东非沿海诸国,古代的海陆丝绸之路早已将中非两地文明联系在一起。近代民族独立解放运动以来,共同的历史遭遇、共同的奋斗历程让中非结下了兄弟般情谊。历史见证 | 中非的“铁”超乎你想象 (Translation: China and Africa's "iron" friendship is beyond your imagination. China and Africa are far apart, but China-Africa relations have a long history. The silk and porcelain of the Han dynasty were exported to the Mediterranean Sea coast through the Western Regions. Zheng He's four voyages to the West Coast arrived in the coastal countries of East Africa. The ancient land-sea Silk Road had long linked the civilizations of China and Africa. Since the national independence and liberation movement, the common historical experience and common struggle allowed China and Africa to form a fraternal friendship. Historical witness | Central Africa's "iron" friendship is beyond your imagination.)

Nr.101 【国家文物局副局长: 中国文化从未“闭关锁国”】考古发现认为, 公元前 5 世纪中国就和中亚、西亚建立联系, 之后在汉代打通了东西方交通的大道, 而宋代以来“海上丝绸之路”从未断。国家文物局副局长宋新潮提出, 基于以上发现, 可以说中国的文化始终是跟世界文化联系在一起的。国家文物局副局长: 中国文化从未“闭关锁国” (Translation: Deputy director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage: Chinese culture has never "closed." Archaeological discoveries suggest that in the 5th century BC, China established relations with Central Asia and West Asia, and afterwards opened the road between East and West in the Han Dynasty. Since the Song Dynasty, this road has never been broken. According to Song Xinchao, deputy director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, based on the above findings, China's culture has always been associated with world culture. Deputy Director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage: Chinese culture has never "closed.")

Nr.108 【你想来趟丝绸之路旅行吗?】丝绸之路在我国遗产点包括: 汉魏洛阳城遗址、汉长安城未央宫遗址、张骞墓、唐长安城大明宫遗址、大雁塔、小雁塔、玉门关遗址、麦积山石窟、炳灵寺石窟、锁阳城遗址、高昌故城、交河故城、克孜尔石窟、苏巴什佛寺遗址、北庭故城遗址……等 22 处。走起! via @央视新闻 (Translation: Do you want to travel through the Silk Road? The Silk Road heritage sites in China include: Han and Wei Luoyang City site, Han Chang'an City Weiyanggong site, Zhang Qiang tomb, Tang Chang'an City Daming Palace site, Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Yumen Pass Ruins, Maijishan Grottoes, Bingling Temple Grottoes, Suoyang City Ruins, Gaochang Old City, Jiaohe Ancient City, Kizil Grottoes, Subach Buddhist Temple Ruins, Beiting Ancient Ruins, etc. let's go! Via @ CCTV News)

Nr.135 【文化古城塔什干一瞥】乌兹别克斯坦是一个有深厚文化底蕴的国家。首都塔什干是古“丝绸之路”上重要的商业枢纽之一, 有文献记载的历史达 1500 多年。人口约 250 万, 是乌政治、经济、文化和交通中心。按人口, 塔什干是中亚最大、独联体内仅次于莫斯科、圣彼得堡和基辅的第 4 大城市。(沙达提摄) via @新国际 (Translation: A view of the historic city Tashkent. Uzbekistan is a country with profound cultural heritage. The capital, Tashkent, is one of the important commercial hubs on the ancient "Silk Road" and has a documented history of more than 1,500 years. With a population of about 2.5 million, it is a political, economic, cultural and transportation centre in Uzbekistan. By population, Tashkent is the fourth largest city in Central Asia, after Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev. (Photo by Shaddati) via @New International)

The fourth category is made up of reviews. The messages in this category include experts' opinions and Xinhua's editorial comments on the BRI as well as government officials' quotes. The reason to set up this category is that many messages contain the phrase "the expert says ..."³⁷ By reading through all the tweets and posts, I found that the experts' opinions and the editors' comments or interpretation of the officials' quotes often lack detailed information, and these messages tend to be very general and positive. This is a reason to offset them from the other categories, that are markedly different in style and tone. Some tweets and posts in this category are:

Nr.40 Institutionalized platforms needed for Europe to better interact with "Belt and Road": expert <http://xhne.ws/wthlp?>

Nr.68 #XinhuaSilkRoad products help #BeltandRoad investors form better partnership: Aussie experts <http://xhne.ws/AZFZz?>

Nr.73 Kyrgyzstan to play positive role in integration of #SCO, #SilkRoad and #EEU: expert <http://xhne.ws/2DPGL?>

Nr.106 China's Belt and Road initiative will benefit regional countries: expert <http://bit.ly/1MgkcUG?>

Nr.127 U.S. scholars say China's #SilkRoad initiative "a great and historic endeavor" <http://xhne.ws/taOIB?>

Nr.55 【一分钟读懂“一带一路”大战略】什么是“一带一路”? 谁将受益? 五大合作重点都有哪些? 亚投行对“一带一路”意味着什么? (Translation: One minute to understand the “Belt and Road” grand strategy. What is the “Belt and Road”? Who will benefit? What are the five major cooperation priorities? What does the AIIB mean to the “Belt and Road”?)

Nr.67 【很火的“一带一路”将给中国、世界和你的生活带来什么】“一带一路”看起来高大上, 实际上看得见、摸得着。透过这份愿景与行动, 可以清晰地看到“一带一路”给中国、沿线国家和百姓带来的实实在在的益处。(Translation: What will the hot “Belt and Road” bring to China, the world, and your life? The “Belt and Road” looks grand and noble, but it is actually down-to-earth. Through this vision and action, we can clearly see the tangible benefits brought by the “Belt and Road” to China, the countries along the route, and the people.)

Nr.140 【21 世纪新丝路】法国中国问题专家、巴黎第八大学地缘政治学博士皮埃尔·皮卡尔认为, 习近平有关建设“丝绸之路经济带”的倡议十分新颖, 这一倡议通过与欧亚国家建设 21 世纪的新丝绸之路, 使古丝绸之路的经济和文化精神得以重新体现。 via @新国际 (Translation: The 21st Century New Silk Road. French expert on China and geopolitical studies scholar at the University of Paris Eighth, Pierre Picard, believes that Xi Jinping's initiative to build the “Silk Road Economic Belt” is very innovative. This initiative has been adopted in cooperation with Eurasian countries. The new Silk Road in the 21st Century has re-embossed the economic and cultural spirit of the ancient Silk Road. Via @NewInternational)

Nr141 【推动跨区域发展、合作和繁荣】印度资深战略分析家、陆军退役准将肖普拉说, 习近平提出建设“丝绸之路经济带”的主张有重大意义, 将推动跨区域发展、合作和繁荣。中国和印度在建设新丝绸之路方面有很大合作前景。 via @新国际 (Translation: Promoting cross-regional development, cooperation and prosperity. India's senior strategic analyst and currently retired Brigadier General Chopra said that Xi Jinping's proposal to build a “Silk Road Economic Belt” is of great significance and will promote cross-regional development, cooperation,

³⁷ During my field work, a number of interviewees mentioned that “the experts' opinions” often became titles of Xinhua's news.

and prosperity. China and India have great prospects for cooperation in building a new Silk Road. Via @NewInternational)

The last category is named “other.” Coincidentally, this category contains the least number of messages. This category holds messages that pertain to the BRI, but are not written from a diplomatic, economic, or cultural viewpoint and/or do not convey a “review” style. These messages include tweets and posts about education, health, entertainment, weather, etc. Some messages in this category are:

Nr.150 A woman with her child walk on a caravansary in Iranian city of Qazvin, an important station of the Silk Road

Nr.16 【中外影人丝路电影节“蓝毯”秀 成龙刘德华等大咖云集】26日晚，来自多国的中外众多电影人踏上了第二届丝绸之路国际电影节的闭幕式“蓝毯”。陈凯歌、陈红、刘德华、唐国强、中野良子、郑淳元、吴京、杨舒婷、欧阳娜娜等国内外知名电影人如约亮相。中外影人丝路电影节“蓝毯”秀 成龙刘德华等大咖云集 (Translation: Chinese and International Silk Road Film Festival “Blue Carpet” show. Jackie Chan, Andy Lau and other movie stars gathered on the evening of the 26th. Many Chinese and international actors embarked on the closing ceremony of the 2nd Silk Road Film Festival “Blue Carpet.” Chen Kaige, Chen Hong, Andy Lau, Tang Guoqiang, Nakano Yoshiko, Zheng Junyuan, Wu Jing, Yang Shuting, Ouyang Nana and other well-known actors made appearances at the festival. Chinese and International Silk Road Film Festival “Blue Carpet” show. Jackie Chan, Andy Lau and other movie stars gathered during the event.)

Nr.39 【新一轮高考改革元年:语文考试有何不同?】7日举行的首个高考科目是语文。专家指出，今年命题的一大重点是要给学生上“生动一课”。全国二卷的“一带一路”、安徽卷的亚投行、湖北卷的南水北调……今年高考语文试卷中，社会热点、新闻时事、国家大政等内容很多。专家解读 2015 年高考作文 (Translation: The first year of college entrance examination reform: What is the difference in Chinese language examination? The first college entrance examination subject held on the 7th was Chinese. Experts pointed out that one of the major focuses of this year’s exam is to give students a “vivid lesson.” The “Belt and Road,” the AIIB, and the South-to-North water transfer... In this year’s college entrance examination, there are many social hot spots, news and current events, and state affairs. Experts interpret the 2015 college entrance exam.)

The distribution over these categories of the number of messages that fit the case study’s parameters is shown below (Table 6.1):

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language
New China	55	38	42	53	1	189	English
Xinhua net English	12	4	6	6	0	28	English
Xinhua iReport	11	13	30	16	1	71	English
Xinhua net	57	16	22	47	9	151	Chinese
China Scoop	0	1	18	1	0	20	Chinese
Xinhua International	39	8	25	13	1	86	Chinese
Xinhua Viewpoint	5	14	28	17	4	68	Chinese
China net Affairs	3	2	3	0	2	10	Chinese
Total	182	96	174	153	18	623	

Table 6.1 Categorization according to topic

From the total of 623 messages, the number of the messages in English is 288: 189 on Twitter and 99 on Weibo. The number of Chinese messages in Chinese is 335, all from the five Chinese accounts on Weibo.

The percentages in each category are (Table 6.2):

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language	Platform
New China	29.1%	20.1%	22.22%	28.04%	0.53%	189	English	Twitter
Xinhua net English	42.86%	14.29%	21.43%	21.43%	0%	28	English	Weibo
Xinhua iReport	15.49%	18.31%	42.25%	22.54%	1.41%	71	English	Weibo
Xinhua net	37.75%	10.6%	14.57%	31.13%	5.96%	151	Chinese	Weibo
China Scoop	0%	5%	90%	5%	0%	20	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua International	45.35%	9.3%	29.07%	15.12%	1.16%	86	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua Viewpoint	7.35%	20.59%	41.18%	25%	5.88%	68	Chinese	Weibo
China net Affairs	30%	20%	30%	0%	20%	10	Chinese	Weibo
Total	29.21%	15.41%	27.93%	24.56%	2.89%	623		

Table 6.2 Percentages of messages from each account, based on topic

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Platform
New China (English)	29.1%	20.1%	22.22%	28.04%	0.53%	189	Twitter
Xinhua's Weibo accounts (English)	23.23%	17.17%	36.36%	22.22%	1.01%	99	Weibo
Xinhua's Weibo accounts (Chinese)	31.04%	12.24%	28.66%	23.28%	4.78%	335	Weibo

Table 6.3 Percentages of messages from Xinhua's accounts in English and Chinese, based on topic

It is worth mentioning that the accounts New China on Twitter, and Xinhua iReport and China Scoop on Weibo, are all set up by Xinhua Overseas Department. Therefore, the majority of English posts from Xinhua iReport are the same as the tweets from New China.

The numbers and percentages in these categories provide an overview of Xinhua's perspectives on the BRI. Among the eight accounts on social media platforms, Xinhua Overseas Department is responsible for the Twitter account New China with 189 tweets. The account of Xinhua's official website, Xinhua net, provided the most posts, 151 posts, on Weibo. On both Twitter and Weibo, Xinhua tends to post more messages on diplomacy and culture than on the other topics. New China, Xinhua net English, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International produce the most messages on diplomacy. Xinhua iReport, China Scoop, and

Xinhua Viewpoint produce more messages on culture. Except the category for “other,” Xinhua provides the least number of messages on the topic of economy. Comparing New China and Xinhua net, 20.1% of the tweets and 10.6% of the posts are related to economy. Their messages include the ones that mention figures of financial input and contracts in the economic progress of the BRI.

6.1.2 Categories by Period

To examine how the news agenda of Chinese state media changes through time, I applied a categorization in time periods to the tweets and posts in my case study. The number of messages that fall in each of these periods is shown below (Table 6.4):

Period	New China	Xinhua net English	Xinhua iReport	Xinhua net	China Scoop	Xinhua International	Xinhua Viewpoint	China net Affairs
Up to 30 Jun 2013	2	0	0	3	1	1	1	1
1 Jul to 31 Dec 2013	16	0	26	26	13	30	3	1
1 Jan to 30 Jun 2014	12	3	10	15	2	8	17	5
1 Jul to 31 Dec 2014	10	5	11	13	4	7	11	1
1 Jan to 30 Jun 2015	65	14	22	57	1	21	26	1
1 Jul 2015 to 4 Jan 2016	84	6	2	37	0	19	10	1

Table 6.4 Categorization according to period

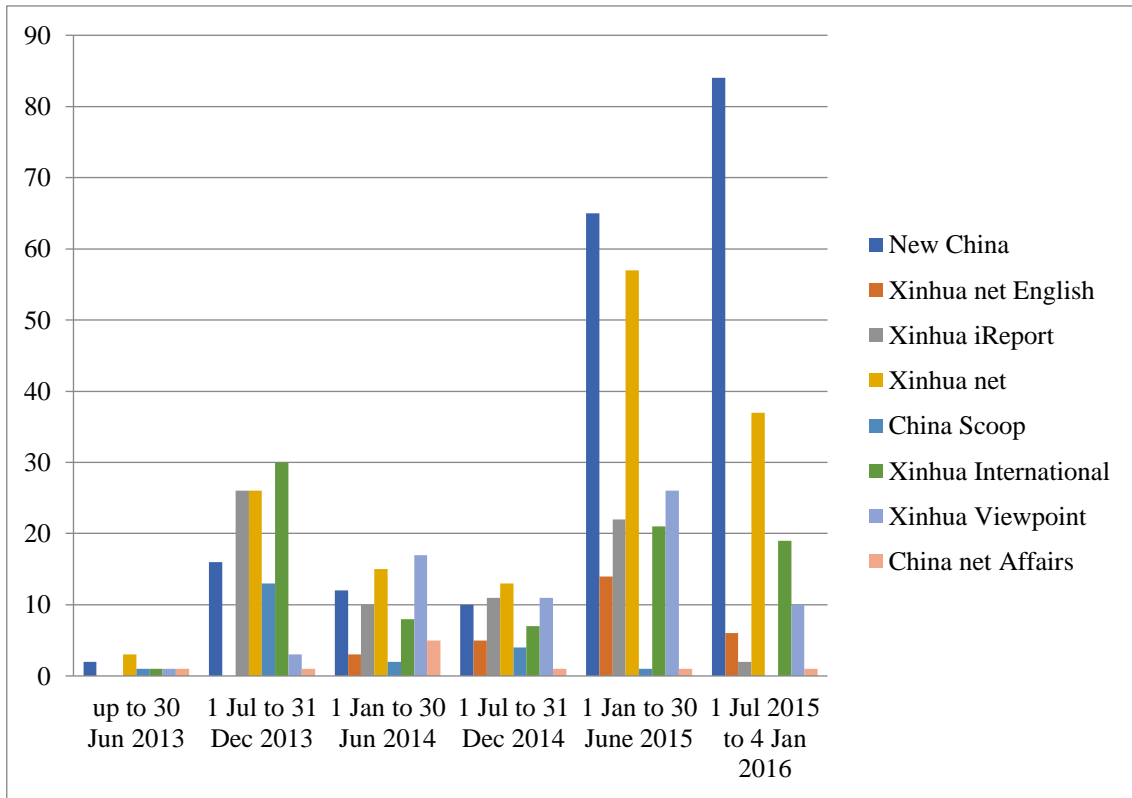


Figure 6.1 Message distribution according to time

The result shows different levels of activity of Xinhua’s accounts in reporting the BRI through time. In 2013, Xinhua International distributed the most messages and showed the biggest growth during the second half of the year. In 2015, Xinhua’s Twitter account New China distributed the most messages and saw the biggest growth. Most of Xinhua’s Weibo accounts saw an increase in message distribution in the second half of 2013 and the first half of 2015, too, but a decline in the second half.

The increase of the message distribution in these two periods of time correlates with the critical steps taken by the central government to roll out the BRI. The second half of 2013 was a crucial period of forming the BRI through both diplomatic ties and domestic support. In September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a visit to Kazakhstan and officially introduced the concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt (the Belt) during his speech at Nazarbayev University; in October 2013, in his speech at the Indonesian parliament, Xi presented both the proposal of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (the Road) to build a China-ASEAN community and the plan of establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); in the following months, the central government reinforced the idea of

facilitating the BRI within China during the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee.

Compared to the policy formation period in late 2013, the first half of 2015 saw an early implementation of the BRI. In January 2015, the founding members of the AIIB increased to 26 countries; in March, the BRI became China's diplomacy in 2015 and the government officially rolled out a plan of action on the framework and priorities of the initiative (Xinhua net, 2015f). This suggests that, by announcing and making decisions, the government influences Xinhua's priorities in message distribution to a great extent.

I extracted the tweets and posts from these periods of increase, 1 July to 31 December 2013 and 1 January to 30 June 2015, for a closer look and comparison. By mapping out the topic categories specifically for the messages in these two periods, I aim to find out what perspectives Xinhua focused on during the times its messaging activity significantly increased. The result is shown below (Table 6.5 and 6.6):

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language	platform
New China	0	1	14	1	0	16	English	Twitter
Xinhua net	0	0	0	0	0	0	English	Weibo
English								
Xinhua iReport	0	0	24	2	0	26	English	Weibo
Xinhua net	14	0	8	4	0	26	Chinese	Weibo
China Scoop	0	0	13	0	0	13	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua	17	0	12	1	0	30	Chinese	Weibo
International								
Xinhua Viewpoint	0	0	1	0	2	3	Chinese	Weibo
China net Affairs	0	0	0	0	1	1	Chinese	Weibo
Total	31	1	72	8	3	115		

Table 6.5 Messages from the period 1 July to 31 December 2013, distributed according to topic

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language	platform
New China	26	10	9	20	0	65	English	Twitter
Xinhua net	3	0	3	8	0	14	English	Weibo
English								
Xinhua iReport	2	5	2	13	0	22	English	Weibo
Xinhua net	13	9	3	29	3	57	Chinese	Weibo
China Scoop	0	0	0	1	0	1	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua	11	1	4	5	0	21	Chinese	Weibo
International								
Xinhua Viewpoint	2	6	3	13	2	26	Chinese	Weibo
China net Affairs	1	0	0	0	0	1	Chinese	Weibo
Total	58	31	24	89	2	207		

Table 6.6 Messages from the period 1 January to 30 June 2015, distributed according to topic

The combined number of messages in these two periods is 322, which is more than half of the total messages of 623 in this case study. In the second half of 2013, the highest number of messages was related to culture, followed by those related to diplomacy. The first half of 2015 showed a different image: here, the categories of reviews and diplomacy had the highest numbers of messages, and messages related to culture dropped both in absolute numbers as well as relative to the total number of messages on the BRI, compared to 2013's second half.

When looking at the activity of the individual accounts, we see that from 1 July till 31 December 2013, New China provided the least number of tweets, followed by Xinhua iReport, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International. From 1 January till 30 June 2015, however, New China rose to prominence as the leading account, next to Xinhua net, in distributing messages related to the BRI.

To analyse what factors may determine the changing perspectives, from culture and diplomacy to reviews and diplomacy, between these two periods of increase, I focused on the detailed tweets and posts from the accounts New China, Xinhua iReport, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International (see Table 6.7 and 6.8).

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language	platform
New China	0	1	14	1	0	16	English	Twitter
Xinhua iReport	0	0	24	2	0	26	English	Weibo
Xinhua net	14	0	8	4	0	26	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua International	17	0	12	1	0	30	Chinese	Weibo

Table 6.7 Messages from the accounts New China, Xinhua iReport, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International from 1 July till 31 December 2013

	Diplomacy	Economy	Culture	Reviews	Other	Total	Language	platform
New China	26	10	9	20	0	65	English	Twitter
Xinhua iReport	2	5	2	13	0	22	English	Weibo
Xinhua net	13	9	3	29	3	57	Chinese	Weibo
Xinhua International	11	1	4	5	0	21	Chinese	Weibo

Table 6.8 Messages from the accounts New China, Xinhua iReport, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International From 1 January till 30 June 2015

Since the accounts New China and Xinhua iReport are managed by the Xinhua Overseas Department, it is worth exploring which messages are duplicates, and which messages only appear on Twitter or Weibo. From 1 July till 31 December 2013, among the 16 tweets on New China and 26 posts on Xinhua iReport, 15 messages are identical. The posts and tweets from both platforms are highly repetitive and they all start with the same hashtag (#OntheSilkRoad) at the beginning of each message. Most of the messages appear to be distributed simultaneously on both accounts from 4 July to 30 July 2013, illustrating Xinhua's campaign to raise public awareness of preserving Silk Road heritage, such as the Bingling Temple grottoes, various Buddhist statues, and a section of the Great Wall. These messages emphasize the importance of the Silk Road to be included on UNESCO's World Heritage List. In July 2013, Xinhua reported on the experts' investigation on the Silk Road, and later, in November 2013, mentioned for the first time the "Silk Road economic belt agreement," which is the earliest name for the BRI. In the following year, 2014, "Silk Road economic belt" and "Maritime Silk Road" became the frequent expressions that denote the government's initiative.

From 1 January till 30 June 2015, among the 65 tweets on New China and 22 posts on Xinhua iReport, 17 messages were posted on both accounts. In the first appearances, the messages on both accounts in January 2015 introduced the BRI, and this expression becomes the one most frequently used, compared to the previous ones. During this period, New China outdid Xinhua iReport in terms of message distribution, and became the most proactive account of all of Xinhua's Weibo accounts. The general tendency of Xinhua iReport is to post reviews on the initiative from China's perspective, and to not cover diplomatic activities, or which other governments engage in the initiative. In contrast to this, nearly one third of the tweets on New China are about diplomatic activities, relations with neighbouring countries, and how different countries have participated or have been involved in the initiative. This may mean that New China's messages with a diplomatic perspective are specifically targeted at international audiences. Even though New China and Xinhua iReport have posted about the Silk Road's UNESCO inclusion before, the perspective has shifted from its cultural significance to its role in diplomacy.

From 1 July till 31 December 2013, among the 26 posts on Xinhua net and 30 posts on Xinhua International, there are 20 duplicate messages. The time and date that the duplicate

messages were posted show that Xinhua net would repost them from Xinhua International in about ten minutes. Xinhua International played a more proactive role in this period, and more than half of the posts from both accounts were about President Xi's visits to Central Asian countries, the majority of which start with the hashtag #习主席出访# (*Xi zhuxi chufang*, President Xi's visit in translation). Those posts in the category of culture are mostly about history of different capital cities in Central Asia and their relations with historical cities in China.

From 1 January till 30 June 2015, among the 57 posts on Xinhua net and 21 messages on Xinhua International, there is one message that is posted on both accounts. Xinhua net, as the more active account than Xinhua International, provides 57 posts, among which 29 posts are reviews, thirteen posts are related to diplomacy, and three posts are related to culture. Compared to Xinhua International, this account distributes 21 posts with five posts of reviews, 11 posts related to diplomacy, and four posts related to culture. In the earlier period in 2013, the message distribution from the two accounts shows a high level of repetition. In contrast to this, the content in this period of 2015 from the two accounts demonstrates a distinction. Xinhua net tends to report on diplomatic activities and to provide reviews from China's perspective. Xinhua International tends to report through a perspective of foreign countries or foreign governments' officials. The reason may be that Xinhua net accounts are often updated by domestic journalists and Xinhua International by foreign correspondents.

Xinhua has different reporting strategies for internal and external news and audiences: for an intended international audience, New China reports reviews and events from an international perspective, and Xinhua iReport keeps a reporting perspective from China; for an intended national audience, Xinhua net reports reviews and events from a national perspective, and Xinhua International reports reviews and events from an international perspective.

Overall, the message distribution shows Xinhua places the government's decisions as high priorities in both internal and external communication. Comparing their message distribution in 2013 and 2015, these four accounts have increased the number of reviews and decreased the number of messages about culture. Both New China on Twitter and Xinhua net on Weibo become the two leading accounts by distributing the most messages. New China shifts its reporting perspective from culture to diplomacy through time, and the reviews and opinions it

provides, tend to be mostly from foreign experts and foreign government officials rather than Chinese. In contrast to this, Xinhua net, which distributed more reviews in 2015 than in 2013, focuses mainly on events within China, and reviews and speeches by Chinese officials. This shows that overall, Xinhua has different strategies in terms of internal and external communication.

6.1.3 Categories by Region

The third level of categorization is based on geopolitical regions. I divided the posts and tweets pertaining to the BRI that talk about international economic projects and diplomatic activities into the following geopolitical categories: East & South Asia, Central Asia, Russia, Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and Africa. Through collecting the quantitative data according to spatial boundaries, this geographic categorization is intended to compare the Chinese government’s relations and foreign policies with different geopolitical regions.

I initially started a categorization in continents and regions. Since the infrastructure projects are distinctively separate in East South Asia and Central Asia, I decided to keep the messages related to these two regions apart. To examine whether Xinhua uses different themes and tones when reporting on these regions, initially, I attempted to make a distinction between western Europe and eastern Europe, but there were too few messages from eastern Europe to merit this distinction. Therefore, the messages are merged into one. One of the exceptions to this continent/region mode of categorization is Russia, as in the BRI, China’s collaboration with Russia is independent from either Europe or Central Asia. In a similar vein, instead of using a category for the whole of North America, I created one for the United States, since the only messages that fit into this category were related to the United States.

Not all of Xinhua’s social media accounts lend themselves to this categorization. China Scoop has not distributed any message relevant to this categorization, and Xinhua Viewpoint and China net Affairs have very few relevant messages. Therefore, I only discuss Xinhua’s other accounts that have consistently distributed messages that fit into geopolitical categories. Messages distributed according to this categorization are shown below (Table 6.9 and Figure 6.1):

East	Central	Russia	Europe	The	Middle	Africa	Total
------	---------	--------	--------	-----	--------	--------	-------

	&South Asia	Asia			United States	East		
New China	18	6	3	29	5	14	2	77
Xinhua net English	3	4	0	2	1	0	1	11
Xinhua iReport	6	2	0	1	2	2	0	13
Xinhua net	18	26	3	6	1	5	1	60
Xinhua International	12	27	4	10	3	9	0	65
Total	57	65	10	48	12	30	4	226

Table 6.9 Categorization according to geopolitical regions

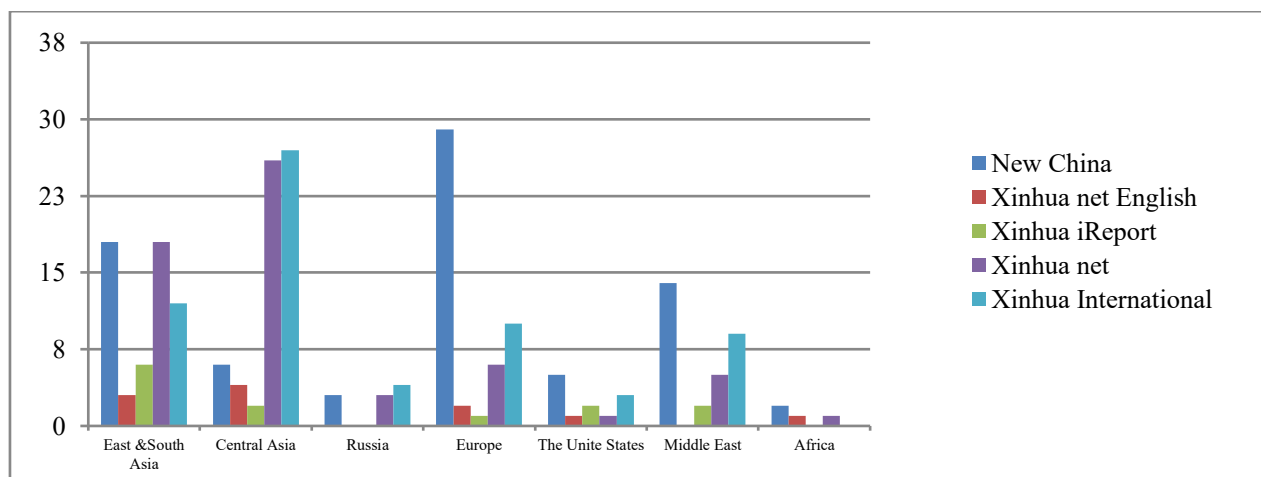


Figure 6.2 Message distribution according to geopolitical regions

The following observations can be drawn from this. First, New China, Xinhua net, and Xinhua International have distributed more messages than Xinhua net English and Xinhua iReport. Second, the categories of East and South Asia, Central Asia, and Europe consist of larger numbers of messages than the other categories. Third, New China distributes the most messages in the category of Europe, and Xinhua net and Xinhua International distribute the most messages in the category of Central Asia. Fourth, New China and Xinhua net distribute the same amounts of messages in the category of East and South Asia. What we can gather from these observations is that in promoting the BRI, Xinhua's Twitter account focuses more on China's relations with European Countries, and Xinhua's Weibo accounts focuses more on the relations with Central Asia.

As with periods, I also related these geopolitical categories to topics. In the tweets related to Europe, there is a strong emphasis on the economic cooperation between China and European countries in terms of banking, investment, and logistics. In contrast to this, the Weibo posts

related to Central Asia tend to emphasize the cultural and historical bond between China and Central Asian countries. This raises the question whether New China, managed by Xinhua's Overseas Department, has a goal of "advertising" towards the English-speaking audiences; and whether Xinhua net and Xinhua International intend to mobilize the Chinese domestic audiences in the discourse of "reviving the past glory with neighbouring countries." If so, then Xinhua functions as an outlet of public relations externally, and as a tool of ideological work internally. To understand how Xinhua carries out the different communicative strategies, I then conducted a keywords analysis in the following section and an extensive qualitative analysis in Chapter Seven.

6.2 Keywords Frequency

Two of Xinhua News Agency's social media accounts, New China on Twitter and Xinhua net on Weibo, publish the highest amount of messages about the BRI on the two social media sites, compared to Xinhua's other accounts. Therefore, I identified the keywords of the tweets and posts from these two accounts of Xinhua for further analysis.

In order to collect and compare the keywords of both the English text of New China and the Chinese text of Xinhua net, I used the software Yoshikoder 6.5.0 and CNCorpus.org (*yuliaoku zaixian*, 语料库在线) for a content analysis. In my corpus, Xinhua's account New China has published 189 tweets on Twitter with total 2249 English words, and the account Xinhua net has published 151 posts on Weibo with total 17111 Chinese characters.

There are in total 8642 words (or terms) in the Chinese text, and 2249 words in the English texts. In treating them as proper, primary sources, I kept both Weibo posts and Twitter tweets in their original formats as they appeared on social media platforms. This means that I kept the hashtags (#) and mentions (@) "as is." This has implications for the word count. In English tweets, hashtags such as #beltandroad and #silkroad occur. Here, the individual words ("belt," "and," "silk," and "road") are not divided by spaces that function as word boundaries in text-processing software. Therefore, the analysing software counts them as a single word, not as multiple words. The Chinese case is different. Word divisions are not formed by spaces, as each character counts as a word or term in itself. However, a hashtag symbol does group the characters that follow it into one word for a word-counting tool such as Yoshikoder.

So, hashtags such as #一带一路 (*yidai yilu*, Belt and Road) and #丝绸之路 (*sichou zhilu*, Silk Road) are counted as a single word/term in Chinese as well.

By referring to the original context, with the aid of Yoshikoder's concordance functions,³⁸ I identified the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that describe the topic of the BRI, with frequencies of ten and higher in the Chinese messages, and frequencies of two and up in the English ones. In addition, I included some of these relevant keywords with a lower frequency. There are 124 Chinese keywords that occur with such high frequencies that they make up 2688 out of the total 8642 words. In English, 106 English keywords occur frequently enough to cover 849 out of the total 2249 words within the corpus. Due to the different corpus sizes, I divided the total number of words from the Chinese and English texts in order to produce more meaningful percentages that express the relative occurrence of these keywords. The results are shown below (Table 6.10):

Weibo Keywords	Translation	Freq.	Pct.	Twitter Keywords	Freq.	Pct.
一带一路	Belt and Road	163	1.89%	Silk road (#Silkroad)	124	5.51%
丝绸之路	Silk Road	137	1.59%	china	121	5.38%
习近平	Xi Jinping	126	1.46%	Belt and Road (#beltandroad)	85	3.78%
中国	China	121	1.40%	initiative	64	2.85%
合作	cooperation	104	1.21%	economic	17	0.76%
经济	economy/economic	87	1.01%	chinese	16	0.71%
建设	construction	84	0.97%	new	16	0.71%
新	new	83	0.96%	ancient	15	0.67%
国家	country	71	0.82%	Xinhua	14	0.62%
发展	development	69	0.80%	cooperation	13	0.58%
主席	chairman	65	0.75%	countries	12	0.53%
信息	information	43	0.50%	boost	11	0.49%
各国	all countries	41	0.48%	benefit(s)	11	0.49%
多	many	36	0.42%	world	10	0.44%
新华	Xinhua	35	0.40%	investment	10	0.44%
世纪	century	35	0.41%	official	9	0.40%
重要	important	35	0.41%	expert	9	0.40%
共同	together	33	0.38%	development	9	0.40%
战略	strategy	31	0.36%	trade	8	0.36%
共建	to construct/build together	30	0.35%	region	8	0.36%
关系	relations	30	0.35%	help	8	0.36%
文化	culture	28	0.32%	fund	8	0.36%
推动	to promote	25	0.29%	information	7	0.31%
推进	to boost	25	0.29%	promote	7	0.31%
世界	world	25	0.29%	bring	7	0.31%
沿线	regional (along the road)	23	0.27%	tourism	7	0.31%
服务	service	22	0.26%	welcome	6	0.27%
表示	express	22	0.26%	product	6	0.27%
人民	people	21	0.24%	partner	6	0.27%

³⁸ By applying a dictionary analysis to the results of a concordance, Yoshikoder can provide local word contexts.

论坛	forum	21	0.24%	focus	6	0.27%
地区	region	21	0.24%	build	5	0.22%
我们	we	21	0.24%	start	5	0.22%
愿景	wish	20	0.23%	global	5	0.22%
会见	meet	20	0.23%	facilitate	5	0.22%
外交	diplomacy	20	0.23%	join	4	0.18%
倡议	initiative	19	0.22%	open	4	0.18%
演讲	speech	19	0.22%	launch	4	0.18%
行动	action	19	0.22%	historical	4	0.18%
古	ancient	18	0.21%	heritage	4	0.18%
基础	base	18	0.21%	co-op	4	0.18%
发布	release	18	0.21%	construction	4	0.18%
提供	provide	18	0.21%	info	3	0.13%
投资	investment	17	0.20%	revive	3	0.13%
交流	communication	17	0.20%	cultural	3	0.13%
历史	history	17	0.20%	urge	3	0.13%
友好	friendly	17	0.20%	service	3	0.13%
出访	visit abroad	16	0.19%	seek	3	0.13%
提出	propose/mention	16	0.19%	ready	3	0.13%
繁荣	prosperous	16	0.19%	opportunities	3	0.13%
重点	key points	16	0.19%	minister	3	0.13%
两会	two sessions	15	0.17%	link	3	0.13%
总统	president	15	0.17%	key	3	0.13%
代表	representative	15	0.17%	interaction	3	0.13%
访问	official visit	15	0.17%	important	3	0.13%
互联	interconnect	14	0.16%	impetus	3	0.13%
互通	interoperability	14	0.16%	huge	3	0.13%
区域	area	14	0.16%	growth	3	0.13%
成为	become	14	0.16%	great	3	0.13%
项目	project	14	0.16%	further	3	0.13%
共赢	to win together	13	0.15%	eyes	3	0.13%
产品	product	13	0.15%	exports	3	0.13%
双方	both sides	13	0.15%	closer	3	0.13%
坚持	insist	13	0.15%	chance	3	0.13%
文明	civilization	13	0.15%	business	3	0.13%
遗址	ruins	13	0.15%	bond	3	0.13%
社会	society	13	0.15%	better	3	0.13%
金融	finance	13	0.15%	pledge	3	0.13%
促进	facilitate	13	0.15%	ties	2	0.09%
发表	publish	13	0.15%	system	2	0.09%
贸易	trade	13	0.15%	strategy	2	0.09%
中方	China side	12	0.14%	relics	2	0.09%
会议	meeting	12	0.14%	protect	2	0.09%
大学	university	12	0.14%	priority	2	0.09%
带来	bring	12	0.14%	president	2	0.09%
支持	support	12	0.14%	preserve	2	0.09%
设施	facility	12	0.14%	participation	2	0.09%
访	visit	11	0.13%	neighbor	2	0.09%
加强	strengthen	11	0.13%	nations	2	0.09%
和平	peace	11	0.13%	much	2	0.09%
自贸区	free trade center	11	0.13%	merchant	2	0.09%
伙伴	partner	11	0.13%	major	2	0.09%
对接	to connect	11	0.13%	logistics	2	0.09%
出席	to attend	11	0.13%	investor	2	0.09%
参观	to visit	10	0.12%	ink	2	0.09%

外方	foreign	10	0.12%	industrial	2	0.09%
强调	emphasize	10	0.12%	gains	2	0.09%
总理	premier	10	0.12%	form	2	0.09%
政府	government	10	0.12%	foreign	2	0.09%
资金	funding	10	0.12%	exclusive	2	0.09%
共享	to share together	9	0.10%	exchange	2	0.09%
互利	mutual benefit	9	0.10%	economy	2	0.09%
小华	xiaohua (Xinhua)	9	0.10%	diplomat	2	0.09%
互信	mutual trust	7	0.08%	customs	2	0.09%
联合	to align	7	0.08%	conjoin	2	0.09%
共同体	common body	7	0.08%	concrete	2	0.09%
共商	to discuss together	6	0.07%	company	2	0.09%
互鉴	mutual reference	5	0.06%	call on	2	0.09%
联系	to connect/contact	5	0.06%	believes	2	0.09%
共舞	to dance together	4	0.05%	bank	2	0.09%
相互	mutually	4	0.05%	back	2	0.09%
联盟	alliance	4	0.05%	active	2	0.09%
联通	to connect and communicate	4	0.05%	joint	1	0.04%
共识	consensus	2	0.02%	culture	1	0.04%

Table 6.10 Numbers and percentages of keywords in both Chinese and English texts

The frequencies of keywords demonstrate some significant similarities and differences. The terms describing the government’s initiative, including “Silk road,” “belt and road,” “丝绸之路,” and “一带一路” in Chinese, all have high frequencies on both Twitter and Weibo. The word “China” has a percentage of 5.38%, and its equivalent term “中国” (*Zhongguo*, China) has a percentage of 1.40%. In the frequency tables, “China” on Twitter ranks the second after the term “Silk road” and “中国” ranks fourth on Weibo, after Xi Jinping’s name “习近平.” In addition, “Xinhua,” the name of the news agency, has shown high frequencies on both platforms.

Aside from the words and terms mentioned above, keywords that are frequently used in both platforms include: a) “economic” and “经济” (*jingji*, economy); b) “new” and “新” (*xin*, new); c) “cooperation” and “合作” (*hezuo*, cooperation); d) “countries,” “world,” “国家” (*guojia*, country) and “各国” (*geguo*, all countries); e) “boost,” “promote,” “bring” and “推动” (*tuidong*, to facilitate), “推进” (*tuijin*, to forward); f) “development” and “发展” (*fazhan*, development); g) “information” and “信息” (*xinxi*, information).

There are some markedly different keywords, too. “Initiative,” “ancient,” “benefit(s),” “investment,” “official,” “expert,” “trade,” “region,” “help,” and “fund” have much higher frequencies on Twitter; and “习近平” (Xi Jinping), “建设” (*jianshe*, construction), “主席” (*zhuxi*, chairman), “多” (*duo*, many), “世纪” (*shiji*, century), “重要” (*zhongyao*, important), “共同” (*gongtong*, together), “战略” (*zhanlue*, strategy), “共建” (*gongjian*, to construct/build together), “关系” (*guanxi*, relations), and “文化” (*wenhua*, culture), in their turn, occur much more frequently on Weibo.

The words (and their equivalents) that occur most frequently on both platforms suggest the following: first, the importance of cooperation among different countries is addressed on both platforms; second, the issues of economy and information are highlighted on both platforms; and third, visions of progress and development are emphasized on both platforms. But, as we can see from the differences in frequencies of certain terms on either platform, Xinhua maintains certain divisions on Weibo and Twitter in terms of topics and themes. The evidence suggests the following: first, there are more voices from the official(s) and expert(s) on Twitter. Second, on Weibo “Xi Jinping” and “chairman” receive more attention. Third, Xinhua uses a financial idiom more frequently on Twitter than on Weibo, reflected by such terms as “investment,” “trade,” and “fund.” Fourth, Xinhua adopts the word “战略” (*zhanlue*, strategy) on Weibo, rather than on Twitter, to point out the importance of the initiative. Fifth, on Twitter, Xinhua tends to emphasize the benefits that will be brought about by the initiative, whereas on Weibo, Xinhua tends to highlight the spirit of “togetherness” (*gong*, 共) that can push the initiative forward.

Some of the keywords tend to form repeated collocations. On Twitter, the English keywords tend to form collocations such as “world economic growth,” “economic development,” “economic cooperation,” “trade economic cooperation,” “trade investment,” “bring benefits,” “benefit the world” and “benefit the regional countries.” On Weibo, the Chinese keywords tend to form collocations such as “世界/(各国)经济发展” (*shijie/(geguo) jingji fazhan*, world economic development), “经济发展” (*jingji fazhan*, economic development), “经济合作” (*jingji hezuo*, economic cooperation), “经济信息服务” (*jingji xinxi fuwu*, economic information service), and “经济发展战略” (*jingji fazhan zhanlue*, economic development strategy), etc.

These Chinese and English collocations are not necessarily equivalent in terms of literal translation.

The keywords analysis lists the words and terms with their frequencies. A comparison of the results in the Chinese and English languages shows that there are certain terms and expressions that Xinhua favours over others. By closely examining the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that Xinhua uses, I explored the different communicative patterns reflected from the two platforms. In this chapter, I laid out my impressions and interpretations through a quantitative analysis. To support my understanding, it is necessary to explore both the intentions and functions of the keywords and terms in the context. Do their similarities and differences tell a coherent story of Xinhua's strategic communication? What are their denotations and connotations in the context? And what do they in turn tell about Xinhua's worldview? I will further examine these similarities and differences of the keywords and terms in their original context through a dedicated qualitative analysis in Chapter Seven, in which I intend to answer these questions.

6.3 Conclusion

Xinhua sets up multiple accounts on Sina Weibo and Twitter that are managed by different departments. Xinhua's New Media Centre supervises the content on each domestic account. However, the topic selection, the style and the tone are, to a great extent, decided by each department. The goal of this de-centralized management is to ultimately attract more domestic audiences with diverse tastes and preferences. Xinhua uses one official account, New China, on Twitter. The account name, New China, is used for its all overseas accounts on different social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc. As a unified and recognizable social media presence of Xinhua for foreigners, New China is maintained and updated by the New Media Centre. Such a centralized way to tell "good China stories" to international audiences is Xinhua's strategy to avoid target conflicts in terms of content and reporting style.

In the case study of the BRI discourse, Xinhua emphasizes different themes on Weibo and Twitter. Xinhua intensifies its social media activities on both platforms over the topic of the BRI during the policy formation period in the second half of 2013 and the policy implementation period in the first half of 2015. This suggests, in terms of agenda setting, that

Xinhua's communication strategies coincide with the government's policymaking. During the time span of 2013 to 2015, Xinhua net shifted its focus on Weibo from culture to reviews, Chinese official's speeches, and events taking place within China, whereas New China on Twitter took its reporting perspective from culture to diplomatic activities, reviews from foreign experts, and opinions of foreign governments' officials. In terms of geopolitical difference, Xinhua tends to highlight China's relations with European countries on Twitter from the aspect of economic cooperation, and provides a stronger emphasis on the relations with Central Asia from the aspect of culture and history. Xinhua's preferences of themes reflect the agenda of the BRI, which is to create more business opportunities with European countries, and to develop the infrastructure in Central Asian countries.

The findings from the keywords analysis in this chapter suggests that Xinhua makes certain distinctive discursive choices on the two platforms. These findings not only reinforce my initial understanding of Xinhua communicative strategies, but also raise some critical questions that are worth further exploration. To examine how Xinhua understands internal and external communication, through which perspectives Xinhua intends to reach out to international and domestic audiences, and what factors are shaping Xinhua's communicative patterns, I take my findings and observations from this chapter to carry out an extensive qualitative analysis in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven

Qualitative Analysis

In this qualitative analysis, I intend to analyse the recurring linguistic and rhetoric features in the tweet categories that I have identified in the previous quantitative analysis. To explore the intentions and functions of Xinhua’s social media messaging, I then compare Xinhua’s messages in Chinese and English. This chapter aims to examine how Xinhua projects itself and portrays China’s BRI on social media platforms, and to explore the factors that influence Xinhua’s communication strategies.

7.1 Linguistic Features

In addition to the previous, quantitative analysis on word frequencies in Weibo and Twitter messages from Xinhua’s accounts Xinhua net and New China, I looked for similarities and differences among the keywords in terms of their meanings and usages. On Xinhua net, Xinhua always and only uses Chinese words and characters. On New China, Xinhua always and only uses English translations and equivalent terms (in Roman script). For a better understanding of meanings and usages than frequency counts alone can provide, I related the keywords to their respective contexts, and compared these. In case of the context, an article that a message refers to, a message to which it replies, or a hashtag with associated messages, are all context in which the keywords have meanings. However, in this analysis, I strictly use “context” in a definition of the Weibo/Twitter message in which the keyword occurs. The following analysis aims to explore the variations that result from different contexts between certain Chinese and English keywords that might have similar meanings.

7.1.1 “合作” (*he zuo*, cooperation) and “cooperation”

On Weibo, “合作” (*he zuo*, cooperation) has 104 occurrences, which is a percentage of 1.21% relative to the whole corpus that I analysed on the BRI. The following examples show the contexts where “合作” is used (Table 7.1):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
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5	习近平指出双方要发挥互补优势提高务实	合作	水平推动中澳自贸协定尽快生效推进一带一路倡议
	Xi addresses that the two sides should use complementary strengths to improve the pragmatic cooperation, to promote Sino-Australian Free Trade Agreement enters into force as soon as possible to promote the initiative.		
5	同澳方北部大开发计划对接中澳要开展好防务	合作	共同打击腐败犯罪增进教育
	The development plan for Northern Australia needs to strengthen the defense cooperation in combating corruption and promoting education.		
7	习近平对越南和新加坡的国事访问取得丰硕经贸成果从而为一带一路和互联互通建设绘制了新图景为政府间	合作	提供了新动力为产业发展创造了新机遇
	Xi Jinping's visits to Vietnam and Singapore has achieved fruitful result in trade and economy, which will draw a new picture for the Belt and Road Initiative and interconnection among countries, and also will provide a new impetus to intergovernmental cooperation and create new opportunities for industrial development.		
8	中国欢迎周边国家参与到	合作	中来共同推进一带一路建设
	China welcomes the neighboring countries to cooperate in the construction of Belt and Road Initiative.		
10	习近平访新此访旨在推动中新关系为两国政治关系开创新前景为深化务实	合作	和人文交流提供新动力
	Xi Jinping's visit in Singapore aimed at promoting bilateral relations between the two countries, in order to open up new prospects for the political relations and to provide new impetus to deepen pragmatic cooperation and cultural exchanges.		

Table 7.1 Examples of “合作” (*he zuo*, cooperation) in Weibo messages, with context

On Twitter, the word “cooperation” appears 13 times, which is a percentage of 0.58% in the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.2):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
9	China, United Arab Emirates pledge to boost	cooperation	within #BeltandRoad framework
12	China, ASEAN envision new prospects for	cooperation	under #BeltandRoad Initiative
24	#China, #Netherlands agree to boost	cooperation	in Belt and Road Initiative, AIIB
75	Spotlight: China's #BeltandRoad initiative to promote #SCO economic	cooperation	
100	China, Uzbekistan to expand trade, economic	cooperation	under #SilkRoad initiative

Table 7.2 Examples of “cooperation” in tweets, with context

The term 合作 on Weibo has a much higher frequency than “cooperation” has on Twitter. Both platforms show similarities in how Xinhua uses these terms. First, it mainly refers to economic cooperation. Second, the actors who cooperate are mainly nation-states and

international organizations rather than individual people. Third, the term is often used with verbs referring to a future action to depict the visions and plans for call-to-actions, such as “提高” (*tigao*, to improve) and “深化” (*shenhua*, to deepen) in Chinese and “to boost” in English. However, on Weibo, Xinhua also tends to link “合作” with the term “务实” (*wushi*, pragmatism) to form a collocation “务实合作” (*wushi hezuo*, pragmatic cooperation). “务实” (*wushi*), as a political terminology adopted by the CCP, is from Deng Xiaoping’s legacy of pragmatic reform politics in 1980s (Chang, 1988). In Chinese political discourse, “务实” refers to a practical governance that leads to economic growth. Its equivalent word in English, “pragmatism,” has not been used on Twitter in tweets by Xinhua about the BRI.

7.1.2 “经济” (*jingji*, economic/economy) and “economic”

On Weibo, “经济” (*jingji*, economic/economy) appears 87 times, which is a percentage of 1.01% in the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.3):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
18	新华丝路正成为一带一路建设中	经济	信息服务功能最大最快最准
	Xinhua Silk Road is becoming the largest, fastest, most accurate economic information service in Belt and Road construction		
18	新华丝路正成为一带一路建设中	经济	信息服务领航者搭建各国互
	In Belt and Road construction, Xinhua Silk Road is becoming a leading role in economic information service to bridge the countries		
20	新区对于推进实施一带一路长江	经济	带等国家重大战略和区域
	new area to promote national major strategy and area along the Yangtze River economic belt		
23	互通建设领域的合作是丝绸之路	经济	带建设与欧亚经济联盟建设
	Cooperation in the interconnection is... for construction of Silk Road Economic Belt and construction of the Eurasian Economic Union		
23	是丝绸之路经济带建设与欧亚	经济	联盟建设对接的重要内容李
	the important point to connect he construction of Silk Road Economic Belt and construction of Eurasian Economic Union		

Table 7.3 Examples of “经济” (*jingji*, economic/economy) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter, the word “economic” appears 17 times, which is a percentage of 0.76% in the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.4):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
5	BeltandRoad helps boost	economic	ties among China Nepal and India senior
14	Initiative to give new impetus to world	economic	growth New air route to link Xi'an
55	Road China to push forward 6 int'l	economic	corridors along BeltandRoad promote long-term co-op Want
75	Spotlight China's BeltandRoad initiative to promote SCO	economic	cooperation Why does a French ex-PM back
81	BeltandRoad initiative to boost Myanmar s	economic	development renowned businessman Senior official says

Table 7.4 Examples of “economic” in tweets, with context

Economic development is emphasized on both platforms. On Weibo, “经济” pertains to regional economic development in China, multilateral economic cooperation between China and other countries, and world economy. On Twitter, “economic” always pertains to economic cooperation between China and another country or organization, or to world economy, rather than to the local economy in China. Overall, Xinhua’s external communication strategy aims to highlight how China’s initiative would engage other countries and contribute to the world economy.

7.1.3 “新” (*xin*, *new*) and “new”

On Weibo, “新” (*xin*, *new*) appears 83 times, which is a percentage of 0.96% in the corpus.

Examples of “新” are (Table 7.5):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
7	和互联互通建设绘制了 new picture for interconnection construction	新	图景为政府间合作提供了
7	图景为政府间合作提供了 new impetus for intergovernmental cooperation	新	动力为产业发展创造了新
7	新动力为产业发展创造了 new opportunities for industrial development	新	机遇也为中越和中新经贸
10	中新关系为两国政治关系开创 new prospects between China and Singapore in political relations, to deepen pragmatic cooperation	新	前景为深化务实合作和人文
10	深化务实合作和人文交流提供 new impetus to deepen pragmatic cooperation and cultural exchanges, Xi's visit in Singapore	新	动力习主席访新将为中

Table 7.5 Examples of “新” (*xin*, *new*) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter, the word “new” appears 16 times, in 0.71% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.6):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
7	China’s BeltandRoad offers	new	opportunities to ASEAN Malaysian minister EBRD approves
12	Belt and Road China ASEAN envision	new	prospects for cooperation under BeltandRoad Initiative Polish
14	China’s BeltandRoad Initiative to give	new	impetus to world economic growth
19	China-proposed BeltandRoad Initiative represents	new	way for advancing globalization
119	China’s BeltandRoad initiative to help	new	global alliances China Cambodia pledge closer cooperation

Table 7.6 Examples of “new” in tweets, with context

With certain Chinese characters like “新,” it is necessary to interpret their meanings based on the combinations with other characters, as this can form different meanings. The character “新” means “new” and “innovative” when used in constructions as “新颖” (*xinying*, new and creative), “新建” (*xinjian*, newly built), “新篇章” (*xin pianzhang*, new page), “新一代” (*xin yidai*, new generation), “新区” (*xinqu*, new region) and “新图景” (*xin tujing*, new picture). However, this character is also used in Chinese terms referring to the country Singapore, such as “新加坡” (*Xinjiapo*, Singapore) and “中新” (*ZhongXin*, Sino-Singapore), and refers to Xinhua News Agency in “新华社” (*Xinhuashe*) and “新华” (*Xinhua*). For this comparative analysis of the same key words on Weibo and Twitter, I only included the cases where “新” means “new” and “innovative.”

Although Xinhua intends to emphasize the “new opportunities” that would be brought about by China’s BRI on both Weibo and Twitter, the word “新” (*xin*) has a much broader meaning in the Chinese contexts on Weibo than in the equivalent English contexts on Twitter. For instance, “新” is not only used for describing new activities and new relations, but also appears in Chinese political jargons such as “新共识” (*xin gongshi*, new consensus), “新佳话” (*xin jiahua*, new story), and “新常态” (*xin changtai*, new normal). Adopting these terms shows the strong influence of the Chinese government, as this jargon often appears in policy papers and

official news reports to describe the changes that the new leadership under Xi Jinping has introduced since 2012. In contrast, Xinhua does not adopt or translate these terms into English on its Twitter account. This suggests how Xinhua interprets its different target audiences: Using this jargon in English would alienate readers. For instance, for English readers to understand the term “new normal” in its intended sense, the reporter will have to introduce the background and the original context: the government’s confrontation with the slowed down economy. Political jargon such as this “new normal” will not make much sense in English without a proper background explanation. However, with limited typing space on Twitter, the reporters do not have the luxury to explain this jargon in detail.

7.1.4 “发展” (*fazhan*, development) and “development”

On Weibo, “发展” (*fazhan*, development) appears 69 times, in 0.80% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.7):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
13	新对话和经济融合丝路国家	发展	新动力三个分议题进行了
	new dialogue and economic integration, new impetus for Silk Road countries’ development, three important issues		
14	不同文明交流互鉴促进世界和平	发展	是一项造福沿线国家人民的
	communication among different civilizations to promote world peaceful development is beneficial to the people of these countries along the road		
20	带等国家重大战略和区域	发展	总体战略为西部地区新型城镇
	national important strategies and regional development for the new towns in the west region		
23	俄全面战略协作伙伴关系深入	发展	交通领域合作成为两国务实合作
	deepening strategic partners relationship with Russia, collaborating in transportation become pragmatic cooperation between the two countries		
30	将积极报道沿线各国经济社会	发展	情况并与沿线国家媒体和机构
	will positively report on the economic and social development of all the countries along the road, and will communicate with their national media and institutions		

Table 7.7 Examples of “发展” (*fazhan*, development) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter, “development” appears nine times, which is a percentage of 0.40%. Examples are (Table 7.8):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
25	conjoin China's beltandroad initiative with own	development	BeltandRoad initiative helps China become net
37	Society inaugurated in Hong Kong to explore	development	opportunities China's Belt and Road to boost
44	is willing to align BeltandRoad with ASEAN's	development	strategies
81	BeltandRoad initiative to boost Myanmar s economic	development	renowned businessman Senior official says
126	USD Thailand tourism to benefit from railway	development	in collaboration with China SilkRoad

Table 7.8 Examples of “development” in tweets, with context

The Chinese term “发展” on Weibo has a much higher frequency than “development” on Twitter. The two platforms show similar features in how they use the term. The concept of development does not merely refer to China's development, but also to all countries that participate in the BRI. The term is used to designate “regional development” and “cross-border development,” and also often appears in active sentences with the future tense. With a sense of action, verbs such as “将” (*jiang*, will), “让” (*rang*, let), “把” (*ba*, make) on Weibo, and “to explore” and “to align” on Twitter, bring the future tense about. In addition, “development” is often linked with “benefits,” “opportunities” and “sharing,” to project the expected result of development in a positive light.

7.1.5 “推动” (*tuidong*, to promote) and “推进” (*tuijin*, to boost); “promote” and “boost”

The Chinese terms “推动” (*tuidong*, to promote) and “推进” (*tuijin*, to boost/advance) on Weibo are synonyms of the English words “promote” and “boost” on Twitter.

On Weibo, “推动” appears 25 times in 0.29% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.9):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
56	我们带来什么改变一张图读懂	推动	共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上
	what changes we will see, one picture to understand the factors that promote Belt and Road construction		
69	开放战略秉持正确义利观	推动	建立以合作共赢为核心
	hold on to open policy and correct values towards benefits, promote cooperation and win-win situation as the core		

122	州的杜伊斯堡港参观	推动	丝绸之路经济带建设习近平
	Xi's visit at Duisburg, promote Silk Road economic belt construction		
141	经济和文化精神得以重新体现	推动	跨区域发展合作和繁荣印度
	revive economy and cultural spirit, promote regional development and cooperation, and bring prosperity to India		
141	带的主张有重大意义将	推动	跨区域发展合作和繁荣中国
	the initiative has great significance, will promote regional development and cooperation, and bring prosperity to China		

Table 7.9 Examples of “推动” (*tuidong*, to promote) in Weibo posts, with context

“推进” appears 25 times, in 0.29% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.10):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
51	站这对巩固中巴友谊和	推进	一带一路建设意义十分重大正如
	it is of great significant to consolidate the friendship between China and Pakistan, and to boost Belt and Road construction		
58	和一带一路之间是什么关系	推进	一带一路建设工作领导小组答记者问
	Leading group in promoting Belt and Road construction answering journalists' questions regarding the relations with Belt and Road Initiative		
73	互联互通项目已经在稳步	推进	习近平中国已经制定一带
	interconnection project is being carried forward steadily, Xi Jinping, China is making plans for Belt and Road		
81	外交部部长王毅, 在	推进	一带一路的过程中
	Foreign Minister Wang Yi: during the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative		
81	物流大通道区域协同发展效果显著	推进	一带一路建设加强与相关国家
	there has been a great achievement in developing a logistic route, to boost Belt and Road construction, to strengthen relations with related countries		

Table 7.10 Examples of “推进” (*tuijin*, to boost) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter, “boost” appears 11 times, which is a percentage of 0.49%. Examples are (Table 7.11):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
5	Belt and Road Initiative BeltandRoad helps	boost	economic ties among China Nepal and India
24	China-proposed Beltandroad initiative China Netherlands agree to	boost	cooperation in Belt and Road Initiative AIIB
38	development opportunities China's Belt and Road to	boost	Dubai's role as trade hub Dubai Economic
81	initiative Europarl_EN China s BeltandRoad initiative to	boost	Myanmar's economic development renowned businessman Senior

95	with China's beltandroad initiative to help EU	boost	reconciliation with Russia What's being shown on
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Table 7.11 Examples of “boost” in tweets, with context

“Promote” appears seven times, in 0.31% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.12):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
10	and eastern European countries sign memo to	promote	BeltandRoad Initiative China in limelight structural
39	Hong Kong SAR chief says AIIB will further	promote	infrastructure construction of countries along BeltandRoad
55	forward 6 int'l economic corridors along BeltandRoad	promote	long-term co-op
75	Spotlight China's BeltandRoad initiative to	promote	SCO economic cooperation
162	the Silk Road Silk Road countries to	promote	railway investment Xi meets Kazakh youth retracing

Table 7.12 Examples of “promote” in tweets, with context

“推动” and “推进” have similar meanings in the Chinese language. The verb “推” (*tui*) means “to push,” often associated with the action of using hands and power to push something. However, the difference between the two terms is that “推动” (*tuidong*) refers to pushing something to move or to make a change, and “推进” (*tuijin*) refers to pushing something that is already progressing to the next stage.

According to the context, “推动” (*tuidong*, to promote) describes reaching agreements, cooperation, and developing relations between China and other countries. Examples of this are “推动跨区域发展合作” (*tuidong kuaquyu fazhan hezuo*, to promote cross-region development and cooperation), “推动中澳自贸协定” (*tuidong Zhong Ao zimaao xieding*, to promote China-Australia free trade agreement), and “推动中新关系” (*tuidong Zhong Xin guanxi*, to promote China-Singapore relations). Xinhua has the tendency to adopt “推动” when implying plans, actions and efforts that do not exist yet, but are necessary to make new changes. Compared to this, “推进” is applied to ongoing development, construction, and projects. For example, “巩固中巴友谊和推进一带一路建设意义十分重大” (*gonggu Zhong Ba youyi he tuijin yidai yilu jianshe yiyi shifen zhongda*, It is of great significance to consolidate the

friendship between China and Pakistan, and to boost the Belt and Road construction) implies that China and Pakistan have already established a positive relationship; “互联互通项目已经在稳步推进” (*hulian hutong xiangmu yijing zai wenbu tuijin*, interconnection project is already being carried forward steadily) states that the project has already started; “物流大通道区域协同发展效果显著,推进一带一路建设” (*wuliu datongdao quyu xietong fazhan xiaoguo xianzhu, tuijin yidai yilu jianshe*, there have been great achievements in developing logistic route, to boost Belt and Road construction) states that the logistic route has already been explored.

In contrast to the distinctly different uses of the Chinese terms, the equivalent English words, “to promote” and “to boost,” have a more similar, interchangeable function. “To promote” and “to boost” both appear in phrases such as “promote the initiative,” “boost the initiative,” and “promote cooperation,” “boost cooperation.” This may mean that there are less distinctive guidelines for the Chinese reporters with respect to the wording of messages in English than in Chinese.

In addition, comparing the Chinese and English sentence structures where the key verbs appear, the Chinese verbs “推动” and “推进” tend to be used in paralleled phrases, whereas “promote” and “boost” are often used in infinitive phrases.

The Chinese parallelism in this case consists of three related sentences or phrases with the same structure and tone. Through lyrical expressions, parallelism can produce a more dramatic effect and achieve coherence in argument or persuasion. Besides “推动” (and “推进”), other verbs with lower frequencies that are commonly used in paralleled sentences include: “优化” (*youhua*, to improve), “促进” (*cujin*, to facilitate), “加强” (*jiaqiang*, to strengthen), “加快” (*jiakuai*, to speed up), “助推” (*zhutui*, to promote), “增进” (*zengjin*, to deepen), “巩固” (*gonggu*, to consolidate), and “支持” (*zhichi*, to support). For example, in the post “习近平指出双方要**发挥**互补优势, **提高**务实合作水平, **推动**中澳自贸协定尽快生效, **推进**一带一路倡议” (Xi addresses that the two sides should **use** complementary strengths, **improve** the pragmatic cooperation, **promote** Sino-Australian Free Trade Agreement enters into force, and **promote** the initiative), parallelism emphasizes the four verbs.

In contrast to this, the equivalent English verbs tend to appear in infinitive phrases, including the keywords “promote,” “boost,” “help” and “bring.” Examples are: “China’s BRI to promote SCO economic cooperation,” and “China’s Belt and Road to boost Dubai’s role as trade hub.” The infinitive phrases, often seen in the news headlines from English media, are commonly used in Xinhua’s English tweets. Since infinitive phrases stress the main verb and emphasize the action that is to be taken, it creates a sense of urgency.

7.1.6 “习近平” (*Xi Jinping*) and “主席” (*zhuxi, chairman*); “experts” and “official”

The Chinese President Xi Jinping’s name has been mentioned 126 times on Weibo, which is a percentage of 1.46% relative to the whole corpus. His name “Xi Jinping” and his family name “Xi” on Twitter have been mentioned only seven times in total, which is a percentage of 0.31%. In order to examine and compare the contexts where the president’s name appeared on Weibo and Twitter, I used Yoshikoder’s concordance function for “习近平” (*Xi Jinping*) and “习主席” (*Xi zhuxi, Chairman Xi*) and for “Xi Jinping” and “Xi.” Examples are shown below (See Table 7.13 and 7.14):

On Weibo:

Nr.	Key term	Context	Translation
5	习近平	日在安塔利亚会见 澳大利亚总理	Xi Jinping meets Australian Prime Minister at Antalya
5	习近平	指出 双方要发挥互补	Xi Jinping points out that both parties/countries should join force
5	习近平	会见 澳大利亚总理 特恩	Xi Jinping meets Australian Prime Minister Turnbull
6	习近平	主席 多次 在 国际 社会上	Xi Jinping many times at the international conferences
7	习主席	访 越 新的 经贸 成果 中国	Chairman Xi visits Vietnam, economic achievement, China
7	习近平	对 越南 和 新加坡 的	Xi Jinping towards Vietnam and Singapore’s
8	习近平	中国 愿 同 周边 国家	Xi Jinping (says) China is willing to ...together with neighboring countries
8	习近平	强调 一带 一路 倡议 的	Xi Jinping emphasizes Belt and Road Initiative’s
9	习近平	中国 将 坚定 发展 同	Xi Jinping (says) China will continue develop with
9	习近平	在 新加坡 国立 大学 发表	Xi Jinping gives speech at Singapore’s National University
10	习主席	于 日 至 日 访 新	Xi Jinping visits Singapore from
10	习近平	访 新 将 为 中 新 关系	Chairman Xi’s Visit to Singapore will contribute to Sino-Singapore relations

11	习近平	会见 读懂 中国 国际 会议	Xi Jinping meets...at international conference, to understand China
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Table 7.13 Examples of “习近平” (Xi Jinping) and “主席” (*zhuxi*, chairman) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter:

Nr.	Tweets with “Xi”
33	#BREAKING: China welcomes US, other parties to join AIIB, land&maritime Silk Road initiative: # XiJinping @WhiteHouse
116	President Xi’s fruitful Eurasia trip injects vitality into #BeltandRoad initiative
131	Live: Xi says Belt and Road and #AIIB open initiatives, welcomes partners worldwide
149	Xi Jinping’s belt and road to revive ancient Silk Road, prioritizing infrastructure
157	Xi Jinping welcomes Maldives in maritime Silk Road construction when meeting Abdulla Yameen
163	Xi meets Kazakh youth retracing route of ancient Silk Road in China
166	China’s Xi urges joint efforts with Arab states to build silk road economic belt

Table 7.14 Examples of “Xi” in tweets, with context

On Weibo, there are in total 163 posts in the corpus that mention President Xi’s name. These posts mainly report on Xi’s visits abroad and his meetings with foreign leaders. Xinhua mostly demonstrates his points of view through reported speeches.

In contrast, on Twitter, Xinhua mentions President Xi only seven times (in narratives and reported speech), and most of these tweets appear in the early stage of the BRI. This implies that Xinhua’s journalists tend not to report intensively on the Chinese president’s activities and speeches on Twitter. However, the president’s name “习近平” (Xi Jinping) counts for three Chinese characters while its English spelling “Xi Jinping” counts for ten letters. This may be a reason for reporters, in the limited 140 English letters per tweet, to only use his family name “Xi” or even not to mention his name at all.

On Twitter, “expert” and “official,” have a higher frequency than the Chinese president’s name “Xi Jinping.” The word “expert” appears nine times, in 0.40% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.15):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
73	in integration of SCO SilkRoad and EEU	expert	China’s far western Xinjiang forms closer int’l
79	EEU SilkRoad to facilitate regional development Russian	expert	European lawmaker hails synergies between Junker Plan

106	and Road initiative will benefit regional countries	expert	China to shoot TV documentary about countries
110	and Road initiative to boost Turkey's economy	expert	China to give priority to port projects
49	due to growing trade halal BeltAndRoad Officials	expert	back China's BeltandRoad initiative at Singapore Regional
68	help BeltandRoad investors form better partnership Aussie	expert	Details XinhuaSilkRoad includes database credit reports consulting

Table 7.15 Examples of “expert” in tweets, with context

“Official” appears nine times, which is a percentage of 0.40% in the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.16):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
5	among China Nepal and India senior Nepali	official	Follow us into Dunhuang an ancient town
38	role as trade hub Dubai Economic Co	official	Hong Kong SAR chief says AIIB will
51	to BeltandRoad and much to gain HK	official	Modernization of SilkRoad opens concrete possibilities of
82	Myanmar's economic development renowned businessman Senior	official	says China's BeltandRoad initiative to safeguard free
88	huge chance for SilkRoad nations Senior Chinese	official	urges China Spain to further cooperate under

Table 7.16 Examples of “official” in tweets, with context

Both “expert” and “official” are used in a similar, interchangeable way, depending on the context. First, Xinhua’s reporters often omit the names of referred experts and officials in a Twitter message, but do mention their nationalities or positions. This shows that in Xinhua’s reporting, one of the most important categories for making sense of people is their nationality. Examples of this are “Russian expert,” “Aussie expert” and “Nepali official.” The emphasis on their nationalities indicates that the intention is to include opinions from countries other than China, and mentioning their positions demonstrates the importance and authority of their opinions. The expressions of the foreign experts and officials are delivered through reported speeches, and what they have said is consistently in favour of China’s BRI. On Twitter, through downplaying the opinions from the Chinese president and including voices from abroad, Xinhua tries to present an objective, open, and inclusive image.

7.1.7 “战略” (*zhanlüe, strategy*) and “倡议” (*changyi, initiative*); “strategy/strategic” and “initiative”

“战略” (*zhanlüe*, strategy) is a keyword in the Chinese messages on Weibo. The term appears 31 times, in 0.36% of the corpus. Examples are (Table 7.17):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
20	家重大战略和区域发展总体	战略	为西部地区新型城镇化建设
	national important strategies and regional development for the new towns in the west region		
23	贺信中表示当前中俄全面	战略	协作伙伴关系深入发展交通领域
	In the congratulation letter, it pointed out that China and Russia have stepped into comprehensive strategic partnership, and will further develop transportation.		
25	习近平主席提出的重大	战略	构想在经过一年多的酝酿后已
	President Xi Jinping proposed important strategic thought that has been prepared after a year.		
29	也标志着新华社在推进信息服务	战略	布局中迈出重要一步助推
	It also means Xinhua News Agency has made an important step to promote an information service strategy.		
82	带你读懂一带一路经济发展	战略	中国外交一个重点两条主线令人
	take you to understand Belt and Road economic development strategy, China's diplomatic policy has one point two main ways		
85	和开放注重与各国的发展	战略	相互对接注重与现有的地区
	the importance of openness and interconnections with other countries' development strategies		

Table 7.17 Examples of “战略” (*zhanlüe*, strategy) in Weibo posts, with context

The equivalent English words “strategy” or “strategic” only occur in three messages in total (Table 7.18):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
17	S Europe for 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road	strategy	China Kazakhstan to form working group to
44	willing to align BeltandRoad with ASEAN's development	strategies	Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said ASEAN
89	to join China's BeltandRoad initiative to spur	strategic	partnership China envoy Chinese Russian media to

Table 7.18 Examples of “strategy” in tweets, with context

The Chinese term “战略” is not entirely coterminous with the English term “strategy.” The character “战” (*zhan*) means “war” and “battle.” The traditional character for “战” consists of two characters: “单” (*dan*) and “戈” (*ge*). “单” means “crossbow” and “戈” means “polearm.” These are the weapons used in Shang and Zhou dynasties (1600-256 BC). The character “略” (*lüe*) consists of “田” (*tian*) and “各” (*ge*). “田” means “field” and “各” means “cross.” These

two characters “战” and “略” together refer to “warfare.” In the social media feeds, instead of referring to the military operation or overall governance in their original semantic meanings, the two terms “战略” and “strategy” mean the diplomatic visions and economic plans made by the government to achieve long term goals with other nations.

In the context of Xinhua’s promotion for the BRI, “strategy” refers to the government’s plans to achieve long-term goals, such as “区域发展总体战略” (*quyu fazhan zongti zhanlüe*, overall regional development strategy) and “经济发展战略” (*jingji fazhan zhanlüe*, economic development strategy), or “Silk Road strategy” and “ASEAN’s development strategies.” The contrast between the frequencies of “战略” and “strategy” on the two platforms shows that Xinhua uses the word “strategy” in moderation on Twitter. This may be because the connotation of “strategy” plays into the China Threat theory, as opposed to the peaceful rise. Even though it is not military *per se*, “strategy” can be perceived as something unilateral and in the same category of words as “scheming” and “plotting”—secretly making plans, which goes against the publicity goals of the BRI.

On Twitter, Xinhua even makes efforts to downplay any potential negative connotation of the word “strategy” by stating that the initiative is not a “strategic tool,” in the following two tweets (Table 7.19):

3	China #BeltandRoad initiative not geopolitical tool, would not force anyone’s hands: FM
134	China’s #Belt and Road not geo-strategic tool: vice FM Zhang Yesui

Table 7.19 Tweets that downplay the word “strategy”

These tweets are reported speeches from Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang and vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui. In response to the comments from other international media outlets, these tweets use negative phrases: “not geopolitical tool,” “would not force,” and “not geo-strategic tool.” The fact that the claims are attributed to identified individuals implies that Xinhua’s journalists distance themselves from what the government officials said. This indicates that Xinhua strives for an objective appearance. This acknowledging of a potential negative political meaning of “strategy” also reveals essentially neo-realist political thinking by Xinhua. In this sense, it emphasizes that China does not seek to be the central authority in

international politics, but aims to participate in an international system that is shaped and balanced by different nation state powers.

In addition, Xinhua uses the word “initiative” with a much higher frequency on Twitter than the equivalent Chinese term “倡议” (*changyi*) on Weibo. “倡议” has a frequency of 19 on Weibo, which is a percentage of 0.22% of the corpus, but the word “initiative” appears 64 times on Twitter, which is a percentage of 2.85%. Examples of “initiative” in Xinhua’s tweets are shown below (Table 7.20):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
89	UAE seeks to join China’s BeltandRoad	initiative	to spur strategic partnership China envoy Chinese
92	port for Europe Africa under China’s beltandroad	initiative	Turkey ready to be active part of
93	to be active part of Beijing’s BeltandRoad	initiative	China envoy Georgia ready to participate in
99	China eyes tourism to power SilkRoad	initiative	and Gansu Province is taking action China
106	Italy at Expo2015Milano China’s Belt and Road	initiative	will benefit regional countries expert China to

Table 7.20 Examples of “initiative” in tweets, with context

“Initiative” and “strategy” have similar meanings in their respective contexts. However, compared to “strategy,” “initiative” contains a more positive meaning through association with the use of certain expressions such as “to join” and “to spur” in Nr. 89; “ready to be active” in Nr. 92; “ready to participate” in Nr. 93; “taking action” in Nr. 99; and “will benefit” in Nr. 106. Xinhua highlights “initiative” rather than “strategy” on Twitter, and does so the other way around on Weibo. It shows Xinhua’s different treatment towards internal and external communication strategies.

7.1.8 “利益” (*liyi, benefit*) and “benefit(s)”

On Weibo, the equivalent Chinese term “利益” (*liyi, benefit*) has a frequency of seven times. The examples are (Table 7.21):

Nr.	Context	Key term
24	习近平主席在博鳌亚洲论坛上说一带一路建设不是空洞的口号而是看得见摸得着的实际举措将给地区国家带来实实在在的	利益

	President Xi Jinping said during the Boao Asia conference, that Belt and Road construction is not empty words, but tangible measure that will bring concrete benefits to the regional countries.	
37	习近平强调加强安全合作符合中阿两国共同	利益
	Xi Jinping points out that strengthening safety cooperation is to the mutual benefits of China and Saudi Arabia.	
67	一带一路看起来高大上实际上看得见摸得着透过这份愿景与行动可以	利益
	清晰地看到一带一路给中国沿线国家和百姓带来的实实在在的	
	Belt and Road Initiative seems too “unreachable,” but in fact is very tangible. Through the initiative and action, the concrete benefits are visible to the China’s neighbouring countries and their people.	

Table 7.21 Examples of “利益” (*liyi*, benefit) in Weibo posts, with context

On Twitter, the word “benefit(s)” appears 11 times, in 0.49% of the corpus. The examples are (Table 7.22):

Nr.	Context	Keyword	Context
29	early results How will China’s BeltandRoad initiative	benefit	the world Milan of Qarilik County in
56	along BeltandRoad promote long-term co-op Want concrete	benefit	from SilkRoad initiative See Chinese customs report
106	Expo2015Milano China’s Belt and Road initiative will	benefit	regional countries expert China to shoot TV
126	lend 25 bln USD Thailand tourism to	benefit	from railway development in collaboration with China
133	SilkRoad Spotlight China’s land-sea SilkRoad initiatives to	benefit	Russia

Table 7.22 Examples of “benefit(s)” in tweets, with context

The English tweets and Chinese posts that mention “benefit(s)” or “利益” do not have the same meaning. There are, however, similarities: first, the related English tweets and Chinese posts are both used in future tense to visualize the advantages China would bring to other countries. Second, “benefit(s)” (as a noun) and “利益” both have a modifier to stress the “concreteness” of the benefits, such as the English adjectives “concrete,” and “huge”; and the Chinese adjective “实实在在” (*shishi zaizai*, concrete).

The differences in the usage of “benefit(s)” on these two platforms are the following. Almost all the English tweets are comments from Xinhua’s point of view, whereas all the Chinese posts are reported speeches from Xi Jinping, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Xinhua’s director Cai Mingzhao. In English journalism, comment and reviews from media personnel

often weigh more than mere quotations from government officials. In Chinese journalism, it is rather the other way around: emphasis on the opinions of officials often adds importance and authority to a statement. In addition, Xinhua reporters tend to apply Chinese colloquial phrases to the official’s speeches, such as “高大上” (*gao da shang*, high and noble), “看得见” (*kan de jian*, visible), “摸得着” (*mo de zhao*, tangible). Colloquial language often can be understood by a broader group of audiences and can also help to build a more amiable image of the government officials. This shows that Xinhua adapts to different journalistic paradigms on Chinese and English social media platforms. By interspersing official comments with colloquialisms, Xinhua avoids a condescending tone, and demonstrates to be familiar with non-official language. With a “down to earth” approach, Xinhua intends to show its close relationship with “commoners” (*laobaixing*, 老百姓) and to attract younger audiences.

7.1.9 Chinese terms with “共” (*gong*, together) and “互” (*hu*, mutual)

The Chinese terms “共” (*gong*, together) and “互” (*hu*, mutual) cannot be used on their own to indicate their meanings, but only in combinations with other characters. As such, they occur in high enough frequencies to merit analysis. The combinations with “共,” occurring in 109 Weibo messages in the corpus, are summarized in Table 7.23:

Terms	Frequency	Translation
共*	109(total)	Together
共同	33	together
共建	30	to construct together
共赢	13	to win together
共享	9	to share together
共商	6	to discuss together
共舞	4	to dance together
共识	2	consensus
公共	1	public
共处	1	to get along together
共创	1	to create together
共有	1	to own together
共命运	1	common destiny/path
共同体	7	common body

Table 7.23 Examples of “共” (*gong*, together) in Weibo posts

The high frequency of the various terms with the character “共” demonstrates how Xinhua highlights the importance of “togetherness” in the promotion of the BRI towards the Weibo users. Based on the contexts of these terms, there are several distinctive patterns. First, terms with “共” are applied when describing the future cooperation between China and other countries or organizations. Examples of this are shown in Table 7.24:

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
8	习近平中国愿同周边国家	共同	推进一带一路建设习近平
	Xi Jinping, China is willing to promote Belt and Road construction together with neighbouring countries, Xi Jinping;		
25	平主席在多个场合主动表达	共建	一带一路的诚意目前已经有多
	On several occasions, President Xi has expressed the genuine proposal to build Belt and Road together.		

Table 7.24 Examples of posts with “共” (*gong*, together) in Weibo posts, with context

“共” refers to the diplomatic relations that the Chinese government leaders envision and propose. Therefore, the related Weibo posts are often used in future tense with words such as “将” (*jiang*, will), “让” (*rang*, let), and “实现” (*shixian*, to realize). These terms tend to form repeated collocations throughout. For example, “共商、共建、共享” (*gongshang, gongjian, gongxiang*) means to discuss together, to construct together and to share together, which applies to the actual steps of the process; “互利共赢” (*huli gongying*) means to achieve a mutually beneficent situation; and “命运共同体” (*mingyun gongtongti*) refers to having the same destiny and path. The usage of these terms implies that as China proposes cooperation and sharing, the BRI will be beneficial to all participant countries. The related Weibo posts tend to deploy rhetorical figures consistently, including parallelisms and personification in particular. For instance, the paralleled phrases “共享机遇，共迎挑战，共创繁荣” (*gongxiang jiyu, gongying tiaozhan, gongchuang fanrong*) are used to describe and emphasize that China and other countries will share opportunities together, confront challenges together and achieve prosperity together. The expression “同呼吸，共命运” (*tonghuxi, gongmingyun*)—meaning “to breathe together, to survive together,”—is deployed to describe the future relations between

China and other countries, as if countries were human beings. These rhetorical figures are employed to create a dramatic effect.

The total number of the terms with character “互” (*hu*, mutual/inter-) is 58. See Table 7.25 below:

Terms	Frequency	Translation
互*	58 (total)	mutual/inter-
互联	14	interconnect
互通	14	interoperability
互利	9	mutual benefit
互信	7	mutual trust
互鉴	5	mutual reference
相互	4	mutually
互敬	1	mutual respect
互学	1	mutual learning
互补	1	complementation
互助	1	mutual help
交互	1	interaction

Table 7.25 Examples of “互” (*hu*, mutual/inter-) in Weibo posts

Compared to the usage of “共,” similar features can be identified in the terms containing “互” (*hu*, mutual). First, they are applied when describing the future relationship between China and other countries or organizations. Rather than “共”, referring to a broader concept of a cooperative relationship, “互” often refers specifically to economic cooperation. For example (Table 7.26):

Nr.	Context	Key term	Context
50	要以一带一路为主线, 以	互联	互通和产业合作为支点
	must be guided by Belt and Road Initiative, through interconnection and industrial cooperation		
53	一带一路建设离不开资金的互联	互通,	从银行贷款、银行授信等.
	In Belt and Road construction, the interoperability of funding is indispensable, such as bank loan and bank credit.		

Table 7.26 Examples of posts with “互” (*hu*, mutual/inter-) in Weibo posts, with context

Second, the terms with “互” tend to form collocations that have the same tones. For instance, in collocations such as “团结互信” (*tuanjie huxin*, to be united and to trust each other), “互学互鉴” (*huxue hujian*, to learn from each other), and “真诚互助” (*zhencheng huzhu*, to sincerely help each other), the second character is always the second tone with a rising pitch and the last character is the fourth tone with a falling pitch. The tones create orderliness in sound. Third, the related Weibo posts also use parallelisms, personification and metaphors. For instance, the paralleled terms “和平合作, 开放包容, 互学互鉴, 互利共赢” (*heping hezuo, kaifang baorong, huxue hujian, huli gongying*) are used to emphasize the importance of peace, collaborating and sharing. The expression “中塔山水相连, 真诚互助” (*ZhongTa shanshui xianglian, zhencheng huzhu*) means “China and Tajikistan, sharing the bordering mountains and lakes, will help each other sincerely.” The statement uses personification to frame the reasons for collaboration between the two countries. In addition, “country” is sometimes replaced by the term “家园” (*jiayuan*, homeland), creating a personal sense and a closer tie with the individual Weibo users.

7.2 Analysis of Rhetorical Devices

In the following analysis, I analysed both the Chinese and English textual structures in terms of their grammatical features and rhetorical and literary figures. To provide substantive explanations on Xinhua’s reporting style, this analysis consists of three sections: exploration of the in-group and out-group; comparison of rhetoric features; and examination of visual elements.

7.2.1 Self and Other

In the Chinese posts, pronouns such as “我” (*wo*, I), “我们” (*women*, we) are used more frequently than pronouns like “你们” (*nimen*, plural you), “他” (*ta*, he) and “他们” (*tamen*, they). For instance, “我们” is used 21 times whereas “他们” is only used twice. For example, the pronoun “我们,” the reflexive pronoun “自己” (*ziji*, self) and the term “我国” (*woguo*, our country) refer to the self, and the pronouns “他们” and “你们” are the others.

Compared to the pronouns, certain nouns also contain the sense of “self.” For example, the terms including “中国” (*Zhongguo*, China), “中方” (*zhongfang*, China) and “中国人民” (*Zhongguo renmin*, Chinese people) often are the in-groups in the statements, and the terms “周边国家” (*zhoubian guojia*, neighbouring countries), “外国” (*waijie*, foreign countries) and “外方” (*waifang*, foreign parties) often stand for the “out-groups.” See the following example (Table 7.27):

Example Nr.98	习近平强调，要本着互利共赢的原则同沿线国家开展合作，让沿线国家得益于 我国 发展，要实行包容发展，坚持各国共享机遇，共迎挑战，共创繁荣。
Translation	Xi Jinping stresses that based on the principle of mutual benefits, to cooperate with the countries along the road, let these countries benefit from our country’s development, to face challenges together and to achieve prosperity together.

Table 7.27 Example that shows “self” and “others” on Weibo

This is a post from the perspective of the Chinese president. His statement is in the form of indirect speech. The reporter uses the verb “强调” (*qiangdiao*, to emphasize/stress) to show how he makes a statement and to indicate the authority of what he says. In the statement, the literal meaning of the first phrase “要本着互利共赢的原则同沿线国家开展合作” means “should accord to the mutual beneficial and win-win principles, to cooperate together with the countries along the road.” In this phrase, it lacks the subject “who,” as to “who” should obey these principles and then cooperate with other countries. However, in the sentence “让沿线国家得益于**我国**发展,” the subject appears in the passive phrase, as it means “let these countries benefit from our country’s development.” In this way, these two sentences together can be translated as: “Xi Jinping stresses that we (the Chinese people) should obey the win-win and mutual beneficial principles and cooperate with the countries along the Silk road we propose, and we let them benefit from our country’s development.” Therefore, the term “我国” (*woguo*, our country), and/or the omitted pronoun “we” imply the in-group in the statement, and the term “沿线国家” (*yanxian guojia*, countries along the road) marks the out-group. It is worth mentioning that there are several out-groups: “countries bordering China,” “European countries,” “African countries,” “Middle-eastern countries,” and then the rest of the world. Xinhua attributes meaning to these out-groups through association with the use of certain

word groups such as “共赢” (*gongying*, win together), “互利” (*huli*, benefit mutually), “mutual,” “together,” “along,” “shared,” etc. In this way, the construction of “others” equally reveals the sense of self that Xinhua promotes: China, led by the current leadership, as a nation that is open, benevolent, cooperative, powerful, and generous.

Compared to the Weibo posts, the frequencies of pronouns are much lower in the tweets. In all of the tweets in the corpus, Xinhua uses only two pronouns, “us” and “you,” and then only once each. These tweets are shown below (Table 7.28):

Nr.	Tweets
6	Follow us into Dunhuang, an ancient town along the Silk Road in northwest China’s Gansu Province
54	The 600-year-old Heshun ancient town in southwest China will take you to the ancient South SilkRoad

Table 7.28 Examples of pronouns “us” and “you” on Twitter

In first tweet above, “us” refers to the Xinhua reporters who have acquired information regarding the Chinese town Dunhuang. It is the message sender, directly inviting the receivers to hear what they have to say. In the second tweet, “you” refers to the target audience on Twitter. In this case, the message sender keeps some distance from the receiver, by issuing an indirect invitation.

Apart from the example above, Xinhua does not use first and third singular pronouns, like “we” and “they,” on Twitter, presumably to avoid the dichotomy of self and other, or national and foreign. In addition, the Chinese terms on Weibo discussed above—such as “我国” (*woguo*, our country), “外方” (*waifang*, foreign parties) or “外国” (*waijie*, foreign countries)—do not get an English equivalent on Twitter. The ‘self’ in the English text is often “China” or the “BRI,” and the ‘others’ include “neighbours,” “ASEAN,” “Europe,” “regional countries” and countries such as “the U.S.” and “Russia.” See the examples below (Table 7.29):

Nr.	Tweets
77	China sees more exports, investment along #BeltandRoad in 1st 5 months
110	China’s Belt and Road initiative to boost Turkey’s economy: expert
111	China to give priority to port projects along Belt and Road, opens up customs
128	Belt and Road initiatives will bring huge benefits for Asia and rest of the world #Silkroad

Table 7.29 Examples of “China” and “Belt and Road Initiative” on Twitter

The liberal use of pronouns on Weibo and their distinctive absence in tweets demonstrates different perspectives and tones in reporting. On Twitter, Xinhua reporters tend to downplay the contrast of the national self (China) and foreign others by avoiding pronouns such as “we” and “they.” Rather, the constant use of “China” instead of “our country” implies the reporters intend to adopt an objective, detached tone towards the English audience on Twitter.

7.2.2 Rhetorical Figures

Xinhua deploys rhetorical figures in social media messaging on both the Weibo and Twitter platforms. To explore the intentions and functions of using these rhetorical figures, I examined and compared which elements have frequently appeared in the Chinese and English texts.

On Weibo, metaphors, symbolism, personifications, and parallelism are the most frequent rhetorical figures throughout the posts. Some examples of posts that use metaphors are shown below (Table 7.30):

Nr.	Weibo posts
45	<p>西安是丝绸之路的起点，习主席提出的“一带一路”战略构想为“龙象共舞”提供了新机遇，……</p> <p>Xi'an is the beginning of the ancient Silk Road. Through proposing “Belt and Road” initiative, President Xi has provided new opportunities for the “dance of Dragon and Elephant,” ……</p>
84	<p>“一带一路”的理念是共同发展，目标是合作共赢。它不是中方一家的“独奏曲”，而是各方共同参与的“交响乐”。</p> <p>The concept of Belt and Road Initiative is for common development. The aim is to cooperate and create a win-win situation. It is not just China's “solo,” but a “symphony” for all parties.</p>

Table 7.30 Examples of metaphors on Weibo

In the first example, the context of the post is about the Indian president Modi's visit to Xi'an. In this post, “龙” (*long*, dragon) refers to China, because dragons are prevalent in ancient Chinese mythologies. “象” (*xiang*, elephant) signifies India, as elephants were used as mounts for the royal families. “Dance” refers to the future cooperation between China and India. The imagery of a dragon and an elephant reinforces several assumptions. First, the contrasting imageries imply a normative stance and stress the cultural differences between the two

countries. Second, the new opportunities for cooperation indicate that the relations between the two countries have not always been smooth. Third, the imagery of dragon and elephant dancing together emphasizes that China and India could find mutual benefits despite the differences.

In the second example, “solo,” in the sense of a musical performance, carries the implication that the BRI is only acted out by China and will only benefit China. This negative image is countered by calling it rather a “symphony,” to make clear that the initiative engages all member countries and will be beneficial for all. These metaphors conjure up appealing images, and in this way make China’s foreign relations easier to understand for a variety of audiences.

Examples of messages where symbolism is used, are shown in the following messages (Table 7.31):

Nr.	Weibo posts
120	参天古柏掩映之下，婆娑竹影摇曳之中，一对造型古朴的石虎相对而卧，守护着丝绸之路开拓者——张骞的陵墓。 Under the towering pine trees and swaying shadows of bamboos, a pair of ancient stone tigers are guarding the tomb of Zhang Qian, the explorer of the Silk Road.
132	撒马尔罕城静静屹立。帖木儿家族陵墓、列吉斯坦神学院、兀鲁伯天文台……鳞次栉比的古迹无声诉说着曾经的壮丽。 The city Samarkand is sitting quietly. Timur family mausoleum, Liejisitan Theological Seminary and Wu Observatory,The monuments one after another are quietly telling the past glories.

Table 7.31 Examples of symbolism on Weibo

In these two examples, the terms “古柏” (*gubai*, pine trees), “竹影” (*zhuying*, shadows of bamboos), “石虎” (*shihu*, stone tigers), “撒马尔罕城” (*Sama'erhan cheng*, the city of Samarkand) and “古迹” (*guji*, monuments) present specific images to the audiences. These images symbolize history and ancient culture. This symbolism goes beyond a superficial level of representing the abstract concepts “history” and “ancient culture,” but also carries a layer of subtle connotations. For instance, the stone tigers guarding the tomb of the envoy Zhang Qian represent the tradition and spirit of the ancient empire; the monuments in the city of Samarkand represent the glory of the past. These topics are given symbolic meanings to instill more profound impressions on the audience.

The following are examples of where personifications are used (Table 7.32):

Nr.	Weibo posts
4	近代民族独立解放运动以来,共同的历史遭遇、共同的奋斗历程让中非结下了兄弟般情谊。
	In the modern history, the common obstacles and experiences in the national independence movements have led to a brotherly friendship between China and Africa.
38	习近平强调,中国和印尼是真诚相待的好朋友、好伙伴。
	Xi Jinping stresses that China and Indonesia are good friends and partners who treat each other honestly.

Table 7.32 Examples of personifications on Weibo

In the first sentence, by describing China and Africa as going through similar history, the reporter uses “brotherly friendship” to indicate that the relation between China and Africa is getting closer. The second sentence is an indirect quote from Xi Jinping. In his words, China and Indonesia are good friends and partners, as if the two countries have human character traits. Such personifications can be a powerful tool to explain and present complex international relations in a limited writing space.

Examples of messages that use parallelism are shown below (Table 7.33):

Nr.	Weibo posts
83	毫无疑问,随着中国外交走完 2014 年这个丰收之年、开拓之年、创新之年,外界更加渴望看清中国未来世界角色的内涵和力量。
	No doubt, as China’s diplomacy has gone through a year of harvest, a year of exploration, a year of creation, the outside world is longing to know what role China will play in the future.
25	习近平主席曾说,“一带一路”建设秉持共商、共建、共享原则,不是封闭的,而是开放包容的;不是中国一家的独奏,而是沿线国家的合唱。
	President Xi Jinping once said, the construction of Belt and Road will hold on to the principles of discussing together, building together and sharing together. It is not closed, but open and tolerant; it is not China’s solo, but a symphony of regional countries.

Table 7.33 Examples of parallelisms on Weibo

In the first sentence, the paralleled phrases “丰收之年、开拓之年、创新之年” (*fengshou zhi nian, kaituo zhi nian, chuangxin zhi nian*, a year of harvest, a year of exploration, a year of creation) describe China’s diplomacy in the year 2014. They emphasize the importance of the

year and the achievements of the government. The second sentence is a direct quote from Xi Jinping. Using direct speech implies the reporter’s detachment and intention of keeping objectivity. In Xi’s speech, parallelism “不是……,而是……;不是……, 而是……” (*bushi, ershi; bushi, ershi*, not..., but...; not..., but....) denies that the BRI only pertains to China, but emphasizes that the initiative is open, tolerant, and engaging all regional countries. Parallelism reinforces the arguments rhetorically and creates dramatic effects.

On Twitter, metaphors and personifications are the most frequent rhetorical figures used. Examples of tweets with metaphors are (Table 7.34):

Nr.	Tweets
3	China #BeltandRoad initiative not geopolitical tool, would not force anyone’s hands: FM
36	Chinese, U.S. initiatives along #SilkRoad, not crash but chemical reaction generating merits

Table 7.34 Examples of metaphors on Twitter

The first tweet is a reported speech from the Chinese foreign minister. In this case, “China’s initiative” is compared to a “geopolitical tool.” By stressing that the initiative is not a geopolitical tool, the foreign minister indicates that it could be misinterpreted as a tool by others. In the second tweet, the link between the Chinese and the U.S. initiatives is compared to a “chemical reaction,” indicating that it will cause no conflict, but that the initiatives will bring more benefits. The use of such metaphors illustrates that Xinhua’s journalists make efforts to adopt native English expressions on Twitter. However, in the first tweet, the expression “force anyone’s hands” comes from the expression “to force someone’s hand” where the noun is singular, not plural. This expression originates from a game of cards, where it means to force a player to react and make a particular play, even if this is against their will. In the tweet, the phrase “would not force anyone’s hands” implies that the Chinese government, while promoting the initiative, will not force governments from other countries to make decisions. The metaphor is even more apt as a game of cards usually is a zero-sum game, where the winner takes all and the losers nothing, but the BRI is beneficial for all. In the second tweet, “chemical reaction” is used in the sense of substances converting and—through chemical bonding—producing new substances or energy. Moreover, “chemical reaction” is not nearly as unequivocally positive as “chemistry.” It is likely that the reporter originally meant to indicate “chemistry” between the two countries, as the word “chemistry”

is the proper, idiomatic term to denote positivity and added value in the context of interpersonal relationships.

Personifications in tweets occur in the following examples (Table 7.35):

Nr.	Tweets
42	#China woos private funds to build 1,000 camps for RVs, or campervans, along #SilkRoad, YangtzeRiver belt by 2020
120	#China, #Cambodia pledge closer cooperation under Belt and Road framework

Table 7.35 Examples of personifications on Twitter

In these tweets, the countries China and Cambodia are personified through the verbs “woo” and “pledge.” The meaning is clear: the first tweet speaks of the Chinese government’s attempts to collect more private funds, and the second tweet’s topic is the governments from China and Cambodia deciding on further cooperation. The application of verbs that usually apply to human actors, “wooing” and “pledging,” puts these situations in a more general, easy-to-understand framework that people can relate to on a personal level.

The first rhetorical device I have discussed, the dichotomy between self and other, domestic and international, pervades Xinhua’s discourse on Weibo much more prominently than on Twitter, where it is downplayed, subverted, or altogether avoided. In using stylistic, rhetorical figures, however, Xinhua seems to take similar approaches on both platforms. Its reporters use metaphors and personifications in Weibo posts and tweets alike. These figures paint a portrait of China as friendly, open, and cooperative, on both platforms. The abstraction, simplification, and generalization these rhetorical figures enable, are powerful means to reach broader audiences on Weibo as well as on Twitter.

7.2.3 Visual Analysis

Most of Xinhua’s tweets and posts come with photographs and images. Xinhua accompanies its messages on the BRI, too, by a large number of images. These include pictures of politicians, cultural heritage, and infrastructure, as well as maps and infographics. The complex aspects involved in visual communication range “from criteria that might lead an editor to select an image to provoke a particular response, low-level visual aspects that direct attention and memory of images, subjective evaluation of images that can be, for example, a

function of knowledge, attitude, motivation, or group membership, to the specific multimodal context in which images are presented” (Müller, Kappas and Olk, 2012, p. 321). In the following analysis, I looked at the photographs and images collected from Xinhua’s two accounts: the English account New China on Twitter and the Chinese account Xinhua net on Sina Weibo. The goal of this analysis is to understand what the visual elements symbolize, and what effects the images from Xinhua may create for the audiences.

I collected 212 images from New China and 224 images from Xinhua net during the same time frame (from 4 September 2012 till 4 January 2016) I used for the collection of messages as discussed in Chapter Six. The images from each account fall into five thematic categories: pictures of politicians, pictures of cultural activities and heritage, pictures of technological industry and infrastructure, maps and infographics, and other pictures without a clear, unifying theme (such as flags, experts, Chinese currencies and the military). I analysed the themes, the angles, and the main characters of these images from the two accounts for a comparison. The amounts of the images in each of the five categories are shown in Table 7.36 below:

	Politicians	Cultural activities & heritage	Industry & infrastructure	Maps & infographics	Other	Total
New China	48	104	49	7	4	212
Xinhua net	59	110	4	49	2	224

Table 7.36 Categorization of images attached to tweets and posts from New China and Xinhua net

Between the two accounts, there is no significant difference in the total number of images, in the number of photos of politicians, and in the number of photos of cultural activities and heritage. The numbers also show that on both accounts, pictures of cultural activities and heritage amount to nearly half of the total images, making it the biggest category. The number of politicians’ photos, the second largest category, is 48 for New China’s tweets—a little less than Xinhua net, where they occur in 59 posts.

There is a large contrast between the category of industry and infrastructure and the category of maps and infographics. New China has attached 49 pictures that focus on industry and infrastructure, whereas there are only four pictures in the same category from Xinhua net. In

contrast to this, Xinhua net provides many more infographics than New China. Xinhua uses infographics to introduce slogans and concepts related to the BRI.

These observations lend themselves to the following interpretations: first, Xinhua provides a large number of photos of culture, heritage, and landscape on its Twitter and Weibo accounts in order to promote the BRI from a cultural perspective. This helps to depoliticize the initiative, because these photos do not directly reflect political and sensitive issues. Second, the photos about politicians on the two accounts are meant to demonstrate China's positive relationships with different countries, the efforts made by China's government leaders, and how easy and competent Chinese officials interact with the outside world. Third, the reasons that Xinhua tends to highlight the construction of infrastructure on its Twitter account while posting more images of infographics on its Weibo account may lie in different external and internal communication strategies.

These thematic categories show that Xinhua focuses on both official and non-official publicity in promoting the BRI. Photos of politicians' activities demonstrate the government's role in implementing the initiative, and photos of cultural activities demonstrate the responses and reactions of the public. According to Schneider, visual analysis, combining methods from discourse analysis and semiotics, identifies the different signs that work in a communication process, and explores how they come together to transmit a message (Schneider, 2012, pp. 249-253). I applied Schneider's steps in analysing visual signs, acoustic signs, verbal signs and narrative issues (Schneider, 2012). To identify the visual signs in my analysis, I focused on various factors in the compositions of the images: camera angle, colour schemes, mise-en-scene, lighting, etc.

Category 1. Photos of politicians

On Sina Weibo, most photos from this category are of Chinese government leaders, such as President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and of officials like Xinhua News Agency's director Cai Mingzhao, etc. The same images of President Xi are repeatedly used. For example, the photo of him delivering a speech in Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan is used seven times (see image 5 in figure 7.1). The settings in which the officials appear are meetings, press conferences, airports, and universities. Examples are shown below (see figure 7.1):

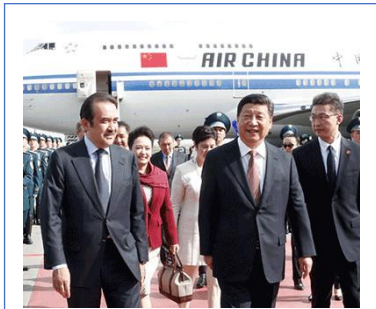


Image 1 Chinese President Xi Jinping arriving at Astana airport, Kazakhstan
Retrieved on May 8 2015



Image 2 Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi
Retrieved on Mar 10 2015

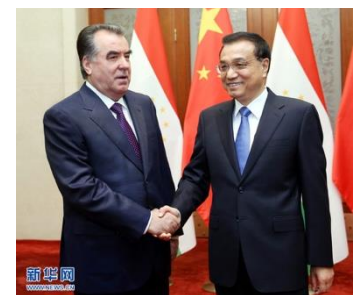


Image 3 Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon
Retrieved on Nov 8 2014

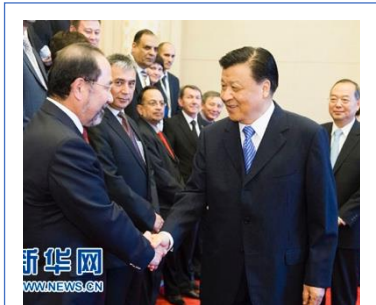


Image 4 Liu Yunshan, member of the Politburo Standing Committee, at OBOR meeting of media cooperation
Retrieved on Jul 3 2014



Image 5 Chinese President Xi Jinping giving a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan
Retrieved on Sep 10 2013



Image 6 Cai Mingzhao, former president of Xinhua New Agency
Retrieved on Jul 16 2015

Figure 7.1: Photos of Chinese political leaders, posted by Xinhua net on Weibo

On Twitter, most photos of politicians include both officials from within and outside China, such as Xi Jinping, Russian President Putin, U.S. President Obama, etc. The settings where the politicians appear are often international conferences, press conferences, and presidential meetings. Examples are shown in figure 7.2:



Image 1 Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang Retrieved on Dec 29 2015

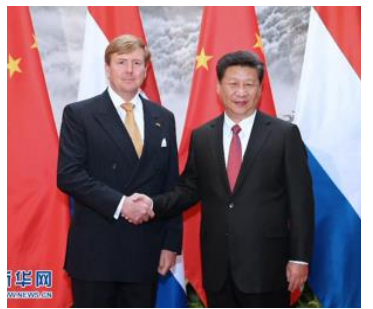


Image 2 King of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander and President Xi Retrieved on Oct 26 2015

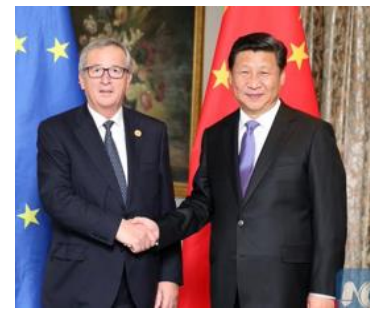


Image 3 EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and President Xi Retrieved on Jun 24 2015



Image 4 President Xi and former US President Barack Obama Retrieved on Sep 25 2015



Image 5 President Xi and former US President Barack Obama Retrieved on Sep 14 2015

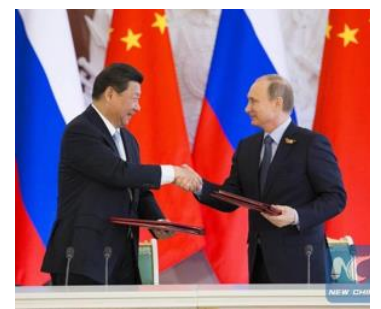


Image 6 President Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin Retrieved on Jul 6 2015

Figure 7.2: Photos of political leaders, posted by New China on Twitter

Visual depiction of politicians often consists of various political gestures. These include standing behind a lectern giving a speech, and handshakes during meetings. Embedded in a certain social and political context, “a symbol in action or a gestural performance” can create a profound effect (Rauer, 2006, pp. 257-258). For instance, Willy Brandt’s knee fall at the Warsaw Memorial, as “a gestural ‘speech act’ that expressed feelings of remorse and repentance,” has had a “path-breaking effect on German collective memory” (Rauer, 2006, pp. 258-159). Even when lasting for only an instant, performances may lead to “clear transformation of social reality” if “they succeed in their aim of transmitting their actors’ sense of identity to the spectators” (Mori, 2011, pp. 6-7).

The activities politicians engage in, as seen on the photos posted on Weibo, often take place within China, whereas those on Twitter tend to take place outside China. These photos are

taken either when the politicians are delivering speeches or having meetings. The most common body language visible in these photos includes handshakes, greetings, and raising hands during a speech to indicate reinforcement (see figure 7.1 and 7.2). Different gestures may contain communicative values that “provide the listener with a subtle index of how the speaker feels the content of the co-occurring speech” (Casasanto and Jasmin, 2010).

The point of view in an image can add a layer of meaning as well. The angle at which the photo is taken, that is to say, at which the viewer gets to see the image, plays an important part in “symbolic relations between image producers/viewers and the people, places or things in images” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004, p. 136). For instance, “frontality allows the creation of maximum involvement,” as “the viewer is directly confronted with what is in the picture” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004, p. 136). For the images of politicians in figure 7.1 and 7.2, the shots are frequently medium close-ups or medium shots of the politicians, which demonstrates this creation of involvement for the viewers. Politicians always conduct their behaviours and deliver speeches towards the audiences who are present at the time, such as other officials, other conference participants, or journalists. The viewpoint chosen for these photos gives the sense to the viewer of being in that audience. Even if in some photos politicians do not directly look into the lens, the formality of their postures and expressions shows an awareness of the presence of cameras. This indicates a familiarity with public speaking. In terms of gender, most of the politicians in the photos are male, and there is only one portrait of a Chinese female official Fu Ying, who is the former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Twitter. If the politicians are giving speeches on stage (see image 2 in figure 7.1 and image 1 in figure 7.2), the backgrounds are often in blue colour, with the titles of the conferences in white colour. If the politicians are having a meeting, the backgrounds are often national flags based on the participants’ nationalities.

The Twitter images show far more foreign leaders shaking hands with Chinese officials and while delivering public speeches. Showing both Chinese and foreign officials’ might be a way to establish relevance for viewers in those countries. For instance, in image 2 and 3 in figure 7.2, President Xi’s handshakes with the king of the Netherlands, Willem-Alexander, and the president of the European Union’s executive Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, create an impression of Xi’s diplomatic charm, and relay China’s positive foreign relations. In addition, in image 2 and 3, Xi shows an open arm during his handshakes. Based on the semiotic approach of visual meanings by Jewitt and Oyama, “‘actors’ are the participants from whom

or which the vector emanates, or who themselves form the vector” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004, p, 144). In this case, the “actor” and the “doer” is Xi, as the vector is directed towards him. The visual trope invites a mixed interpretation of Xi’s superiority and masculinity on the one hand, and China’s openness and pro-activeness in gearing up better foreign relations on the other hand.

Category 2. Photos of cultural activities, heritage and landscape

On Weibo, most photos in this category are taken within China, and include cultural exhibitions, celebrities’ activities, historical sites, traditional Chinese villages, etc. Examples are shown in figure 7.3:

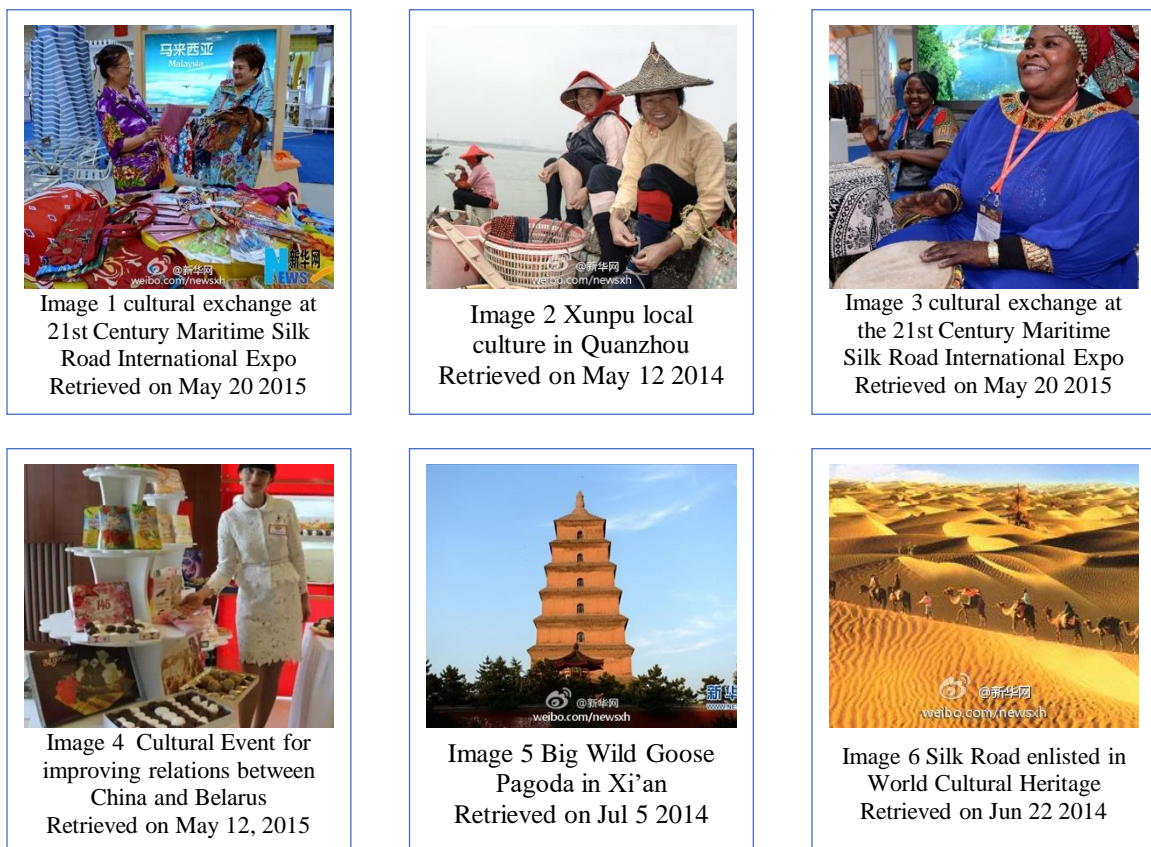


Figure 7.3: Visualizing Culture and Heritage from Xinhua net on Weibo

On Twitter, the photos are taken from both within and outside China, such as China’s terracotta warriors from Xi’an, the Dunhuang Grottoes, a cultural festival in Edinburgh, the EXPO in Milan, etc. Examples are shown in figure 7.4:

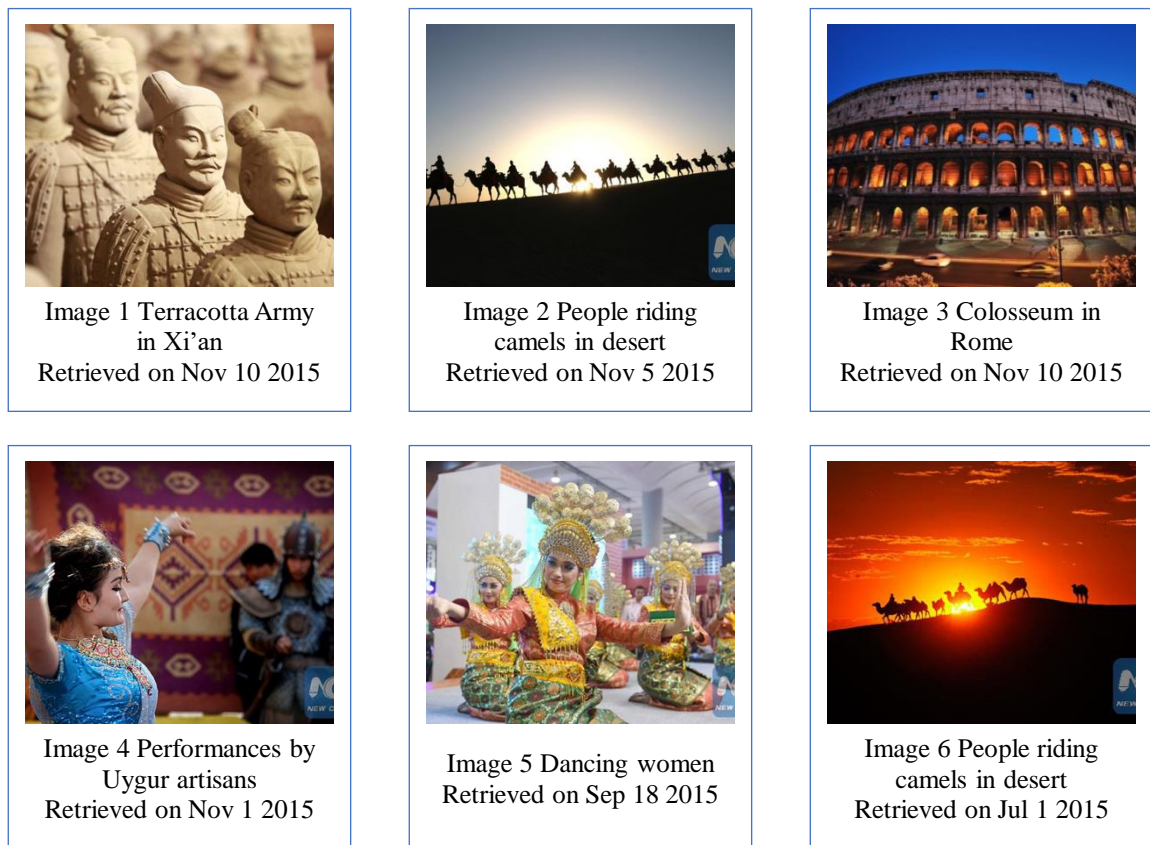


Figure 7.4: Visualizing Culture and Heritage from New China on Twitter

Photos from Weibo and Twitter do not overlap, but they are often used repeatedly on the respective platform. All the photos accompany posts and tweets that mention the locations of the events and activities. This gives the impression that the reporters, present at the subject of the photo, provided these themselves. The photos on Twitter of events or cultural heritage that are located outside China would then be provided by foreign correspondents.

This category shows a diversity in subjects of nationalities and culture. As shown in figure 7.3 and 7.4, whenever there are human actors visible in these photos, these characters are mostly female. By showing the femininity, these images indicate the attractiveness and the peacefulness in China's cultural exchange. These women might have noticed or been informed of the presence of cameras, but most of them do not pose for the cameras. The images create an impression of immediacy. By referring to the negative rule "that the artist must not include in the image anything the eye-witness could not have seen from a particular point at a particular moment," Gombrich argues that the "eye-witness principle" enables a

“perception of movement” in an image and a “focus on the significant” in terms of conveying visual information (Gombrich, 1980, pp. 260-262). Using techniques such as foreshortening and adjusting light, distance, and colours, the arrested images can create momentary views and show the beholder both physically and emotionally “what happened out there but also by implication what happened or would have happened” (Gombrich, 1980, pp. 244-247). By showing the experience of the eye-witness, the images allow the beholder to understand where they are “supposed to stand in relation to the event depicted” and the moment they “are made to share vicariously with the eye-witness” (Gombrich, 1980, p. 247).

There is also a large number of photos about the heritage and landscape in the ancient Silk Road region (see image 5 in figure 7.3 and image 3 in figure 7.4), including the Big Goose Pagoda in Xi’an, envoy Zhang Qian’s tomb in Hanzhong, the Dunhuang Grottoes, the Colosseum in Rome, etc.

There are three photos on Weibo and 23 on Twitter depicting people riding camels in the desert against the sun (see image 6 in figure 7.3, image 2 and 6 in figure 7.4). These photos refer to the ancient route for caravans; the effect that is sought after is to reflect nostalgia for the past. We do not know who the characters in the photos are, they may as well be modern tourists. However, by the use of backlighting, these people appear in dark shadows, rendering them unidentifiable, so as not to break the spell of the conjured image of the past. All of these images generate a sense of presence, authenticity and immediacy, caused by their mise-en-scene, camera angles, colour schemes, and visual tropes.

Photos like these visualize the ancient Silk Road for various audiences, and highlight and romanticize the historical significance of early communications between “the East” and “the West.” Taken from a far distance, these photos display people riding camels in a boundless desert, during sunset or sunrise. Modern technology and high-speed transportation are absent from these images. It seems as if these people move at the slow pace of a trading caravan of the ancient Silk Road’s heyday. These features provide a sense of recalling cultural memory.

Category 3. Photos of industry and infrastructure

Xinhua net only posted four photos on Weibo of technological industry and infrastructure. On Twitter, New China attached 49 photos in this category. This shows that Xinhua uses

technological and infrastructural advancements, to a certain extent, to attract international audiences on Twitter.

The four photos in this category on Weibo are shown in figure 7.5:

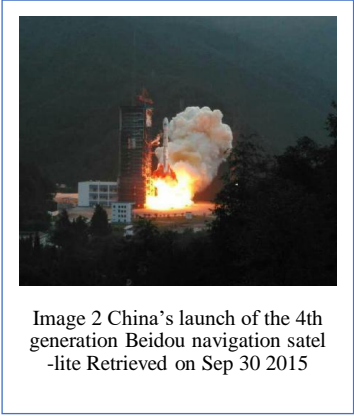
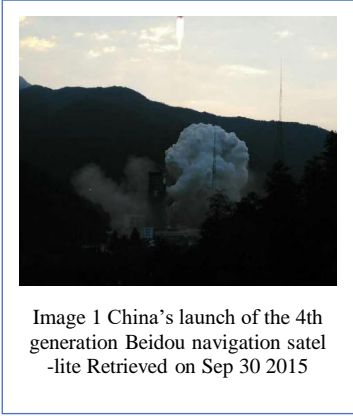


Figure 7.5: Visualizing the Belt and Road projects from Xinhua net on Weibo

On Twitter, photos in this category include industry and infrastructure from within and outside China, such as railways, ports, cargos, ships, high ways, pipelines, etc. Examples are shown in figure 7.6:

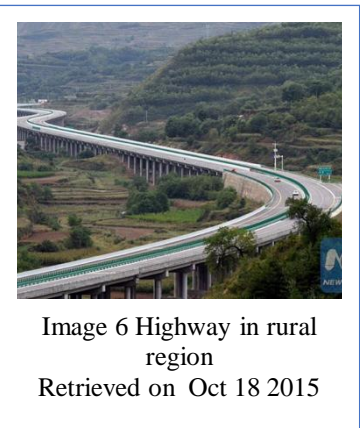


Figure 7.6: Visualizing the Belt and Road projects from New China on Twitter

Photos in this category are taken from a great distance in order to include a wider space, and to highlight the grandness of the projects in the BRI. For instance, in the photo of train (see image 1 in figure 7.6), the mountains in the background take up of two-thirds of the image space, and in the photos of ships, the sea and the sky occupy most of the space (see image 5 in figure 7.6).

Most of these photos are taken from the side of the objects. This is to highlight the movement, continuity, and vitality of the projects, and to indicate that these projects are in the process of construction. For example, shown in figure 7.6, the winding highways (see image 6) and the running bullet trains (see image 2) are taken from the angles that emphasize the different sizes of the objects from closer and further distances. This technique is to visually stretch the lengths of objects and suggest their movements. Vehicles that seem to move in streamlines are classic visual tropes of progress and metaphors of modernity. Transportation, power sources,

and energy distribution were used in photography from late 1920s to 1930s in Germany, as an iconography of modernity to demonstrate the “industrial progress and processes” (Stokoe, 2014, p. 86). The “dramatic and monumentalized view of German industry,” according to Stokoe, reflects the “contemporary optimism about technical advance” (Stokoe, 2014, pp. 86-87). Visible in the pictures above, Xinhua uses modern technology in a very similar way to depict modernity.

Most of the photos in this category focus on industrial and construction machinery. In the few photos that show people, these people appear frequently in working uniforms to demonstrate the development of industrialization (see image 3 in figure 7.6). According to Gluck, “modernity is as much an attitude as it is an institutional or cultural condition, a mental temper distinguished by perpetual self-consciousness and critique” (Gluck, 2011, p. 678). In Xinhua’s perspective, the modernist vision of China’s future is shown through industrial expansion in the rural or rather barren areas. This process of achieving modernity integrates “modern, urban industrial subjects into what had hitherto been a more obviously *volkisch*, ruralist agenda” (Stokoe, 2014, p. 91). As Stokoe points out, “the clear message is one of a reconciliation or synthesis of the old with the new” (Stokoe, 2014, p. 91).

Category 4. Maps and infographics

In this category, most of the images from Weibo are infographics, that introduce slogans and explain concepts, such as why the BRI is important, what kind of financial changes the initiative will bring, what “shadow banking,” “municipal bond,” and “Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank” mean, etc. Examples are shown below (in figure 7.7):



Figure 7.7: Infographics from Xinhua net on Weibo

On Twitter, among the seven images in this category, there is only one illustration: the rest are maps. These maps show the ancient caravan routes, and only include regions of Asia, Europe and a part of Africa. Examples are shown in figure 7.8:

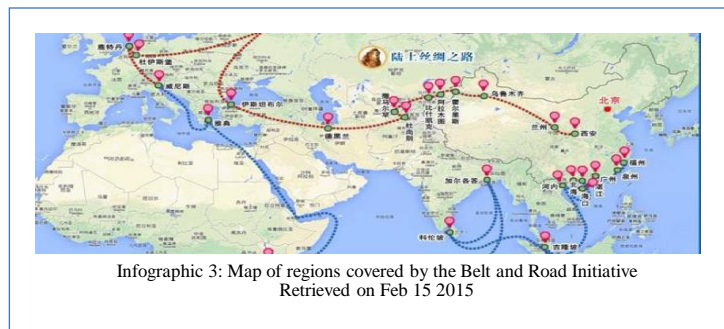
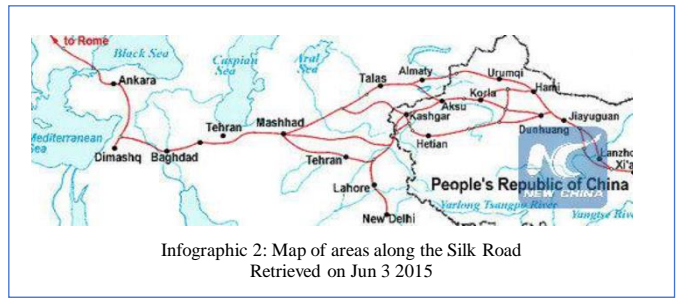


Figure 7.8: Infographics from New China on Twitter

In the infographics on Weibo, the explanations of concepts tend to be short and straightforward. However, the use of infographics to present the complex issues of China's diplomacy, the government's Two Sessions, and its financial policy, runs the risk of (over)simplifying and generalizing these issues towards the Weibo audiences. These Chinese infographics are Xinhua's interpretations of the BRI, and adopt the same tones from the government's policy papers.

The two infographics shown in figure 7.7 can establish categories and their relations, which is precisely a discursive act, and these practices would therefore lend themselves to a closer look. For instance, image 1 in Figure 7.7, titled by "Who will benefit?" (*Shui jiang shouyi*, 谁将受益?), consists of a map, numbers, a pie chart, a column chart, and Chinese texts at the bottom. The texts describe that the BRI connects countries and regions in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Central Europe, that take up 63 percent of the world population and 29 percent of the world economy. Demonstrated through a pie chart and a column chart, these two numbers give the impression that they are from reliable and professional sources. On the one hand, by accentuating the importance and the scale of the initiative, the map and the numbers give way to the interpretation that 63 percent of the population will benefit from China's initiative. On the other hand, by indicating that the majority of the population has enjoyed less growth in

economy, it shows the necessity of a call for cooperation. The graphic demonstrates the significance and timeliness of China's initiative.

These Chinese infographics would not be suitable to post on Twitter, even if they were to be translated into English. This is because introducing the same concepts and posting the same slogans does not fit with Xinhua's strategies and patterns of communication on Twitter.

As van Leeuwen holds, "perceiving photographs is closely analogous to perceiving reality because photographs provide a point-by-point correspondence to what was in front of the camera, despite the fact that they reduce this reality in size, flatten it and, in the case of black and white, drain it of colour" (van Leeuwen, 2004, p. 94). Through "a trained sense of 'this is how to do it' gained 'on the job' and by observing what does and does not 'work'" (Lister and Wells, 2004, p. 77), Xinhua's photographers, journalists, graphic designers, and editors make their conscious and unconscious choices on how the images would come out in terms of lighting, composition, framing, etc. Therefore, how to interpret images is not necessarily entirely up to the beholder, as it also depends on the context "where a multiplicity of readings is allowed or even encouraged" and the context "where the producers of the text have an interest in trying to get a particular message across to a particular audience" (van Leeuwen, 2004, pp. 95-96).

If Xinhua deploys various rhetorical features in the texts to exaggerate, simplify, generalize, and personify, then the images along the texts are applied to strengthen the effects of these features. The functions of images are to visualize the textual messages, e.g. bringing back what happened in the past, presenting what is happening, and suggesting what will happen. For instance, in the photos of the politicians' meetings and speeches, enlarged through framing, their expressions and postures show their awareness of the audiences at the time as well as the potential (future) audiences, like social media users. The viewers of these photos may gain a sense of proximity, of "being there" and "being interacted with." The photos of cultural activities and heritage stage an impression of celebration of cultural legacy. Those photos of grand projects and infrastructures are to show the viewers what potential benefits could be there for them. Before the viewers can actually enjoy these benefits, they can already enjoy visualizing and imagining them. In this respect, images provide memories and enlarge imaginations.

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated in several cases how the discourses in English and Chinese differ. These differences arise from various aspects surrounding the production of this discourse. As Michel Foucault states, “[d]iscursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them” (Foucault, 1977, p. 200). Xinhua’s communication strategies are not formed under fixed rules or guidelines from the government, but shaped by various factors that do not necessarily correlate with each other. The different discourses on the BRI from the Chinese and English social media platforms are not only shaped by the central government’s intentions on soft power construction and the interpretations of the directors and senior editors from the official media outlet, but are also determined by the technical formats and limitations of the media platforms these discourses are formed on, the nature of the linguistic features used in these respective discourses, and the different working environments of the overseas and domestic journalists.

In the corpus analysis, I demonstrated the similarities and differences in the meanings and usages of keywords in Chinese and English. The comparisons of the Chinese and English keywords that contain similar meanings show that similar words are often used in different contexts and form different collocations. The comparisons also show that several political terminologies, such as “务实合作” (*wushi hezuo*, pragmatic cooperation), “新常态” (*xin changtai*, new normal), “新佳话” (*xin jiahua*, new story), and colloquialisms such as “高大上” (*gao da shang*, high and noble) and “干货” (*ganhuo*, real stuff) have not found their way into tweets translated into English, as their usage would require lengthy, additional explanation of their background—something that does not fit in the space of a single tweet. This shows that when the need for an explicit context—because the frame of reference is absent in translation—clashes with technical limitations, this too can result in differences between Chinese and English discourses.

On both Weibo and Twitter, Xinhua’s messages imply similar distinctions of the in-group and out-group. The in-group is China and the other countries form the out-group. In the cases of rhetorical and literary figures, Xinhua deploys different metaphors, symbolisms,

personifications, and parallelisms on Weibo and Twitter. In terms of discursive mechanisms, Xinhua tends to take a normative stance in China's foreign relations, through the use of specific rhetorical figures on Weibo. On Twitter, however, some of the terms and rhetorical figures Xinhua uses, carry an ambiguous and counter-intuitive meaning. Complimentary to the rhetorical figures in the texts, the images that Xinhua decides to show domestic and international audiences display similar discursive choices. More importantly, these visual elements reinforce experiences, especially the shared and imagined experiences that stem from the discourses that they are part of.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The Chinese government is striving to strengthen China's international discursive power. While expanding their presence globally, the state-owned media outlets are promoting both the government's domestic policies and international strategies via various digital channels. Under Xi Jinping's current administration, the BRI is promoted in a media offensive that is aimed at both domestic and international audiences. With respect to international discourse, the Chinese government perceives this as dominated by the mainstream "Western media." If there is such a disparity, however, then improving China's international discursive power should be based on understanding the discourses of various ongoing international issues and debates. The traditional doctrine of "differentiating internal and external communication" (*neiwai youbie*, 内外有别) and the supplemental strategy of "differentiating external communication" (*waiwai youbie*, 外外有别) may not fit the current ambitious communication goals any longer. Various cases proved that, when failing to grasp the nuances of international issues, the government's efforts on China's discourse construction not only result in vain but may even backfire.

With an intention to shine a positive light on the BRI, China's state TV network CCTV uses the most watched Chinese show, its annual Spring Festival Gala, to broadcast performances that portray China's friendship with different countries involved in this initiative. For instance, CCTV's 2015 Spring Festival Gala broadcasted different styles of traditional dances from Egypt, Iran, India, and Russia and ended with a leading solo Chinese dance (CCTV, 2015). This performance, named "Silk Road Dance" (*silu nishang*, 丝路霓裳) was clearly intended to raise positive, international attention, but failed to do so. However, a comic performance called "Shared Happiness" (*tongxi tongle*, 同喜同乐), aired in CCTV's 2018 Spring Festival Gala, caused great controversy among various international media outlets and criticism from social media users from both Weibo and Twitter. The performance was made to show friendship between China and Africa, as witnessed by China-backed infrastructure projects in Africa (CCTV, 2018b). However, with a Chinese actor appearing in blackface makeup and an

actor from Cote d'Ivoire in a monkey costume, the show sparked nothing but controversy (Polianskaya, 2018; Taylor, 2018). When an incident like this happens, it tends to create a remarkable discursive situation, where the online debate goes viral on social media platforms on the one hand, yet China's state-owned media outlets stay mute on the other. Would it be fair to say that state media outlets like Xinhua, CCTV, and the *People's Daily* are encouraged to promote China's image, and to disseminate the central government's policies and intentions, but they do not yet learn to handle situations in case of a PR failure? How, then, does Chinese state media's "differentiated communicative strategy" play out in the highly-mediated discursive environment of social media?

In Chapter One, I raised three questions in order to explore the policy and discursive changes of Chinese official media outlets with respect to social media. These questions are: *What is the relationship between social media messaging and media policy in China? Under the current overarching media regulations, what role is social media playing in China's internal and external communication? How does the interplay between digital media and mass media affect China's image building?* In the following section, I will revisit the main findings to investigate the question: *as China continues its soft power construction, how do Chinese policymakers and media practitioners come to terms with the increasingly powerful influences of the ICTs on the state media outlets?*

This research thus focused on Xinhua's performance on social media platforms to examine its internal and external communicative strategies. In this context, it explored—by means of a case study—how the Chinese leadership intends to construct the country's soft power by promoting its diplomacy in the name of the BRI.

8.2 Summary of the Main Findings

Chapter Four, titled "Policy Reviews and Fieldwork," disclosed the hierarchical relations of the relevant governmental departments and examined legal and policy documents on foreign policy, media policies, cyber security, and e-governance, as well as legal and policy documents on the BRI, specifically. The policy papers reveal that the responsibilities of internal communication are increasingly de-centralized, whereas the government aims to enhance its external, international discursive. Thus, for internal communication, the government ensures the overall management of the thought work (*sixiang gongzuo*, 思想工作)

and adopts differentiated measures towards the domestic audience; in terms of external communication, the government is implementing a more centralized strategy to make China's voice heard. However, the centralized management of external communication does not directly translate to a monolithic voice towards all international audiences. Reflected in the policy papers on the EU, Arab states, African countries and ASEAN countries, the nuances of different international relations influence the tones and attitudes held in the communication.

The 33 interviews conducted with academics, media workers, and policymakers revealed significant effects of the government's internal and external communication policies on the media industry. These effects are visible in the more modernized management styles and working environments the state media outlets have adopted. For example, taking on the diplomatic mission to promote the government's BRI, Xinhua creates the Silk Road database providing multi-lingual information products and consulting services. Spearheading the central government's communication policies, Xinhua centralizes its voice on international social media platforms in rebranded, uniform overseas accounts, whereas it differentiates its communication methods through domestic social media platforms. In general, digital technology serves as a catalyst in how the media industry evolves. However, this evolution does not automatically translate to success for China's soft power construction.

In order to examine the role of Chinese media outlets in shaping China's diplomatic discourse, this thesis explored the online discursive dynamics of the BRI. In Chapter Five, using two different digital methods (one using the software program Founder as a research tool and the other with Python scripts), I identified the key influencers in a specific time frame in the online public discourse on both Weibo and Twitter platforms. The result shows that on Weibo, these key message distributors in Chinese language consist of Chinese official media like *China Youth Daily*, commercial online media (such as NetEase and iFeng news), and news information platforms (such as UC Headline and Today's Headline). The distributors in English consist of both Chinese and international news organizations, including the *People's Daily*, *China Daily*, *Guardian* and *The Times of India*. Out of these, Chinese state-owned media outlets, such as Xinhua and the *People's Daily*, show major impacts in promoting this initiative and sending positive messages about China's intentions.

Xinhua emerges as a main player in both internal and external social media communication. This makes it an excellent candidate to examine in the context of a case study on the BRI in

social media discourse. This merits questions as: in shaping the online discourse of the BRI, does Xinhua display different communication strategies and perform different functions towards domestic and international audiences? Chapter Six dealt with this question and scrutinized the intentions and functions of Xinhua's messages on Weibo and Twitter. In this chapter, I collected messages from Twitter and Weibo pertaining to the BRI, and categorized these posts and tweets based on themes, timeline, and regions. With the aid of software program Yoshikoder 6.5.0 and the reference database CNCorpus.org, I identified and compared Chinese and English keywords from my corpus of data. The divisions of topics and themes I produced by categorising, show that in the early phase of promoting the BRI from 2013 to 2015, Xinhua shifts its reporting focus on Weibo from cultural topics to the opinions and speeches of Chinese officials and to current events taking place within China; whereas on Twitter, Xinhua shifts its reporting perspective from cultural topics to diplomatic activities, reviews from foreign experts, and the opinions of foreign governments' officials. More profoundly, Xinhua highlights China's relations with European countries on Twitter from the aspect of economic cooperation, and it underpins the relations with Central Asia from the aspect of culture and history.

The keywords analysis illustrated furthermore that Xinhua addresses the government's intention to seek potential partnerships for economic cooperation, policy connectivity, and information exchange on both platforms. Nevertheless, by putting a stronger emphasis on economic aspects on Twitter, Xinhua demonstrates a more defensive communication approach towards international audiences. The very restricted and often downplayed use of the word "strategy" on Twitter further adds to this case, whereas the Chinese equivalent word for strategy, 战略 (*zhanlüe*), appears frequently on Weibo. Moreover, Xinhua tends to quote from a variety of official(s) and expert(s) on Twitter, whereas on Weibo Xinhua gives much attention to what the Chinese president has to say. These findings reveal Xinhua's thematic preferences on social media to be in line with the government's communication policies. It also reveals how Xinhua sees the world. In Xinhua's reporting, the geopolitical paradigm is a division of the world in nation states. The effect of this, when Xinhua discusses politics in the discourse of Weibo and Twitter, is that political stances are naturally determined and justified by nation states.

Adding to the quantitative impressions and findings from Chapter Six, Chapter Seven addressed the qualitative aspect of Xinhua's performance on social media platforms by comparing its linguistic features and rhetorical devices. This qualitative analysis suggests that the Chinese and English texts show distinctive differences in terms of expressions and reporting tones. Yet, the texts in both languages also show similarities in rhetorical strategies. For instance, rhetorical devices such as metaphors, personifications, and visual elements are used in both texts. By abstracting, simplifying, generalizing, and visualizing, Xinhua aims to portray a friendly, open, and cooperative China on both platforms. As Chapter Seven argues, Xinhua's communication strategies are not only decided by fixed rules or policies from the government, but shaped by multiple, interplaying factors. As apparent in Xinhua's performance on Weibo and Twitter, the different reporting styles flow from the government's designs on soft power construction, diplomatic goals, and communication policies on the one hand, and Xinhua's news workers' responsiveness towards these and interpretation of them on the other. Moreover, the different message lengths, contents, and styles are also determined by the technical forms and limitations of the social media platforms, by Chinese and English rhetoric features, and, more broadly, by different discursive contexts from within and outside China.

8.3 Discussion of the Findings

In the following sections, I will bring empirical findings together to explore the interplay between mass media and digital media in China from different aspects, and I will also examine the dynamics of China's diplomacy, communication strategies, and soft power construction.

8.3.1 Interplay between Mass Media and Digital Media

By investigating Xinhua's efforts to reinforce the government's communication strategies in managing its social media performances, in expanding its international influence, and in promoting its diplomacy, this thesis has explored the interactions of mass media and digital media under the governments' overarching regulations.

First, this research illustrates that Xinhua, as a government information organ that has gone through the marketization process, aims to ensure its leading role among domestic media

outlets and also to enhance its credibility to compete with the international media organizations. In Xinhua's own words, the "around-the-clock news release" is meant to guide online public opinion at home and "publicize China and report the world" (Xinhua net, 2011a).

Communication in China went through a structural overhaul by marketization under Deng Xiaoping's sweeping reforms in 1978 and decentralization under Document No. 37 issued by the former SAPPRT in 1983. Through the implementation of these policies, the media sector received more operational freedom and the benefits of favourable policies (such as tax breaks and performance-based financial rewards). Moreover, a four-tier media structure was formed covering central, provincial, and autonomous regions as well as prefectural cities and county-level cities. This was undeniably instrumental in pushing the media towards commercialization. Following the government's media policies, the state-owned media outlets embraced marketization on the one hand and intended to consolidate the CCP's political ideology on the other. Under the influence of marketization, Xinhua, still as part of the government's apparatus, has been operated through enterprise management to join the international competition.

In the information age, the development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has given rise to the popular use of digital media. With the vigorous expansion of social media, the government had to readjust the media policies. While putting up tremendous funds to back up the "going-out" strategy for the state media outlets, the government uses various measures to supervise the information flow in the domestic environment. The government justifies this as an act to ensure domestic stability and to tackle cybercrimes. In this context, Xinhua integrated digital media forms into its own news reporting. Through modernizing its management style and actively engaging in the international news reporting, Xinhua aims to present its professionalism and objectivity. Nevertheless, Xinhua's performance on social media platforms carries the primary task of policy dissemination from the CCP, and this trend is likely to continue in the future.

Second, as shown in this thesis, Xinhua's strategies to craft its performance on social media platforms differ in the two domains of internal and external communication. For internal communication, Xinhua tends to emphasize the authority of the central government leaders. It also distinguishes an "in-group" (domestic audiences) and an "out-group" (international group) in its discursive prose. In their external communication, Xinhua aims to appear more open and

objective, to engage various actors, and to encourage responsiveness online. This supplements the findings of works from several scholars on Chinese political communication. Zheng Yongnian (2010) and Zhang Xiaoling (2011) suggest that the government influences the agenda-setting of the news organizations in order to create a favourable public opinion environment online. Zhan Xinhui and Yang Chunlan (2006) hold that the media logic of Xinhua on the national level is to advocate the Party's political ideology by winning over online public opinion in the information age. This thesis contributes to their findings by further revealing that the interplay of digital and mass media has been largely guided and shaped by the central government's policy and strategies. Chinese state-owned media outlets may actively engage in the international media environment, integrate various digital channels, and deploy different tones and rhetorical devices, but all these must fit in the overall communication strategies of the central government.

8.3.2 *Dynamics of China's Diplomacy, Communication Strategies, and Soft Power*

Among the 15,000 news stories released by Xinhua in a day, one-fifth focus on international affairs. Xinhua explicitly announced its main task as "setting a good image of China abroad" (Xinhua net, 2011a). However, carrying this diplomatic task of "telling good China stories," Xinhua often finds itself facing a dilemma that reflects the realities and challenges of China's soft power construction in general.

Since 2013, the Chinese leadership asserted a significant change in the country's approach to international affairs, that is, a shift from strategic prudence (*taoguang yanghui*, 韬光养晦) to active engagement (*fenfa youwei*, 奋发有为) (Yan, Xuotong, 2014). In the BRI, the government intends to take part in international policymaking, and to take on more responsibilities in international economic governance (Huang, Yiping, 2016), improve China's national image, and strengthen China's discursive power. According to Tekdal (2017), the BRI reflects China's multiple identities and the dual character of its foreign policy. China's leadership is shifting foreign policies to maintain social stability and confront economic and security challenges, whilst formulating plans to shape the regional order and global economic governance (Tekdal, 2017). However, due to the sheer magnitude, the long-term nature and the many partnerships of the BRI, Ferdinand holds that China's foreign policy is both optimistic and also vulnerable as "its success does not lie in its own hands" (Ferdinand,

2016). Thus, the government intends to send a message that through the initiative China and many other member states would achieve a win-win situation.

My research shows that in the context of China's increased global presence, Xinhua's reporting is oscillating between two discursive positions: playing the role of the CCP's mouthpiece, while also promoting itself as an objective, international media outlet.

On the one hand, as the mouthpiece of the CCP, Xinhua receives significant annual financial support from the government, to distribute messages that portray positive images of the government, and uphold the government's position in the international affairs by disseminating, explaining, and justifying the government's policies. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, in promoting the government's BRI, Xinhua not only downplays the notion of "strategy" on Twitter, but also emphasizes that the initiative is not a "geo-political tool" in response to the international debates. Furthermore, Xinhua distributes messages on the BRI that demonstrate positive relationships between China and other countries. On the other hand, by entering into the international market and expanding its presence around the world with a goal of competing with other major international media outlets, Xinhua upgraded its communication channels and aims to present its information objectivity and openness. For instance, in its Belt and Road message distribution, Xinhua included supportive opinions and quotes from various foreign governments' officials and experts. More broadly, Xinhua aims to project its news professionalism by establishing multilingual webpages with 24-hour broadcasts on global affairs. Therefore, I concur with Zhang Xiaoling (2011) that ICTs provide the government with new vehicles to promote its soft power at an international level.

Based on the opinions of my informants from Xinhua, Xinhua stands for China's position to counter the unbalanced discursive environment that has long been dominated by "Western mainstream media." Thus, by providing a different voice from China's viewpoint, Xinhua contributes to a more balanced international discourse. However, behind this logic, Xinhua's news workers are often driven by a sense of patriotism that does not necessarily translate to supporting all the policies by the government.

From another angle, I concur with Castells that image-making itself is power-making (Castells, 2010a, pp. 473-476). In the power-making process, according to Chinese communication scholar Chen Yanru (2018), Chinese media are balancing between building a

positive national image, “promoting the socialist ideal,” and preserving the “national cultural identity” on the one hand; and “maintaining objective representation of China’s social reality,” “facilitating the implementation of a market economy policy,” and “promoting the globalization of the economy” on the other. Chen argues that although media organizations fulfill diplomatic tasks, the leadership does not export its ideology abroad, but instead intends to support information transfer on “pragmatic knowledge” (Chen, Yanru, 2018). Thus, the narrative of achieving economic success is both the vehicle and the goal of China’s soft power construction. Joseph Nye (2018) states that it is a mistake to use the term “soft power” to describe any exercise of power that does not involve the use of force, as power not just “depends on whose army or economy wins, but it can also depend on whose story wins.” China’s discourse on the BRI demonstrates such efforts made by the government to win over the international opinion. In the midst of the government’s soft power construction, Chinese media outlets may find themselves in a tricky position. For instance, as Nye mentions, Xinhua’s open broadcasts around the world are employing soft-power techniques, but China Radio International’s act of backing 33 radio stations in 14 countries crossed the boundary into “sharp power,” which translates into information manipulation (Nye, 2018).

Chinese media outlets are caught in a dynamic of increasing their global presence to reach the broadest possible audience and to promote the government’s diplomacy, while at the same time taking part in China’s charm offensive as defined by the government’s soft power strategies. Perhaps that is why China’s soft power is not widely recognized. As Rogier Creemers argues, while transforming the state’s view of soft power into policy through the cultural bureaucracy with a focus on “top-down, state-centered image management,” the government’s public diplomacy programs are merely “an extension of domestic propaganda” with limited success even in domestic markets (Creemers, 2015a, p. 311).

8.3.3 Programmers and Switchers

This thesis demonstrates that both the Chinese policymakers and media practitioners recognize the increasingly powerful influence of ICTs on the state media outlets in terms of shaping online discourses. To the leadership, information technology is a crucial factor of social control, political reform, and economic development, as informatization “is no longer seen as an add-on to traditional policy tools and practices, but as a core facilitator of a new

governance approach based on ubiquitous sensors, IT terminals, big data, and cloud storage” (Creemers, 2015b, p. 13).

Nevertheless, this research implies that in China’s state-media-led political discursive environment, technological advances do not necessarily contribute to discursive empowerment of the government. Discursive power is relational, and it dominates through seductiveness as well as invisibility, which contrasts with China’s large-scale type of discourse construction. Based on Castells’ notion of “network-making power” in the information age (2009), Chinese state-media outlets are able to constitute and program such networks in the online sphere: its Weibo and Twitter accounts, for example, deal in no small part with the topics of China’s BRI. However, what lacks in this “network-making power” are the switchers: the important social actors who can connect those networks formed by the state-media outlets. As long as the state media outlets are producing and shaping the political discourse under the supervision of the government, there will be a lack of responsiveness from different social groups, which conversely is not likely to contribute to improving the government’s image in political communication. Rather, the technological advances generated by ICTs function as tools to reflect or even sometimes magnify the ongoing discursive environment.

In terms of discourse of the BRI, this research shows that Xinhua’s communicative strategies on social media turn out to be the extensions of the government’s communicative schemes. Even by reaching the audience through interactive, digital media channels, the official media’s form of communication in terms of official sources still stays in the same, unilateral form of broadcasting communication, equivalent to traditional mass media, including newspapers, radio and television.

With the fast development of ICTs, the Chinese government uses its power to shape and reshape the information environment. To improve “non-Chinese foreigners’ perceptions” of both its domestic policies and international strategies, the government is backing up its plans of “buying a boat,” referring to investing in international media organizations, which may turn out to be effective in the long run (Brady, 2015, p. 58). As Brady earlier pointed out, what has changed under Xi is that external communication is increasingly handled through “business transactions” in which the state-owned cultural organizations “make strategic acquisitions” of relevant international cultural enterprises (Brady, 2015, p. 57). However, it is uncertain

whether the economic drives behind online communication will enable more “programmers” and “switchers” to proliferate and to strengthen the government’s discourse.

8.4 Strengths and Limitations

Looking back at each part of my qualitative research, this type of study has inevitably and admittedly some points for further improvement. I designed the interviews as follows: I noted down a limited number of questions in preparation. When conducting the interviews, I let my informants choose a meeting place where it was most convenient or comfortable at the time for them. To create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere, I started out my interviews with questions that are relatively easy. The goal was to put them at ease and to encourage them to continue talking. However, I frequently interrupted the flow of the interview to ask my informants to further explain certain terms or metaphors they used. In hindsight, this might have caused some distraction counterproductive to my goal of encouraging an easy flow of conversation. A future improvement would be to primarily focus on getting as much information on individual topics as possible, in a natural flow, by avoiding interruptions. I will save additional questions that arise during the interview for after an informant has clearly finished an anecdote or argument.

My informants consist of academics, news workers and policymakers. They treated my interviews with different degrees of seriousness or casualness. For instance, my informants from academia were much more relaxed and understanding compared to the others, due to their familiarity with academic fieldwork and academic language. In this sense, the interviews I conducted with them were collegial in nature. The informants from the media industry demonstrated as much interest and curiosity in me as I had for them. They treated my interviews as if the roles of interviewer and interviewee were exchangeable by shifting perspective. There was a high level of information exchange and discussion. In contrast, the policymakers were polite and distant, and maintained an air of seniority throughout the interviews. Reflecting on the interviews, I learned that there is always a certain kind of power dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee, which varies in different situations and sometimes shifts throughout the interviews.

As this study mainly examines the intention and function of official media discourse online, my interviews in this research only included the perspectives of policymakers, news workers,

and academics. For various reasons, I did not include opinions from information technologists and everyday social media users in my qualitative interviews. At the very least, this would require a serious effort in finding the right informants, and a complete revision of the interviews' framework. At the current stage, it is crucial to acknowledge that the data drawn from the interviews is relatively limited, so the findings of this research cannot be generalized. In this sense, the data acquired from the interviews can be seen as an important start to understand the nuanced relations among different social actors. More abundant and higher-quality data from more social groups should generate stronger results and arguments.

By reviewing the government's policy papers and examining the mass media's communicative patterns, this study contributes to the existing literature on social media's influence on China's policymaking. The combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of Xinhua's message distribution on Weibo and Twitter provides a prism through which to understand the intrinsic relations between the political and economic drives behind Xinhua's news values. Setting up various resources to back up the state-owned media outlets, the government recognizes the social media platforms as important tools for internal and external communication and encourages the state-owned media outlets to fully integrate them in their digital reporting. It is interesting to note that the very act of building domestic cultural confidence and an international image of openness implies that there are domestic instabilities and international disputes associated with China's rise in the global arena in the first place.

The study of the state-owned media outlet Xinhua and its performance on social media platforms, applied to a case study of China's BRI, contributes to the research of online discourse of this topic as a whole. Chapter Five identified the influential actors which shape the BRI discourse on Weibo and Twitter. This shows that Xinhua (crafting its social media performances according to the government's communication strategies) has a major online influence on this topic, in terms of the scale and density of its network on both Weibo and Twitter. However, if data from other major players were qualitatively scrutinized for comparison, it would produce stronger results. Future studies can also extend the present research by covering a larger scale of network analysis, and examine the evolution of the online actors and development of the online discourse of the BRI. It would be interesting to conduct a comparison of a wide range of social media users from within and outside China, which will provide a deeper and more general understanding of the government's communicative strategies regarding the topic.

Second, through close examinations on how the state media outlet Xinhua constructs the Belt and Road discourse on social media platforms in Chapter Six and Seven, this research has contributed to the ongoing debate on China's political communication and official discourse construction. My qualitative analysis shows that on the one hand, by adopting colloquial terms, sensationalist rhetorical devices, and the use of eye-catching imagery and infographics, Xinhua adjusts itself to the taste and expectations of its target social media users. On the other hand, Xinhua's obvious and deliberate use of "down-to-earth" (*jie diqi*, 接地气) language online insinuates that it is, in reality, not a form of grassroots reporting that takes its shape naturally, but part of a carefully orchestrated, "top-down" political agenda that is backed by the central government. In other words, the state media actor intends to shape the dominant discourse by adopting it.

Third, by adopting various digital methods throughout, this research taps into the explorations of digital humanities. In Chapter Five, I used software tools to collect and analyse relevant data from Twitter and Weibo (Python scripts for Twitter, and the tool Founder for Weibo). In Chapter Six, I applied another software tool, Yoshikoder, for text analysis (Yoshikoder has built-in functions for analysis of English terms, and for the Chinese, I used the reference repository on CNCORPUS.ORG). By comparing the advantages and disadvantages of each of these tools and methods, this research shows that these digital methods have considerable advantages, and are therefore becoming increasingly powerful in the field of current media studies, despite their drawbacks. Nevertheless, the limitations, challenges and errors produced by using these digital tools should be closely kept in mind. In this respect, I agree with Rogers (2013) that while researchers could think along with the digital tools they use, they must stay aware that the outcomes of digital research practices have a certain validity in research development, but this does not make them universal truths (Rogers, 2013).

Finally, as it requires a much longer time to testify whether the Chinese government's plans of formulating a stronger discursive power will be effective in the years to come, this research can be developed into a larger research project. The impact of China's online discourse on shaping international opinion about the BRI cannot be definitively known yet. In the future, as the policy develops further and information is more widely distributed throughout the world, assessment of positive or negative reactions will be able to be gauged.

8.5 Conclusion

I initiated my research with an aim to expand our understanding of how ICTs influence the government's communicative strategy that reflects through the state media outlets. This research compares with studies on media in different social and political contexts, and examines the dichotomous views of ICTs' role in China. By analysing Xinhua's activity on social media platforms and its discursive patterns, my study suggests that the theories of disciplinary and symbolic power are still significantly applicable to the contemporary political communication in China.

Tapping into the Xinhua's reporting perspectives on social media platforms Weibo and Twitter, the approach of discourse analysis provides a general picture of how Xinhua forms its communicative strategies under the overarching regulations and guidelines. Through the analysis of China's media regulations, the BRI, and social media phenomena, my research implies that the Chinese policymakers should not see the innovation of technology as a reliable incentive for social change as China continues its opening-up policy. The assessment of the success or failure of China's digital, social media public relations efforts in various regions of the world, on various subjects, is a worthwhile subject for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Fieldwork Questions

Group 1. Academics

1. To what extent are digital media important for the government's external communication policy? Why?
2. In constructing a positive national image, are the government's efforts effective so far?
3. To what extent are the Chinese official media liberal, open, and critical about news and policy reporting? Why and why not? Are there differences shown in digital media and mass media, such as Weibo and Xinhua?
4. What makes a communication strategy effective or successful in the eyes of those who plan it? And why and why not?
5. What "communication terms" are adopted in the media discourse? Why do the official media use these terms? (For example, the change of name from "Propaganda Department" to "Publicity Department.")
6. What possible influences will using these terms (official language / tifa) in social media cause?
7. Who are the target domestic and overseas audiences presumably? What communication strategies are adopted to the targeted audiences, and why? How do communication strategists know?
8. What interests do Xinhua's communication practices on digital media ultimately serve, and why?

Group 2. Media practitioners

1. What is the relationship between Xinhua and Weibo?
2. Who are distributing messages for Xinhua on Weibo and/or on Twitter? Have you worked on both platforms?
3. Who are Xinhua's target audiences on Weibo and on Twitter?
4. Are there differences in communication strategy on Weibo and on Twitter? (Or what are the differences of Xinhua's internal and external communication strategy?)
5. What are the guidelines for Xinhua's communication strategies and how does Xinhua interpret/implement them?

6. What constitutes international news for Xinhua?
7. Why is Xinhua registered with Twitter, when Twitter is blocked in China? Why would Xinhua.net set up the column of “What’s being said about China on Twitter”?
8. There are researches from the States, saying that Xinhua has bought its followers on Twitter. Is this possible? How do you feel about this?
9. How does Xinhua reach out to the targeted audiences? How interactive is Xinhua when it comes to communicating with its followers?
10. In terms of reporting Belt and Road Initiative to overseas audiences, what communication strategies are considered to be effective, and why? Could you provide some examples?

Group 3. Policymakers

1. To what extent are the digital media important for the government’s external communication policy? If so, how do you feel about the different functions of mass media and digital media? Could you give me some examples?
2. What is the function of external communication?
3. In constructing a positive national image, as a (former) government official, what do you consider in terms of the government’s efforts, resources, achievement and drawbacks? What resources are brought to bear on the external communication?
4. Is Xinhua’s communication strategy in line with the government communication strategy? If so, what measures are in place to assure that the strategy conforms with what the government sets out?
5. Are the Chinese official media liberal, open, and critical about news and policy reporting? Why and why not? Are there differences between digital media and mass media, such as Weibo and Xinhua?
6. What makes a communication strategy effective or successful in the eyes of those who plan it? And why and why not? Could you give me some examples?
7. What “communication terms” are adopted by the government to adjust mass communication strategies? (For example, the change of name from “Propaganda Department” to “Publicity Department.”)
8. Who are the target domestic and overseas audiences presumably? Are there different communication strategies towards domestic and overseas audiences? And why?
9. In terms of reporting Belt and Road Initiative to overseas audiences, what communication strategies are considered to be effective? And why? Could you provide some examples?

Appendix 2. Samples of Weibo Posts of Various Accounts from 1 December 2012 to 1 February 2016

No.	Weibo posts	User	Time
1	“一带一路”战略下的对外投资新格局_中国行业研究网 http://t.cn/RUeQBhW	-我是老潘	2015-11-30 23:23
2	【女王热点异动追踪】热点板块、热点龙头个股的异动，代表着市场是否存在赚钱的效应！从异动板块来看 券商一般，主要是一带一路高铁 中国中铁冲击涨停了，整个沪市异动榜都是高铁，一次这波反弹力度大些 5分钟：站上了短期线，关注波段 MACD 是否金叉；	女王擒股	2016-01-29 10:04
3	湖北投 130 亿集中开工 45 个项目 23 条公路同日开工 省交通运输厅在“一带一路”、长江经济带、长江中游城市群、集中连片特困地区扶贫开发、新型城镇化建设等重大战略机遇下，集中开工一批重大工程项目，形成公路、铁路、水运网，承接国际和沿海产业转移，推动产业结构优化升级。 http://t.cn/RUDPj2T	九九同心 V	2015-12-01 12:26
4	#每日读报#【揭秘：二连浩特那些不为人知的“野心”】作为国家重点开发开放试验区和对外开放最大口岸，“一带一路”战略的全面实施，赋予二连浩特的是新机遇下的全新使命。2015-11-06 内蒙古日报 http://t.cn/RUSFMQK	草原书怀	2015-11-06 15:58
5	新闻摘要建设全球知名的“国际内河港”、建成“一带一路”重要支点、创建国家级临空经济示范区……未来，合【分享自@中搜搜悦】 http://t.cn/R4iYqkR	天高任鸟飞 2240326921	2016-01-03 03:30
6	哇哦@新华网:胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作为期两年，将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象旅游宣传品和海报。还将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份，创作以上海为主题的摄影作品。在上海旅游节、一带一路宣传、中美旅游年等活动中，胡歌也将亮相	清晨_最早那班 车	2016-01-04 21:06
7	#渝你有约#DAY12 补卡 一带一路，共建美好家园@何渝老师 @渝你有约 http://t.cn/R2Wx3yi	禾呈离开过	2016-01-03 12:07
8	中国提出建立横跨欧亚的“一带一路”经济圈构想，其支柱就是基础设施出口，中国尤其对资金规模庞大的核电站出口寄予厚望。 http://t.cn/R4JZ9gu	拆哪盖茨	2016-01-01 21:29
9	发表了博文《16届企业总裁管理者年会》12月19-20日北京，全面解读“十三五”规划、互联网+、“一带一路”、大金融浪潮下的企业战略创新与选择，届时，邀请政府部门领导、国内外知名经济专家、管理专家，将 http://t.cn/RUeQxFx	未来宏达 EDP 培训	2015-11-30 23:09
10	连云港如何构筑城市“一带一路”新格局 http://t.cn/Rb1Zig4	记忆中的青涩 99	2016-01-29 10:04
11	这种狭隘的想法不改变，一带一路的战略构想将大大折扣，请一些在东南亚真正融入生活的人来讲解吧。@张有为 @米课 MRHUA	南华国际交流- 杨	2015-12-01 12:19
12	分享：习近平 2013 年提出一带一路。一带即“丝绸之路经济带”，以铁路连接中国西部、中亚、欧洲、中东及南亚。一路是“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”，以港口及设施加强海上交通运输，以东亚为起点连接沿线各国，为它们提供了一条横跨大陆的运输货物通道，以取代现代穿越两个大洋的路线。 http://t.cn/zRlji0g	林世怡-上海	2016-01-02 07:46
13	没去过宁夏就别乱说好吗 空口放屁不要太响 说十七岁的女孩子不懂法 那么成年人说话也负责任 你看看你自己发了一条微博下面有些评论真的可笑又可怕 曲解一个省把它的中阿论坛评论为恶意为止我也是替你很难过 这么没常识还这么有理 一带一路听过吗 半夜看个天气预报还能把你炸醒也是厉害死了	Huang- Libraooo	2016-01-03 01:28
14	我寓言的靠普吧，之前发了...什么叫一带一路@胡歌，现在新闻就出来了，上海旅游大使宣传包括“一带一路”	完颜·飘雪	2016-01-04 21:03
15	不破不立嘛！//@清风十月:弄他。但真乱了对一带一路又没好处，好纠结！//@吃斋的猫 2011:美国可以制造出一个叙利亚，俄罗斯为什么不能造出第二个叙利亚？反正都是死道友不死贫道。//@花鸟满床书:转发微博	摄友约克	2016-01-03 11:53
16	山西 2016 年着力对接京津冀和“一带一路”发展。 http://t.cn/R4xaNA3	吐泡泡的蜗牛 真伟大	2016-01-02 09:13
17	一带一路貌似从上海到纽约[哼]	Vincent_Lemon	2015-11-30 23:05
18	推进一带一路！	穆怀东阿訇	2016-01-29 10:03
19	【从卫星到铁路，北斗导航和遥感卫星助推中国与东盟高端合作】近日，中国测绘科学研究院遥感工	地理国情监测	2015-12-01

	程技术中心主任李英成在接受采访时表示, 北斗及遥感卫星应用产业化发展, 必将把中国和东盟的合作推向另一个高度, 同时也是中国实施“一带一路”建设的技术保障。http://t.cn/RUDPesm	云平台	11:57
20	#石大校园# 【西部油气论坛】2015年11月6日到11月7日以“一带一路”与油气安全学术为主题的研讨会在我校@西南石油大学 图书馆学术报告厅举行 http://t.cn/z8Ajxht	四川西油表白墙	2015-11-06 15:51
21	回复@罗冬林 585 一滴适时雨:你来告诉我, 中国现在咋样? 人民币的世界影响力迅速增强; 亚投行、一带一路、第二艘航母、歼 20、东风 41、军改, , , 中国不再蓬勃发展吗? 洋奴公知们根本就看不到这些。拼命地贬低中国, 中国的每一个进步都令他们心里难受。怎么办? 拿了洋人主子的钱, 没有完成损害中国的任	张怀醉的微博	2016-01-02 22:19
22	//@新华网:#胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作为期两年, 将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片、《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象旅游宣传品和海报。将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份, 创作以上海为主题摄影作品。在上海旅游节、“一带一路”宣传、中美旅游年等活动中, 胡歌也将亮相	yueyue6002	2016-01-04 20:51
23	发表了博文《一带一路惠他乡》汉唐丝路载辉煌华夏文明传万邦欧亚千山天是界东西万水地为疆心中有爱乾坤大世上无私日月长启后承前兴伟业一带一路惠他乡乙未仲冬曾正国作于京华 http://t.cn/R4didG	曾正国艺术 5239	2016-01-03 11:33
24	考研政治 一带一路 我还会背[笑 cry][思考]然而并没有考	粗点心战争	2016-01-01 21:21
25	中韩产业之间的差距相对较小, 合作基础好。双方在开拓第三方市场等方面加强合作对接, 可有效避免企业恶性竞争, 对“一带一路”建设也将起到推动和促进作用。	李李李莎莎莎的地盘	2015-11-30 22:58
26	//@船长私募内线助理:中字头关注: 一带一路(机械)、铁路基建	牛牛升升升	2016-01-29 10:03
27	广发银行日前与重庆市政府签署了战略合作协议。根据协议, 广发银行将累计向重庆提供 1000 亿元的意向性融资支持额度, 共同推动“一带一路”战略及长江经济带建设、重庆市五大功能区域发展战略, 积极参与中新(重庆)战略性互联互通示范项目建设, 共同推动企业转型升级以及小微客户创业等内容。	NEWS 重慶	2015-12-01 11:39
28	//@美国大学网:[泪][泪]//@尹鸿: 一带一路早就成一片一块了[泪][泪]。新年还不忘警世, 真不消停啊, 你们。	圆不隆咚咚	2016-01-02 04:00
29	【人民币在中东认可度高 为企业提供便利】目前, 中国已成为 9 个阿拉伯国家的最大贸易伙伴。中国与阿拉伯国家贸易额从 2004 年的 367 亿美元, 上升到 2014 年的 2512 亿美元。阿拉伯国家已成为中国重要的原油供应地和工程承包及海外投资市场, 这为双方共建“一带一路”打下了坚实基础。http://t.cn/R4ipmNM	回商网官方微博	2016-01-02 23:49
30	恒大集团常务副总裁、海花岛产业集团董事长肖恩在接受记者采访时表示, 海花岛是恒大集团在国家“一带一路”宏伟框架下, 斥资 1600 亿打造的世界级文化旅游综合体项目。项目面市不到 1 个月, 累计认筹超过 4 万组、10 万余人。	liangxiaoji	2016-01-04 20:53
31	云南: 借助公路铁路建设 加快融入“一带一路”:http://t.cn/R4irq5D	小绿萝抽芽了	2016-01-03 11:37
32	//@为爱而暗_今天找到工作了吗:是我打开方式有问题吗 http://t.cn/R4JI0oq //@塞拉伊诺的文香: 紫色的是啥意思。。 //@登坂来人:讲道理 日本这么多绿的全都是山 TM 没法住人啊 //@從二位三条内府実雪: 警世钟 //@凤凰院凶真_封印中: //@有头骑士: //@尹鸿: 一带一路早就成一片一块了[泪][泪]。新年还不忘警世	山上的茶叶蛋	2016-01-02 09:08
33	//@不退居士: //@张志学 1009: 为了孩子能顺利完成学业, 为了孩子的未来望大家援手帮助, 响应习主席的一带一路政策, 真诚欢迎一对一的助学或随捐! 感恩支持! [握手]@HXiaoS @琴心剑胆 111 @Legend 静 @淮安芋头 @玉钱儿 @冷爱无痕 Angel @锐芮睿 @智慧开花 @XXX1219 @寂茂 yangyan @笨大童 @焚心故事	雪域月明	2015-11-30 22:57
34	热点板块、热点龙头个股的异动, 代表着市场是否存在赚钱的效应! 从异动板块来看 券商一般, 主要是一带一路高铁 中国中铁冲击涨停了, 整个沪市异动榜都是高铁, 一次这波反弹力度大些 5 分钟: 站上了短期线, 关注波段 MACD 是否金叉;	股金女皇	2016-01-29 10:00
35	这是我大爷刚正面的结果、一带一路通关、亚投行无解肥、世界强国之势扑面而来、IMF 的提议更是说明中国已经成为了自三足鼎立后的又一条大腿@太原新东方曹扬 http://t.cn/RUeBfrF	人生是场戏_57 靠演技	2015-12-01 11:31
36	#我有话说# 【中越发表联合声明】越南和新加坡是中国实施“一带一路”战略的重要国家。http://t.cn/RUSEiWr	大大的太阳 6782	2015-11-06 15:49
37	//@圆润女郎 521://@如易的天空 1://@风波亭小沙弥 6:楼继伟再放臭屁[笑 cry]一带一路把钱烧, 三军自慰劲头高。挥霍无度收盛世, 恨不刮民三五刀。	特警新人类 2013	2016-01-02 23:25
38	//@低调君越:投资者亏, 实业融不到钱, 人民币走不出去, 一带一路就废了, 中国进入发达国家的道	知本交易	2016-01-04

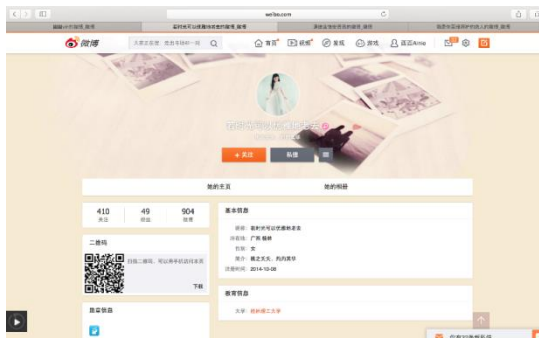
	路又长了, 中国的老人们靠谁来养老。无能的下台吧! 人为的股灾!		20:51
39	王金平当年挡下两岸服贸协议, 现在当然要编点理由了。大陆很多惠台协议, 其实都是被岛内大财团收获的, 岛内中小企业和中下阶层对此无感也是事实。这点, 大陆推动的一带一路也是类似, 部分国内房企就是想通过当局倒贴钱的高铁等项目在沿线搞、炒房地产, 这种国内都被唾骂的方式推出去好吗?	高丸雕冬	2016-01-03 10:45
40	我分享了这个网站 - - 媒体: 十八大以来反腐追回 2500 多亿资金去哪了-新闻频道-手机搜狐, 分享自 @ 欧朋浏览器 http://t.cn/R4MNT1F 都一带一路送人情了呗, 反正老百姓没捞到一分, 相反的挨坑的却是中国老百姓, 合作医疗都涨到 150 了, 一年涨 40	石堆中的草	2016-01-01 19:33
41	辽宁一带一路国际经济技术合作有限公司诚招合作 http://t.cn/RUeHw6I	企业技术贸易	2015-11-30 22:34
42	一带一路领涨, 记得 8 月份见底就是这个版块	股海小石头	2016-01-29 09:58
43	中国与老挝首个“一带一路”电网合作项目投产: http://t.cn/RUDvyYS	裹被烹茶赏琼枝	2015-12-01 11:22
44	从黄河文明到一带一路 (二) 39. 汕君卖直: http://t.cn/R4JNPsW	映雪寒开逐春来	2016-01-02 01:41
45	未来少年独孤求败建议中科院以十二生肖中文文字图形来建立星际图形坐标, 中文图形除了能够在一带一路上面设计大型建筑群使用外, 还可以成为星际旅行穿越图形坐标, 黄金十二星座星际图并不是唯一的标准, 过去中国古代就有用勺子来设计北斗七星, 周易八卦中文图形同样可以作为星际坐标图形标准。@张郎郎的独白	未来少年李世杰	2016-01-03 00:13
46	[哆啦 A 梦吃惊][太开心]//@新华网: #胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作为期两年, 将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象旅游宣传品和海报。还将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份, 创作以上海为主题的摄影作品。上海旅游节“一带一路”宣传中美旅游年等活动	喵呜_不是猫	2016-01-04 20:34
47	图解一带一路(全文见图, 分享自 @ 长围脖 Android 客户端)	阿拉伯的耍蛇人	2016-01-03 10:48
48	一带一路具体路线图正式发布 建设意义及影响改变(图解) http://t.cn/R4JHmVt	智能人做超人	2016-01-02 08:47
49	#看石化#【中国石化争当央企践行“一带一路”战略排头兵】让我们的目光回到今年 2 月的福建省泉州市, 21 世纪海上丝绸之路国际研讨会现场。“中国石化与‘一带一路’沿线国家有着良好的合作基础, 这些国家和地区一直是公司‘走出去’的战略布局重点。” http://t.cn/RU8wXdx	barley111	2015-11-30 22:26
50	中国中铁秒砸拉板, 带动一带一路概念分时活跃, 大盘也再度回升, 依然是下跌抵抗模式, 观望。	潘益兵	2016-01-29 09:57
51	伊斯兰教界人士热议服务一带一路: 爱国爱教 讲好中国故事: http://t.cn/RUepqg6	大风起兮别带伞	2015-12-01 11:15
52	评论@patricia2010 的博文【澳洲佛教代表与会的感言: 为“一带一路”发挥正能量[第四届世界佛教论坛]: “澳洲佛教代表与会的感言: 为“一带一路”发挥正能量”查看原文: http://t.cn/RUCPKE1	水晶球品质	2015-11-06 15:27
53	专家: 落实“一带一路”战略? 企业走到哪银行需跟到哪--财经--人民网 http://t.cn/R4iXFkR	中传核桃林	2016-01-02 21:55
54	【小商品城迎风口 一带一路国家集体抢滩义乌】 http://t.cn/R4Xb5hX (分享自 @ 一点资讯)	今夕是何年 year	2016-01-04 20:29
55	“一带一路”	大明湖畔陳老师	2016-01-03 10:01
56	上海的事不能令人民满意地解决, 那将继续对维护南海小国主权, 一带一路和上海金融港对世界的威胁, 增加恐怖袭击的可能性和如何发动制裁进行继续讨论, 这可能会导致某国脖子上的套索越来越紧, 但是我想, 世界各国认清某国是必要的。另外, 上海公安的事能否令人满意地解决将决定民众是否支持国家项目。	烤鸭人要就着包子喝咖啡	2016-01-01 19:32
57	乌克兰内战, 俄罗斯收回克里米亚, 中国一带一路、亚投行、人民币国际化、股市遭内奸外敌联手打击、东海南海局势恶化, ISIS 势力扩张, 俄罗斯出兵叙利亚, 法国恐怖袭击, 突厥击落俄战机... 局势纷繁复杂, 其实都显示着欧元卢布人民币对美元的博弈—国家利益博弈。谁抓住机会谁有胜算。 http://t.cn/RUeVy19	他六爷	2015-11-30 22:15
58	海外工程一带一路出头, 券商股护盘。今日早盘盘面热闹着。	股海灯塔-胡欣塔	2016-01-29 09:58
59	人民币只有加入 SDR 才算真正的人民币国际化 一带一路才有意思	肥嘟嘟大将军	2015-12-01

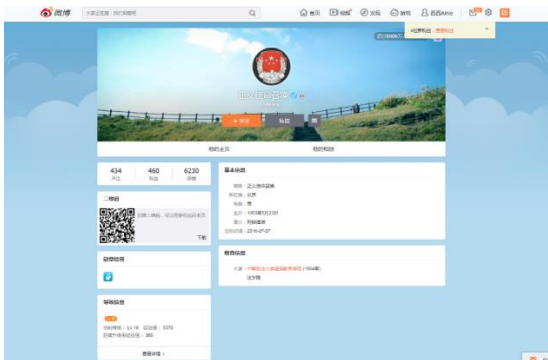
			11:07
60	//@大风海上人://@尹鸿:一带一路早就成一片一块了[泪][泪]。新年还不忘警世,真不消停啊,你们。	飞飞-影帝	2016-01-02 00:25
61	#遵义身边事#【南宁经遵义至兰州航线航班昨日正式开通】遵义机场正式开通南宁—遵义—兰州航线,该航线的开通为遵义架起了至“绿城”南宁和“黄河之都”兰州空中走廊,为遵义融入国家“一带一路”战略提供了更加便捷通道。	遵义城事	2016-01-02 20:55
62	#胡歌上海旅游形象大使#//@新华网:第一期合作为期两年,将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片、《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象的旅游宣传品和海报。邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份,创作以上海为主题的摄影作品。上海旅游节、“一带一路”宣传、中美旅游年等活动中,胡歌也将亮相。	z_____BB	2016-01-04 19:45
63	【中国梦】《“一带一路”握手“两廊一圈”》“如果能够实现‘两廊一圈’与‘一带一路’倡议的对接,将合作放到更广大的背景中来,把合作项目做得更大更实际,达成国际上的衔接,将会为‘一带一路’与其他国家的发展战略对接起到非常好的示范作用。http://t.cn/R4i38Bx	华发网	2016-01-03 10:21
64	说点人话//【山西 2016 年着力对接京津冀和“一带一路”发展】 http://t.cn/R4xC9zh	乐天知命高	2016-01-02 07:55
65	央视纪录片《一带一路》关注泉州。如果说,泉州是海丝起点,九日山则是起点中的起点,这里崖石上刻有十三方宋元时期派遣船舶远洋的祈风石刻文字,是泉州港与 100 多个国家通航的明证。@南安热门 @南安柳城 @封臣秀开 @魄力泉州 @匠者 @刺桐之泪 @刺桐会 @泉州时光客栈 @老醉围脖 http://t.cn/R2dyAvB	平兄旺旺	2015-11-30 21:11
66	【乐视再添智慧城市概念 欲借力“广电+”辐射一带一路】 http://t.cn/Rb1ZJ9B @百度新闻	股票投资那点事	2016-01-29 09:57
67	积极参与“一带一路”建设构建对外开放新格局:http://t.cn/RUe1lu0	榆荚似钱摘来沽酒	2015-12-01 11:09
68	【现场直击】#2015 中国重庆国际跨境电商发展峰会#大龙网全球网贸会总经理冒廷剑:跨境电商三大痛点在结算、物流和本土化,需要新渠道、新思路、新方法。通过在一带一路国家开设中国制造海外精品馆,搭建中国制造产品和国外采购商见面的桥梁,实现“线上约,线下会”。更多报道请关注越域网 WWW.KJDS.COM	越域网	2015-11-06 15:46
69	【凤凰卫视 2016 年全新节目 中文台、资讯台 1 月强势推出】2016 年 1 月,凤凰卫视中文台和资讯台结合眼下全媒体时代与中国“走出去”、“一带一路”等战略背景,强势推出四档全新节目:《龙行天下》、《承诺 2020》、(分享自 @凤凰私享会) http://t.cn/R4iM72i	广播爱好者 658	2016-01-02 20:38
70	福山: 一带一路助中国模式走向世界,美国挡得住吗? http://t.cn/R4XUIY1	飞龙在陆	2016-01-04 19:46
71	//@托尼富:【你具备抓住风口的能力吗?】我们先来看一下 2016 年,在互联网领域有哪些可能的风口,在这里我只讲针对大众的风口,其他的风口来了,往往并不是大众的风口,比如:一带一路、互联网金融、传统企业转型电商服务业、O2O 与智能硬件,基本上与草根吊丝没啥关系,那么针对草根的风口会是什么呢?	长发飘飘苑姐姐	2016-01-03 09:31
72	2015 年“十大经济热词”:“全面二胎”、A 股暴跌、二套房首付、一带一路、亚投行、IPO 重启、春运火车票、春节抢红包、双 11 和人民币贬值。	张-云平	2016-01-01 19:21
73	【中国手机企业提速布局“一带一路”?谁是背后支持者?】更多精彩尽在 360 手机浏览器! http://t.cn/RUD6Kk2	马尹酒 R	2015-12-01 22:06
74	【权重表现】今日早上券商板块,铁路基建,一带一路等板块持续涨幅居前。	點金券手	2016-01-29 09:52
75	“一带一路”助推中孟发展 特事特办云南企业有奔头:http://t.cn/RUeD1ET	不红的伞不叫伞	2015-12-01 10:47
76	……//@大风海上人://@尹鸿:一带一路早就成一片一块了[泪][泪]。新年还不忘警世,真不消停啊,你们。	武清	2016-01-02 00:01
77	丝路史话及其精神传承:“一带一路”建设是我国国家发展的总体战略,关乎中华民族的繁荣与兴盛。“以史为鉴,可以知兴替”。古代丝绸之路的发展历史对于当前我们的“一带一路”建设发展具有重要...文字版>> http://t.cn/R46SjWp (新浪长微博>> http://t.cn/zOXAaic)	手机用户 2521541097	2016-01-03 22:33
78	//@新华网:胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作两年,将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片、《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象的旅游宣传品和海报。还将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份,创作以上海为主题的摄影作品。在上海旅游节、“一带一路”宣传、中美旅游年等活动中,胡歌也将亮相。	已经决定一路向北	2016-01-04 19:41

79	“一带一路”行动计划加强标准化 http://t.cn/RUzqDgK	lychee_721 龔 兒龔攝	2016-01-03 05:16
80	外媒：出口中国模式 一带一路影响世界格局 _ 一带一路目的是为中国以外国家提升工业产能和消费需求。中国试图将重工业转移至新兴国家，令它们累积财富并产生对中国产品需求。 http://t.cn/R4Jj2n (分享自@凤凰新闻客户端)	林世怡-上海	2016-01-02 07:21
81	一带一路论文 - 百度文库 http://t.cn/RUDisx6	summer、痒	2015-12-01 21:53
82	一带一路丝绸经贸之路.投机倒把扰乱国际金融之路!	毛忠诚 Blog	2016-01-29 09:40
83	//@西北师大传媒学院:让我们在“一带一路”互助中成长	糜腐 5713727219	2015-12-01 10:42
84	习马会前，李总理今专文中高速中高端、全面小康社会建设、两个百年目标！一带一路新一轮改革开放开启，各路资金齐头并进 A 股。主力继续高举高打，尤创板又扬前行旗，证金、汇金热股中信 600030 平安 601318 中石油 601857 万向 000559 东财 300059 向日葵 300111（参股金融）...上行空间打开！沪指三千六近眼前！	博古闻天独秀 秋怡果儿	2015-11-06 14:48
85	恩，让非洲兄弟吃上驴皮！让非洲姐妹补血！！//@yuyuye: 他们也被要求搞一带一路的	Mc35 怒海怒 海怒海	2016-01-03 22:23
86	//@云起的守候:#胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作为期两年，将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象旅游宣传品和海报。还将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份，创作以上海为主题的摄影作品在上海旅游节、“一带一路”宣传中美旅游年等活动中胡歌也将亮相。	晨晰之歌	2016-01-04 19:05
87	//@托尼富:【你具备抓住风口的能力吗?】我们先来看一下 2016 年，在互联网领域有哪些可能的风口，在这里我只讲针对大众的风口，其他的风口来了，往往并不是大众的风口，比如：一带一路、互联网金融、传统企业转型电商服务业、O2O 与智能硬件，基本上与草根吊丝没啥关系，那么针对草根的风口会是什么呢?	最岁月 2013	2016-01-02 23:39
88	一带一路还不错	人则先明	2016-01-01 19:12
89	不为妇人之仁//@MRneoanderson:中国的一带一路也要小心：要下围棋，不要下跳棋；不要以为经贸关系就能拴住别人，相比军事同盟，经贸关系靠不住；航母太重要了，比国际舆论重要多了；该输出革命就输出革命。	国产生活	2015-12-01 21:49
90	披着羊皮的狼//@文庙 123 吾知 V://@岑原 2019:一个菊花和口腔直通之柴。//@阿宝背书的美好生活:一个通才。//@余万凯 2016:一会儿玩群众路线、思想教育；一会儿玩金融玩银行，一会儿玩一带一路；现在又玩食品安全！我以为玩得最好的是股市和大外交！	享加私	2016-01-29 09:35
91	短期：环保（巴黎气候大会，注意兑现风险）电改（改革配套文件下发，注意兑现风险），新材料（石墨烯-电池应用、科创进步）；京津冀（产业转移-河北、天津金改、北京-通州，一带一路（高铁、核电；港口整合、亚投行，油价下跌（航运、汽车）；农业（产业融合、一号文件）智慧城市（城市工作会议、	股市分析-孔明 股票	2015-12-01 10:39
92	//@宋晓军: 伊拉克已跟中国签了“战略伙伴关系”，叙利亚政府和反对派也都来北京了。沙特和伊朗都人口年轻，社会阶层矛盾激化，好不容易遇到中国这个玩“遇事讲理、以德服人”游戏规则的“老炮儿”，用石油换些产业技术和基础设施解决国内稳定问题有什么不好呢？“一带一路”讲的就是个“局气”[微笑]	中华儿女 2_2	2016-01-01 23:13
93	说明不在乎钱，在乎的是情义。想去看看大师新作就是没时间。//@我爱一带一路:那就说明被这女的骗了，一百多平赶拆迁最少好几千万。不，看来他是真心爱她的。	我爱一带一路	2016-01-03 22:13
94	[赞]//@古月的风儿:“一带一路”是指“丝绸之路经济带”和“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”的简称。它将充分依靠中国与有关国家既有的双多边机制，借助既有的、行之有效的区域合作平台。“一带一路”战略是目前中国最高的国家级顶层战略。[酷]#胡歌上海旅游形象大使#	古月殊兰_如梦 之梦	2016-01-04 18:56
95	//@当代章鱼哥:中国通信行业重大讨论课题：怎样才能避免中国联通与中国电信在非洲恶性竞争，互相策反搞血腥价格战？//@陕西电信:中国电信践行“一带一路”发展目标 带动中国通信产业链走向非洲	tilianlogi	2016-01-02 22:28
96	依我看，这是贯彻“一带一路”战略的重要举措吧？顺便纠正下楼主，中国信仰伊斯兰教的并不只有回族，能将各族穆斯林联系在一起的最好语言当然是阿拉伯语//@新疆兵团老王:[弱][弱]//@五行剑侠: //@思日荣: //@HelloKafir:可以深切感受到某些人在把回族变成一个跟汉族完全无关民族这个方向上的努力。	黄道姑姑	2016-01-02 02:27

97	【人民币加入 SDR, #别高兴太早#】1、美元铁定升息; 2、央行继续抑制增幅或再来一次主动贬值 (如图 1 今年 1 月份预测); 3、对人民币国际投资性有较显著帮助, 但储备性还长远; 4、能否放手大干 (增值) 取决出口提振而不是 SDR 本身; 5、利好一带一路, 但如果中国军事力量走不出去, 人民币的投资风险依然不小	网络在线 99	2015-12-01 21:41
98	“包”罗万象 // @阿宝背书的美好生活: 一个通才。 // @余万凯 2016: 一会儿玩群众路线、思想教育; 一会儿玩金融玩银行, 一会儿玩一带一路; 现在又玩食品安全! 我以为玩得最好的是股市和大外交!	凤翅金盔	2016-01-29 09:31
99	也是一带一路的重要推动利器	回忆的沙漏被 打破了	2015-12-01 10:34
100	接下来关注: 央改、一带一路	浏阳牛魔王	2015-11-06 14:23

Appendix 3. Screenshots of Individual Leading Accounts on Weibo





Appendix 4. Samples of the Labelled Tweets from Various Accounts

No.	Tweets	Label
1	@SBGroup's rather pessimistic take on #Africa & #BeltAndRoad ends w/ good call for action https://t.co/s0IF7hAoaZ HT @RichardHumphri1	-1
2	#Tourism an important business element along the #OBOR, #beltandroad https://t.co/ewkIFAgKDq	1
3	'Many (youth) expect that Pakistan, Russia and Thailand will be the top three "pivot countries" involved in the Bel... https://t.co/yWQ2Ke5hsr	0
4	'One Belt, One Road' Brings Another 'Decade of Strategic Opportunities' for Leasing Industry (Part 1) #BeltandRoad... https://t.co/AW49XNfzEL	1
5	"#BeltandRoad expectations: centrality of #Xinjiang for #OBOR, and of #OBOR for #Xinjiang's development"-Dr. Duncan Freeman @ChinaEUMission	1
6	"#Xinjiang #BeltandRoad crucial, European population unaware of its importance #development #business"-Mr. Bernard Dewit @ChinaEUMission	1
7	"1.5 trillion RNB directed to infrastructure development in 2017 #Xinjiang #China #BeltandRoad"- Mr. Dimulati Aomaier @ChinaEUMission	1
8	"Abject Poverty Is Absolutely Conquerable" #BeltandRoad #OBOR #BRI https://t.co/aPg6auVHrx	1
9	"China is not breaking..its Paris commitmnts, but these #BeltandRoad invstmnts are..not in keeping with the spirit... https://t.co/RYY61C0LyS	-1
10	"For Latvia #BeltandRoad and Eurasian connectivity are very important" - @Latvian_MFA's Andrejs Pildegovičs at... https://t.co/NqY0ugbIuX	1
11	"In such areas as new energy, urbanization and green finance, our cooperation is booming" - Chinese Ambassador Liu... https://t.co/kwfHneSx0O	1
12	"India the only country at #BeltandRoad Forum whose sovereignty was questioned and hence India justified in not att... https://t.co/4qK8taJX6V	-1
13	"They" used to talk about 'ending poverty' remember that? What happened? Oh yeah, the #wealthtransfer https://t.co/tt62s9ACLa	-1
14	@globaltimesnews History will make impartial judgment on India's wisdom to isolate itself from #beltandroad , Ego &... https://t.co/qNsr4q1hSP	-1
15	@globaltimesnews You r asking Beggars Pakistan to give opinion on #BeltandRoad .. what to expect? 🤔	-1
16	@janiceseeto1 How are the sessions there in Beijing? #BeltandRoad initiative	0
17	@janiceseeto1 Upcoming China trip #Beijing #Shanghai #BeltandRoad Initiative https://t.co/fh2JCVZuRv	0
18	@ZeppLaRouche U r right think tank brings #US interests of #BeltandRoad mentioned in article of "Think traps is blo... https://t.co/KrxF98ahbP	0
19	@zlj517 As the flagship project, #CPEC has been & will remain be one of d best performing projects of #BeltandRoad https://t.co/ZXEftj6EA7	1
20	@zlj517 finally something related to law and belt and road (CPEC). Now I can turn my queries there :) https://t.co/2GoKEV6oPI	1
21	#Arab demand for #Chinese #vehicles on the rise. #BeltandRoad https://t.co/rHnedFDo12	1
22	#BeijingConsensus & #foreignaid? I'll ask another question: Does #BeltandRoad have anything to do with foreign aid? https://t.co/ZaFUx8B5dc	0
23	#BeltandRoad - nice overview of some of the highlights in the #Chinese #infrastructure initiative #OBOR https://t.co/RrmntOCqoK	1
24	#BeltandRoad #BNR will brings many jobs of Int'l language teaching, #Shenzhen needs at least thousands foreign Engl... https://t.co/VFZQUKDktT	1
25	#BeltAndRoad is one part of the #Infrastructure answers in Asia. https://t.co/xPqa4Cu2XB	1
26	#BeltandRoad opening up opportunities for #UK #business to bring in more #pharmaceutical #consumer products into... https://t.co/uOaSY7LeGO	1
27	#BeltandRoad to help build #infrastructure, but could also leave some banks & countries with a #debt hangover #OBOR https://t.co/Tmyb7Vpd9V	-1
28	#Beltandroad will be a perfect circle after #US join it. https://t.co/KMOsUMwkCa	1
29	#Beltandroad will be the gateway for #Nepal to diversify trade and diplomatic ties https://t.co/7IekQMK5VO	1
30	#BeltandRoad will definitely bring long term benefits to Myanmar: capitals, jobs, improved infrastructure..... https://t.co/obP4bIBnHA	1
31	#BeltandRoad will greatly change the world geopolitical and economic patterns, in ancient #China it s called Feng Sui will be changed. #BNR	0
32	#BeltandRoad will open new stage of cooperation: Putin #PutinDirect2017 https://t.co/xFhfQ0A7Hv	1
33	#BeltandRoad: Spain as a Hub to Africa and Latin America https://t.co/9eLIDv1T2U https://t.co/op8s21BRF6	1
34	#BREAKING Pimping for Communist China, anti-national @cpimspeak comes up against Nation's stance on #BeltandRoad... https://t.co/M8xqD6EiNP	-1

35	#Burma : #China 's \$10 billion project sparks ire among locals #BeltandRoad https://t.co/Y18rJGPFCCF https://t.co/N0EsqWdExZ	1
36	#CDNews #China welcomes #Japan to cooperate more under the framework of the China-proposed #BeltandRoad... https://t.co/Ini7BddnX7	1
37	#China 'Goodbye #Hollywood, hello #AltyWood!' President #XiJinping inks trade deals for #International #Film 2.0.... https://t.co/DHBTz2RVK1	1
38	#China buys #Kazakhstan lender as Xi pushes trade 'BeltandRoad' https://t.co/7BIEY0j55q @business @Panckhurst #OBOR #economy	1
39	#China cannot finance the #BeltandRoad alone A blog post by @Aligarciaherrer https://t.co/21HiQJyXBj https://t.co/3KDLzTVfvd	-1
40	#China initiated #BeltandRoad is not Charity; based on mutual, Win-Win situation for participants. #OBOR #SilkRoad https://t.co/Tc3HHL5q8S	1
41	#China invests big in #globaltrade: \$124bn for ports, roads, rail on #NewSilkRoad #BeltandRoad route. https://t.co/LQ6eytVzGF via @bbcworld	1
42	#China mulls setting up #BeltandRoad Green Development Fund https://t.co/4Ou9kCQ4b4 #OBOR	1
43	#China need not beg India to join #BeltandRoad project: State media https://t.co/JIBGebYHYx	1
44	#China Says #Trump Open to Cooperating on #SilkRoad Projects https://t.co/bRNoUxw5ey #geopolitics #OBOR... https://t.co/8rLtGn3UZV	1
45	#China successful secret is to use loans to build its infrastructure since 1980s, int'l loans gives China great hel... https://t.co/w91Ynkg0x1	1
46	#China's #BeltAndRoad policy can foster trade and inclusive growth - https://t.co/Py0Q3gOYRh https://t.co/v3y5wLWMHS	1
47	#China's \$900 billion New #SilkRoad. What you need to know https://t.co/JVWv76Q9BP via @wef #BeltandRoad	1
48	#China's One Belt One Road initiative to boost the #Philippine economy #EmergingMarkets #BeltandRoad #news... https://t.co/rXpAby8Qo	1
49	#Chinese Future #smartcities Mega projects are transforming cities & the way people live! #BeltandRoad #China https://t.co/tW7loJpwTF	1
50	#Chinese President #XiJinping proposed the #BeltandRoad project in 2013, but it is still short on specifics. https://t.co/mLtC7WVfhh	-1
51	#Chinese social media demands payback for #Pakistan murders/ #BeltandRoad https://t.co/cag2OAUbhn	-1
52	#CPEC to be linked by sea with #BCIM EC and other #BeltandRoad corridors https://t.co/a5ggnxc8Yw	1
53	#Davos Conference in China will furth rboost the #BeltandRoad Initiative https://t.co/wBLkOkvL35	1
54	#DeutscheBank hat eine Vereinbarung mit #ChinaDevelopmenBank für #Seidenstraßen-Projekte über 3 Mrd. US\$ erreicht!... https://t.co/JBDFcB7C0d	1
55	#EconDev Strategy & Implementation is out! https://t.co/sbrh23ykkG Stories via @VerredeMiroir @hktcd @NAYDinfo #beltandroad #realestate	1
56	#Etihad Airways and #China Southern Airlines announce codeshare partnership https://t.co/7weTHdPS0U #BeltandRoad	1
57	#EU braucht chinesische Nachhilfe - Welt ohne Filter (#BeltandRoad) https://t.co/ppQcgXf6OG	-1
58	#EUChina Forum's first session will discuss the #BeltandRoad initiative. For more insights read > https://t.co/um2zbpNLSK by @shada_islam	0
59	#Export Services and Standards Are the Key to Going #Global in #BeltandRoad, #TBEA Executives Say... https://t.co/Jj9xMVrxhx	1
60	#FailedStates #EU Parliament snubs China #BeltandRoad: "Market Price" must rule vs. State-Directed Investment... https://t.co/hMNx6d5vWW	0
61	#German ambassador Clauss cautions at the AHK Greater #China Day 2/3 #BeltandRoad countries are below investment gr... https://t.co/Y4ll7n16Rh	-1
62	#Hangzhou to build 'online Silk Road' as example for 'BeltandRoad' development https://t.co/CqvQ1qthRv	1
63	#hong kong plays a key role in #BeltandRoad find out more with us @HKTDCLONDON or come to the #ThinkAsiaThinkHK sem... https://t.co/OxP5c0C2qW	1
64	#HongKong #trade promoter to form consortiums with firms looking for 'beltandroad' ride. @HKTDCLONDON https://t.co/qPa4HMM3pG	1
65	#HongKong firms join forces to make deals under Silk Road plan #BeltandRoad https://t.co/QcCqHq4fAQ via @SCMP_News	1
66	#Hongkong is a leading market on #logistics #maritime industry and it benefits from #BeltandRoad with proximity to... https://t.co/iMYjpaOQ4U	1
67	#HongKong key hub for #China #Beltandroad - Priscilla To, HK Economic & Trade Office https://t.co/ISkiYHQMHP	1
68	#HongKong to grasp more opportunities from the Belt and Road initiative #EmergingMarkets #BeltandRoad #news... https://t.co/n381EijHE8	1
69	#pwc: Opportunities abound for foreign companies to get involved in the #BeltandRoad initiative. Explore... https://t.co/d0pA2357di	1

70	#Qatar #Crisis To #Affect #China #Belt and #Road Plan #beltandroad #silkroad #onebeltoneroad #1belt1road... https://t.co/M3RXLgOU8U	-1
71	#Qatar Crisis Poses Test for #China's #BeltAndRoad Project https://t.co/Xii3oC7R1B	-1
72	#Seidenstraße 2.0: #China's ambitionierte #BeltandRoad Initiative nimmt Fahrt auf: https://t.co/XLYjBVvbch . #globaltrade	1
73	#Shanghai – #Piraeus Ports Join Forces to Boost Container Traffic https://t.co/RFQdyWnxLa #Greece #China... https://t.co/EOmNZtsbgO	1
74	#Shanghai #gold futures, #FX hedging boost #Dubai derivatives market #DGCX https://t.co/ydqPhzC5S8 via @XHNews #BeltandRoad	1
75	#ShinzoAbe made a step in right direction by opening up towards #BeltandRoad, but building trust will be essential... https://t.co/mFomba5arH	1
76	#SilkRoad 2.0: China's #BeltandRoad initiative has the potential to transform & revitalize the region #globaltrade... https://t.co/YcrpNDhYb0	1
77	#Singapore working with #China on #BeltandRoad Initiative, says minister https://t.co/8vkYspFWz0 https://t.co/njoSQnAa6g	1
78	#SouthChinaSea tensions might be pushing #Japan towards #China and #BeltandRoad https://t.co/r2jvnclWqG	-1
79	#Spain next strategic Spanish language partner of #China in #Europe . #geopolitics . https://t.co/bJ7PIhEAeN	1
80	#Spain to boost cooperation with China under #BeltandRoad Initiative https://t.co/0pwFIF1ZfU https://t.co/sMjC5jqydV	1
81	#SriLanka Consul General in Shanghai Lakshitha Ratnayake talked about the partnership through #BeltandRoad Initiati... https://t.co/gh4IRNgY9L	1
82	#SriLanka new FM hails #China's #BeltandRoad Initiative #SouthAsia #OBOR https://t.co/5hKCjI2l5a	1
83	#Thai #PM gives order to #fasttrack #Chinese -backed #railway #OBOR #BeltandRoad https://t.co/Try5jbPWft via @yahooNewsUK	1
84	#Thai government invokes special powers to speed up #China rail project #BeltandRoad #OBOR #Thailand https://t.co/9EvogpSHBk	1
85	#Thailand ready to borrow B170bn for #rail project #BeltandRoad #OBOR https://t.co/doUiLSuRy7	1
86	#Thailand says its \$44 billion infrastructure plan can link up with #China's #BeltandRoad project https://t.co/fr6weppK0D via @business	1
87	#UK is a key partner of #China's #BeltandRoad initiative, says Ambassador Liu Xiaoming via @ChinaBritain. Great spe... https://t.co/mVzz58LzcH	1
88	#UN Security Council resolution backs #China's #BeltandRoad initiatives. #OBOR #CPEC https://t.co/x15yt2hx5x	1
89	#XiJinping meets Spanish King Felipe VI on cooperation in #BeltandRoad construction #XiVisit https://t.co/yv9qKg6s6i https://t.co/Vhg5G6xLh5	1
90	Business Seminar on #HongKong and #BeltandRoad at #Bristol next week! Register NOW to join for FREE:... https://t.co/0OCfthkbhv	0
91	But #China trying to weld all gaps by helping countries along #BeltandRoad to eradicate #poverty , enriching lives... https://t.co/bddSD1A9jn	1
92	caixin: China Proposes Maritime Economic 'Passages' Under Belt & Road #OBOR #BeltandRoad #SilkRoad ... https://t.co/g5sglLTeBD	1
93	caixin: Hong Kong Given Wider Access to China Markets, Belt and Road #OBOR #HK20 #BeltandRoad ... https://t.co/yWeEN6kQwN	1
94	caixin: Opinion: Hong Kong Can Prosper as Key Component of 'One Belt, One Road' #OBOR #beltandroad https://t.co/Qhq3XmUVf1	1
95	Call for #UK #Bristol #business #Entrepreneur:Join us @HKTDCLONDON seminar & learn about #business #BeltandRoad opp... https://t.co/VJxyHOPDxc	0
96	Century-old port of entry on China-Kazakhstan border regains shine due to #BeltandRoad Initiative... https://t.co/bcB0QW8YXF	1
97	Chi Fulin: "We need to change the way we perceive #EUChina market relations. This is what #BeltandRoad is all about" https://t.co/HXJH3bDlyP	0
98	China can share its experiences & expertise in sharing economy with #BeltandRoad countries, accele their eco growth. https://t.co/CF3hGAzQC0	1
99	China risks strategic overstretch from its aggressive foreign policy push for #BeltAndRoad projects... https://t.co/EBahkzILXm	-1

Appendix 5. Posts from Xinhua's Account Xinhua net

Code	Xinhua net Posts	Time
1	#胡歌上海旅游形象大使#第一期合作为期两年，将制作《胡歌邀你领略上海的“大好时光”》宣传片、《胡歌带你游上海》旅游图册、以胡歌为形象旅游宣传品和海报。还将邀请胡歌以业余摄影人身份，创作以上海为主题的摄影作品。在上海旅游节、“一带一路”宣传、中美旅游年等活动中，胡歌也将亮相。	04/01/2016 19:03
2	【胡歌出任上海旅游形象大使】胡歌 2015 年凭借《琅琊榜》《大好时光》《伪装者》三部电视剧中的精彩表演获得第 30 届中国电视剧“飞天奖”优秀男演员提名。值得一提的是，他在电视剧《大好时光》中扮演了一名在上海工作生活的、乐观向上的旅行社经理，备受观众喜爱。O 青年演员胡歌出任上海旅游形象大使	04/01/2016 18:47
3	【构建“网络版”命运共同体】第二届世界互联网大会将于 12 月 16 日开幕，届时，来自全球五大洲 120 多个国家和地区，包括“一带一路”沿线 40 多个国家的代表，20 多个重要国际组织负责人，以及 600 多位互联网企业领军人物、互联网名人等将齐聚乌镇。	11/12/2015 16:58
4	【中非的“铁”超乎你想象】中国与非洲相距遥远，但中非关系源远流长。汉朝的丝绸、瓷器通过西域远销地中海海岸，郑和七下西洋四抵东非沿海诸国，古代的海陆丝绸之路早已将中非两地文明联系在一起。近代民族独立解放运动以来，共同的历史遭遇、共同的奋斗历程让中非结下了兄弟般情谊。O 历史见证 中非的“铁”超乎你想象	04/12/2015 13:02
5	【习近平会见澳总理】习近平 16 日在安塔利亚会见澳大利亚总理特恩布尔。习近平指出，双方要发挥互补优势，提高务实合作水平，推动中澳自贸协定尽快生效，推进“一带一路”倡议同澳方“北部大开发”计划对接。中澳要开展好防务合作，共同打击腐败犯罪，增进教育、地方、旅游合作。O 习近平会见澳大利亚总理特恩布尔	16/11/2015 18:09
6	【让世界看到中国的责任与担当】习近平主席多次在国际社会上强调同世界各国建立“命运共同体”，中国主导建立“亚投行”和“一带一路”，与世界各国共同面对发展难题，“同呼吸，共命运”，是中国经济对世界经济发展的责任与担当。O 让世界看到中国的责任与担当	15/11/2015 14:44
7	【习主席访越新的经贸成果】中国国家主席习近平对越南和新加坡的国事访问取得丰硕经贸成果，从而为“一带一路”和“互联互通”建设绘制了新图景，为政府间合作提供了新动力，为产业发展创造了新机遇，也为中越和中新经贸关系的未来指明了方向。O 网页链接	08/11/2015 21:46
8	【习近平：中国愿同周边国家共同推进“一带一路”建设】习近平强调，“一带一路”倡议的首要合作伙伴是周边国家，首要受益对象也是周边国家。中国欢迎周边国家参与到合作中来，共同推进“一带一路”建设，携手实现和平、发展、合作的愿景。O 习近平：中国愿同周边国家共同推进“一带一路”建设	07/11/2015 11:58
9	【习近平：中国将坚定发展同东盟的友好合作 坚定支持东盟发展壮大】当地时间 11 月 7 日，习近平在新加坡国立大学发表演讲时强调，中国将坚定发展同东盟的友好合作，坚定支持东盟发展壮大，坚定支持东盟共同体建设，坚定支持东盟在东亚区域合作中发挥主导作用。O 习近平：中国将坚定发展同东盟的友好合作 坚定支持东盟发展壮大	07/11/2015 11:26
10	【从“一带一路”到亚投行 中新怎样合作?】习近平于 6 日至 7 日访新，此访旨在推动中新关系，为两国政治关系开创新前景，为深化务实合作和人文交流提供新动力。习主席访新将为中新关系发展绘制蓝图，夯实“亲、诚、惠、容”周边外交理念。	07/11/2015 10:45
11	【习近平会见“读懂中国”国际会议外方代表】习近平 11 月 3 日在人民大会堂会见第二届“读懂中国”国际会议外方代表，并就中国改革发展前景、“一带一路”建设、中方主办 2016 年二十国集团峰会等发表看法，强调实现中华民族伟大复兴就是中国人民的中国梦。O 习近平会见“读懂中国”国际会议外方代表	03/11/2015 21:36
12	【习近平参观国际移动卫星公司】当地时间 22 日，国家主席习近平在伦敦参观国际移动卫星公司。英国约克公爵安德鲁王子和财政部首席大臣汉兹兹专程陪同。习近平表示，中国和国际移动卫星公司合作基础良好，随着“一带一路”建设的发展，合作前景更加广阔。O Forbiden	23/10/2015 00:33
13	【对“一带一路”，各国政党大佬怎么看?】对“一带一路”，各国政党大佬怎么看? 据视点君了解，此次会议旨在促进亚洲国家和丝路沿线有关国家政党更好了解中国“一带一路”战略构想并开展相关合作。15 日，各国政党大佬们围绕“政治引领：丝路政党新共识”“民心相通：丝路文明新对话”和“经济融合：丝路国家发展新动力”三个分议题进行了深入交流和探讨。10 月 15 日，中共中央总书记、国家主席习近平在北京会见出席亚洲政党丝绸之路专题会议的外方主要代表。新华社记者黄敬文摄	16/10/2015 11:31
14	【习近平会见出席亚洲政党丝绸之路专题会议的外方主要代表】习近平表示，加快“一带一路”建设，不仅有助于促进沿线各国经济繁荣和区域经济合作，也有助于加强不同文明交流互鉴，促进世界和平发展，是一项造福沿线国家人民的伟大事业。O 习近平会见出席亚洲政党丝绸之路专题会议的外方主要代表-新华网	15/10/2015 19:43
15	【我国成功发射第 4 颗新一代北斗导航卫星】30 日 7 时 13 分，西昌卫星发射中心用长征三号乙运载火箭成功将 1 颗新一代北斗导航卫星发射升空。这是中国发射的第 20 颗北斗导航卫星，星上首次搭载了氢原子钟。根据系统全球组网建设计划，2018 年可为“一带一路”沿线国家提供基本服务，2020 年将形成全球服务能力。	30/09/2015 13:37

16	【中外影人丝路电影节“蓝毯”秀 成龙刘德华等大咖云集】26日晚,来自多国的中外众多电影人踏上了第二届丝绸之路国际电影节的闭幕式“蓝毯”。陈凯歌、陈红、刘德华、唐国强、中野良子、郑淳元、吴京、杨舒婷、欧阳娜娜等国内外知名电影人如约亮相。O 中外影人丝路电影节“蓝毯”秀 成龙刘德华等大咖云集	28/09/2015 10:43
17	【东盟美食让你流口水了吗】在南宁举行的第12届中国-东盟博览会上,中国与东盟各国广泛开展高端对话、商贸洽谈和人文交流,共同谱写21世纪海上丝绸之路的合作强音。博览会上丰富的东盟美食和食材吸引着人们的眼球和味蕾,特意为大家搜罗了一下,请您先过过瘾……	22/09/2015 09:04
18	【“新华丝路”正成为“一带一路”建设中经济信息服务领航者】新华社副社长于绍良21日表示,作为中国经济信息事业开创者,新华社“新华丝路”正成为“一带一路”建设中经济信息服务功能最大、最快、最准的信息提供者和领航者。O“新华丝路”正成为“一带一路”建设中经济信息服务领航者	21/09/2015 20:41
19	【搭建各国互联互通的“网上港口”——“中国-东盟信息港”由共识到务实】13日,在中国-东盟信息港论坛上,中国国家互联网信息办公室主任鲁伟表示,中方将与东盟各国紧密合作,使中国-东盟信息港成为建设21世纪“海上丝绸之路”的信息枢纽,让中国与东盟各国共享网络发展成果。	15/09/2015 18:57
20	【国务院批复同意设立云南滇中新区】云南滇中新区是滇中产业聚集区的核心区域。设立并建设好云南滇中新区,对于推进实施“一带一路”、长江经济带等国家重大战略和区域发展总体战略,为西部地区新型城镇化建设提供试验示范,培育壮大区域经济增长极具有重要意义。O 国务院批复同意设立云南滇中新区	15/09/2015 11:03
21	【习近平解读“一带一路”】	11/09/2015 11:53
22	【习近平解读“一带一路”】	11/09/2015 11:53
23	【李克强向“中俄交通大学校长论坛”致贺信】李克强在贺信中表示,当前中俄全面战略协作伙伴关系深入发展,交通领域合作成为两国务实合作的新亮点。推动中俄基础设施和互联互通建设领域的合作,是丝绸之路经济带建设与欧亚经济联盟建设对接的重要内容。O 李克强向“中俄交通大学校长论坛”致贺信	04/09/2015 19:22
24	【习近平“一带一路”讲话解读】习近平主席在博鳌亚洲论坛上说“‘一带一路’建设不是空洞的口号,而是看得见、摸得着的实际举措,将给地区国家带来实实在在的利益。”	08/08/2015 10:59
25	【习近平“一带一路”讲话解读——晒一晒上半年成绩单】自“一带一路”构想提出后,习近平主席在多个场合主动表达共建“一带一路”的诚意。目前,已经有60多个国家和国际组织积极响应一带一路的倡议,快来看看“一带一路”上半年的建设成果吧! O 习近平“一带一路”讲话解读——晒一晒上半年成绩单 习近平“一带一路”讲话解读——晒一晒上半年成绩单 “一带一路”是习近平主席提出的重大战略构想,在经过一年多的酝酿后,已经成为中国对外展示大国气象的“新名片”。习近平主席曾说,“一带一路”建设秉持共商、共建、共享原则,不是封闭的,而是开放包容的;不是中国一家的独奏,而是沿线国家的合唱。自“一带一路”构想提出后,习近平主席在多个场合主动表达共建“一带一路”的诚意。目前,已经有60多个国家和国际组织积极响应一带一路的倡议,快来看看“一带一路”上半年的建设成果吧!	04/08/2015 15:11
26	【中国丝绸之路沿线多地变“烤箱”】近日多地出现极端高温,关中平原最高达37-39℃,吐鲁番盆地达44℃。未来几日高温天气范围仍在扩展,强度增强。图为西安,热到连烤虾都烤红,鸡蛋都煎熟了,能做法油泼辣子。温度计3分钟上升到50+,20分钟就能吃个煎蛋。O 中国频现极端天气“丝绸之路”沿线多地变“烤箱”?你的城市烫不烫?	27/07/2015 16:57
27	【企业借道“新华丝路”进军“一带一路”市场】“新华丝路”是基于互联网的信息产品,主要包括四类产品:数据库、征信服务、信息咨询和智库服务、交易撮合,通过提供高效便捷、实时实用的经济信息服务,为沿线各国政府和企业搭建商品贸易和投资合作平台。O“新华丝路”为“一带一路”投资者提供个性化信息服务	16/07/2015 21:56
28	【“新华丝路”为“一带一路”投资者提供个性化信息服务】作为中国经济信息服务的开创者,新华社为用户定制的信息服务独具特色。16日,新华社中国经济信息社的“新华丝路”信息产品正式对外发布,将为“一带一路”投资者提供更加权威、准确、个性化的信息服务。O“新华丝路”为“一带一路”投资者提供个性化信息服务	16/07/2015 21:26
29	【助推“一带一路”新华社“新华丝路”信息产品发布】新华社16日正式发布“新华丝路”信息产品。这是新华社作为国家通讯社服务“一带一路”建设的重要举措,也标志着新华社在推进信息服务战略布局中迈出重要一步。O 助推“一带一路”新华社“新华丝路”信息产品发布	16/07/2015 21:10
30	蔡名照强调,我们将积极报道沿线各国经济社会发展情况,并与沿线国家媒体和机构开展合作,深入了解彼此需求和利益契合点,更好地在信息传播、商贸合作、文化交流等方面发挥桥梁作用,为传承发扬“团结互信、平等互利、包容互鉴、合作共赢”的当代丝绸之路精神,共同推动世界的和平与发展作出贡献。	16/07/2015 10:50
31	蔡名照表示,新华社开发并推出“新华丝路”信息产品,就是着眼于服务“一带一路”战略,改变信息不畅通、不对称的现状,通过提供高效便捷、实时实用的经济信息服务,为沿线各国政府和企业搭建商品贸易和投资合作平台,努力把中国的发展与沿线各国的发展对接起来。	16/07/2015 10:49
32	【本网直播:“新华丝路”信息产品发布会举行】蔡名照发表重要讲话,“一带一路”沿线地域广阔,各个国家和地区在政治制度、发展水平、法律规定、社会风俗、民族文化等方面存在差异,要实现政策沟通、设施联通、贸易畅通、资金融	16/07/2015 10:32

	通、民心相通的愿景,保持信息的便捷畅通是重要基础。"O"“新华丝路”信息产品发布会	
33	【本网直播:“新华丝路”信息产品发布会举行】蔡名照发表重要讲话,“一带一路”沿线地域广阔,各个国家和地区在政治制度、发展水平、法律规定、社会风俗、民族文化等方面存在差异,要实现政策沟通、设施联通、贸易畅通、资金融通、民心相通的愿景,保持信息的便捷畅通是重要基础。"O"“新华丝路”信息产品发布会 今年是中欧建交 40 周年。德国是欧盟重要成员国,希望德方在推动中欧各领域务实合作、推动欧洲投资计划同中国“一带一路”倡议对接、推动中欧四大伙伴关系发展中,继续发挥积极引领作用。O 网页链接	15/07/2015 21:37
34	【习近平会见德国社民党主席、副总理加布里尔】习近平指出,中德建交 43 年来,两国关系保持平稳健康发展。双方高层交往密切,政治互信不断加强。去年,我在访问德国时同默克尔总理达成一致,将两国关系提升为全方位战略伙伴关系,目的就是进一步丰富两国合作内涵,拓展两国利益汇合点,实现互利共赢。	15/07/2015 21:37
35	【“一带一路”是适应新常态的重大战略举措】	14/07/2015 18:18
36	【习近平:夯实上合组织各国友好交往的民意基础】推动民心相通,巩固世代睦邻友好。古老的丝绸之路见证了各国人民结下的深厚传统友谊。我们应该继续弘扬丝路精神,夯实本地区各国友好交往的民意基础,让各国人民互信互敬,共建和谐、安宁、繁荣的家园。	11/07/2015 14:05
37	【习近平会见阿富汗总统加尼】习近平强调,加强安全合作符合中阿两国共同利益。中方愿继续向阿方提供安全物资、技术、装备、培训援助。中方赞赏阿方支持“一带一路”倡议,欢迎阿方参加有关合作。O 习近平会见阿富汗总统加尼	10/07/2015 14:57
38	【习近平同印度尼西亚总统佐科通电话】习近平强调,中国和印尼是真诚相待的好朋友、好伙伴。中方建设“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”构想同印尼方打造“全球海洋支点”规划高度契合。我们一致同意,双方要加快发展战略对接,尽快确定经贸合作优先项目,实现互利共赢。O 习近平同印度尼西亚总统佐科通电话	23/06/2015 18:38
39	【新一轮高考改革元年:语文考试有何不同?】7 日举行的首个高考科目是语文。专家指出,今年命题的一大重点是要给学生上“生动一课”。全国二卷的“一带一路”、安徽卷的亚投行、湖北卷的南水北调……今年高考语文试卷中,社会热点、新闻时事、国家大政等内容很多。O 专家解读 2015 年高考作文	07/06/2015 22:04
40	【2015 高考作文集锦与点评】高考第一天,语文的作文题成为社会关注焦点。今年高考全国有 18 个省是统一命题,其他省份仍然是自主命题。从各地的作文题来看,“材料作文”是今年的主流,同时更加放开了文体限制,有的地区甚至可以写诗歌,充分考查考生的阅读量、思考力和想象力。O2015 高考作文集锦与点评:考阅读量 考思考力 考想象力	07/06/2015 17:46
41	【刘延东出席第二届“中国-东南亚民间高端对话会”开幕式并致辞】刘延东指出,共建“一带一路”旨在开展更大范围、更高水平、更深层次的合作,这契合中国与东南亚各国人民的共同关切与期盼,相信将有力促进各国合作共赢,成为经济合作之路、民心交融之路、文化交流之路、和平繁荣之路 O 刘延东出席第二届“中国-东南亚民间高端对话会”开幕式并致辞	01/06/2015 20:35
42	#聚焦 5-18#【国内首家海丝文化金融交易中心年内落户福州】首届 21 世纪海上丝绸之路博览会在福州举行,会上透露,又一项“海丝”项目即将落地福州,国内首家 21 世纪海上丝路文化金融交易中心将于年内成立实体机构。届时,国内外的海丝相关文化无形资产将可以通过这个平台进行交易和投融资。O 网页链接	20/05/2015 11:33
43	#聚焦 5-18#【首届海丝博览会暨第 17 届海交会重点“三维”项目签约超 800 亿】5 月 18 日,首届 21 世纪海上丝绸之路博览会暨第十七届海峡两岸经贸交易会重点“三维”项目签约仪式举行。本次签约仪式现场上台重点“三维”项目 59 项,总投资 814.01 亿元,总投资比去年增加 143.56 亿元。O 海博会福州重点“三维”项目签约 59 项 总投资超 814 亿	20/05/2015 11:31
44	【首届海丝博览会举办 亚洲各国聚焦“一带一路”建设】18 日,首届 21 世纪海上丝绸之路博览会暨第十七届海峡两岸经贸交易会在福州举办。作为本次大会重头戏,亚洲合作对话(“ACD”)召开共建“一带一路”合作论坛,多国政要和工商界嘉宾云集福建,共商“一带一路”建设和亚洲区域互联互通发展。O 首届海丝博览会举办 亚洲各国聚焦“一带一路”建设	20/05/2015 11:30
45	【国平:“家乡外交”促动“龙象共舞”】“家乡外交”更具有重大现实意义。西安是丝绸之路的起点,习主席提出的“一带一路”战略构想为“龙象共舞”提供了新机遇,而莫迪上台后提出的“向东行动”政策,正好与之呼应。O 国平:“家乡外交”促动“龙象共舞”国平:“家乡外交”促动“龙象共舞”2014 年 9 月 17 日,国家主席习近平在印度总理莫迪陪同下访问古吉拉特邦。这是习近平和莫迪在参观河岸公园发展项目时亲切交谈。去年 9 月,习近平主席访印时曾在莫迪总理生日当天访问其家乡古吉拉特邦。眼下,莫迪应约来到西安,习主席打破惯例首次在自己家乡接待外国领导人。去年,习主席与莫迪在萨巴玛蒂河畔信步闲聊,两位领导人坐在甘地使用过的纺车前纵论天下的画面,定格为中印外交经典。如今,习主席与莫迪在大慈恩寺闲庭信步,吃“酸辣汤”,同登大雁塔远眺西安市景等,成为一幕幕外交新佳话,刷爆了微信微博。	15/05/2015 15:18
46	【国平:让“一带一路”倡议在欧亚大陆落地生根】5 月 7 日至 12 日,习近平主席访问“一带一路”倡议“缘起之地”哈萨克斯坦,访问丝绸之路经济带重要节点俄罗斯、白俄罗斯。习主席此行在缅怀历史、昭示未来的同时,也有着助推“一带一路”倡议在欧亚大陆落地生根的现实意义。O 国平:让“一带一路”倡议在欧亚大陆落地生根	13/05/2015 18:20
47	【习主席推动的中白地方合作进展怎么样了】国家主席习近平这次访问白俄罗斯,将“开创中白全面战略伙伴关系的新	12/05/2015

	时代”。这话可不是吹牛。只要看看习主席 5 月 11 日出席的中白地方经贸合作论坛就知道了：1 两个国家的首都都派代表参加；2 五百人参加，前所未有；3 丝绸之路经济带在这里“对接”。	19:41
48	【中俄发表联合声明：将丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设相对接】中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦 8 日在莫斯科发表《中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明》。O 中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明 (全文)	09/05/2015 10:48
49	【习近平再访哈萨克斯坦】习近平主席 7 日下午乘专机抵达阿斯塔纳。习近平和夫人彭丽媛在机场受到热烈欢迎。哈萨克斯坦青年献上鲜花，礼兵行注目礼。访哈期间，习近平同纳扎尔巴耶夫总统举行会谈。2013 年 9 月，习近平访哈时首次提出建设丝绸之路经济带的战略构想。(摄影鞠鹏) via 新国际	08/05/2015 01:07
50	【习近平会见伊朗总统鲁哈尼】习近平强调，中方高度重视发展中伊关系。当前，两国关系正处于承前启后的重要阶段。双方要保持高层接触和各领域交往，增进战略互信。要以“一带一路”为主线，以互联互通和产业合作为支点，推动双方务实互利合作向宽领域发展。O 习近平会见伊朗总统鲁哈尼	23/04/2015 13:24
51	【“一带一路”铸造中巴“钻石友谊”】巴基斯坦是习近平主席今年首次出访的第一站，这对巩固中巴友谊和推进“一带一路”建设，意义十分重大。正如巴基斯坦总理谢里夫的评价，“习主席这次访问，将是巴中关系史上的里程碑。”O“一带一路”铸造中巴“钻石友谊”	21/04/2015 21:40
52	【自贸区由一到四：筑起对外开放新高地】上海自贸区实施范围扩大到 120.72 平方公里；广东自贸区将成为粤港澳深度合作示范区、21 世纪海上丝绸之路重要枢纽和新一轮改革开放先行地；天津自贸区将成京津冀协同发展高水平对外开放平台；福建自贸区将推进与台湾地区投资贸易自由化进程。O 网页链接	21/04/2015 11:14
53	【“一带一路”共建繁荣】资金互联互通 打通金融大动脉：“一带一路”建设离不开资金的互联互通，从银团贷款、银行授信等方式开展的多边金融合作，到亚洲基础设施投资银行、金砖国家开发银行等新设立的国际金融组织，各方资金共同筹集，正在搭建起一座“一带一路”资金融通的桥梁。O【“一带一路 共建繁荣”】资金互联互通 打通金融大动脉	14/04/2015 22:29
54	【“一带一路”绘就发展新蓝图】一带，指的是“丝绸之路经济带”，是在陆地。它有三个走向，从中国出发，一是经中亚、俄罗斯到达欧洲；二是经中亚、西亚至波斯湾、地中海；三是中国到东南亚、南亚、印度洋。“一路”，指的是“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”，重点方向是两条。O【“一带一路 共建繁荣”】“一带一路”绘就发展新蓝图	13/04/2015 22:03
55	【一分钟读懂“一带一路”大战略】什么是“一带一路”？谁将受益？五大合作重点都有哪些？亚投行对“一带一路”意味着什么？戳链接：O 网页链接	11/04/2015 22:02
56	《推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动》从五方面加强合作：政策沟通是“一带一路”建设的重要保障；基础设施互联互通是“一带一路”建设的优先领域；投资贸易合作是“一带一路”建设的重点内容；资金融通是“一带一路”建设的重要支撑；民心相通是“一带一路”建设的社会根基。	30/03/2015 16:32
57	【“一带一路”+亚投行 = ?】O 一图 “一带一路”+亚投行 = ? 一图 “一带一路”+亚投行 = ? 功能介绍 中央电视台新闻中心公众号，提供时政、社会、财经、体育、突发等新闻信息以及天气、路况、视频直播等服务信息。……为期 4 天的博鳌亚洲论坛 2015 年年会今天正式闭幕。在多达 73 场的论坛中，多位政要、商界精英和专家学者的真知灼见，为亚洲改革与发展提供了源源不断的新动力。而在本届论坛中，亚投行和一带一路成为最热的话题。那么亚投行和一带一路之间是什么关系？……………	30/03/2015 08:49
58	【推进“一带一路”建设工作领导小组答记者问】O 推进“一带一路”建设工作领导小组办公室负责人就“一带一路”建设有关问题答记者问	29/03/2015 18:55
59	【愿景·行动“一带一路”改变生活】↓↓↓	29/03/2015 18:51
60	【解读：推动共建“一带一路”的愿景与行动的八个方面】↓↓↓	29/03/2015 16:56
61	【共建“一带一路”造福各国人民】↓↓↓	29/03/2015 16:50
62	【推动共建“一带一路”愿景与行动的 20 条“干货”】↓↓↓	29/03/2015 16:31
63	【“五通三同”，四字看懂“一带一路”丰厚内涵】↓↓↓	29/03/2015 16:29
64	【5 句话读懂一带一路路线图】O5 句话读懂一带一路路线图 5 句话读懂一带一路路线图 3 月 28 日，习近平主席刚在博鳌亚洲论坛发表主题演讲的午后，《推进共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景和行动》文件公布，“一带一路”的一系列核心信息终于揭开面纱。涉及 60 余国、44 亿人口，“一带一路”自然广泛关注。怎么落实？大家更是充满期待。	29/03/2015 13:47
65	【“一带一路”路线图正式公布】O“一带一路”路线图正式公布 一图读懂“一带一路”路线图正式公布 一图读懂 功能介绍 传播经济信息，服务经济生活，您身边的参谋和朋友！“一带一路”究竟是怎么回事？要怎样建设？能给我们带来什么改变？一张图读懂！推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动 2000 多年前，亚欧大陆上勤劳勇敢的人民，探索出多条连接亚欧非几大文明的贸易和人文交流通路，后人将其统称为“丝绸之路”。千百年来，“和	29/03/2015 11:19

	平合作、开放包容、互学互鉴、互利共赢”的丝绸之路精神薪火相传，推进了人类文明进步，是促进沿线各国繁荣发展的重要纽带，是东西方交流合作的象征，是世界各国共有的历史文化遗产。	
66	【“一带一路”是什么？怎么建？】O 一图读懂 “一带一路”是什么？怎么建？一图读懂 “一带一路”是什么？怎么建？功能介绍 以全媒体形态，为您呈现当日最热、最重要的新闻	29/03/2015 08:43
67	【很火的“一带一路”将给中国、世界和你的生活带来什么】“一带一路”看起来高大上，实际上看得见、摸得着。透过这份愿景与行动，可以清晰地看到“一带一路”给中国、沿线国家和百姓带来的实实在在的利益。O 网页链接	29/03/2015 08:42
68	重磅！一带一路将带来这些福利！一带一路将带来福利！O 重磅！一带一路将带来这些福利！功能介绍 来自腾讯微博认证资料：人民网，创办于 1997 年 1 月 1 日，是以新闻为主的大型网上信息交互平台，也是国际互联网上最大的综合性网络媒体之一。坚持“权威、实力，源自人民”的理念，以“权威性、大众化、公信力”为宗旨，以“多语种、全媒体、全球化、全覆盖”为目标，以“报道全球、传播中国”为己任。 @人民网	28/03/2015 18:46
69	【习近平：“一带一路”建设的愿景与行动文件已经制定】习近平表示，中国将毫不动摇坚持独立自主的和平外交政策，坚持走和平发展道路，坚持互利共赢的开放战略，秉持正确义利观，推动建立以合作共赢为核心的新型国际关系，始终做维护世界和平、促进共同发展的坚定力量。O 习近平：“一带一路”建设的愿景与行动文件已经制定	28/03/2015 17:12
70	【中国发布“一带一路”路线图：将这样影响我们的生活】3 月 28 日上午，习近平主席在博鳌宣布：经各方努力，“一带一路”建设愿景与行动文件已制定。当天下午，国家发改委、外交部、商务部联合发布了《推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动》。O 重磅！中国发布“一带一路”路线图：将这样影响我们的生活	28/03/2015 17:09
71	【授权发布：推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动】国家发展改革委、外交部、商务部 28 日联合发布了《推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动》。点击链接看全文？O 授权发布：推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动	28/03/2015 14:15
72	【习大大博鳌演讲干货：“一带一路”不是独奏是合唱！】继 2010 年、2013 年之后，今年，习近平第三次参加博鳌亚洲论坛。在开幕式的主旨演讲中，习近平说了那些让人印象深刻的重点？又透露了哪些亚洲发展的新动向？“命运共同体”如何落地生根？戳图，了解。	28/03/2015 11:41
73	【习近平：中国已经制定“一带一路”建设的愿景与行动文件】习近平在发表主旨演讲时说，在有关各方共同努力下，“一带一路”建设的愿景与行动文件已经制定，亚洲基础设施投资银行筹建工作迈出实质性步伐，丝路基金已经顺利启动，一批基础设施互联互通项目已经在稳步推进。O 习近平：中国已经制定“一带一路”建设的愿景与行动文件	28/03/2015 11:14
74	【新华网直播博鳌亚洲论坛 2015 年年会开幕式 国家主席习近平做主旨演讲】O 博鳌亚洲论坛 2015 年年会开幕式直播	28/03/2015 10:10
75	【从博鳌论坛看资本市场四大关键词】2015 年博鳌亚洲论坛昨日正式拉开帷幕。分析人士表示，结合官方公布议程安排来看，“一带一路”、三农、“互联网+”、国企改革等四大关键词将成为博鳌亚洲论坛召开期间资本市场关注新焦点，相关概念股也将迎来新的上涨契机。	27/03/2015 09:10
76	【博鳌最热经济词：普惠金融】什么是普惠金融？就是让每一个公民都能接受正常的金融服务，也就是说，普惠金融与每个人的金融未来息息相关，包括广大农民。	27/03/2015 09:09
77	【3 个支撑带+4 个自贸区：中国改革开放有了新版图】随着 3 月 24 日广东、天津、福建自由贸易试验区总体方案的审议通过，“一带一路”、长江经济带和京津冀协同发展“三个支撑带”与上海、广东、天津、福建四个自贸区形成的“3+4”多点支撑大区域发展战略终于现身，勾勒出中国改革开放的新一轮版图。	26/03/2015 17:03
78	【九个关键词带你前瞻博鳌论坛】今天，博鳌亚洲论坛 2015 年年会在中国海南博鳌召开。77 场正式讨论，将围绕食品安全、雾霾治理、人工智能、一带一路、区域合作等议题展开。普惠金融、政商关系新生态、自贸区、市政债、影子银行、亚投行……这些概念，你都熟知吗？ via@人民日报	26/03/2015 13:18
79	【谋定出发“马上就办”】两会期间，“十三五”规划编制、“一带一路”、京津冀协同发展、进一步深化财税金融体制改革等，都是代表委员们关心的重大话题，教育、就业、医疗卫生、养老、环境治理等百姓生活中的热点难点问题，同样备受关注。O 谋定出发“马上就办”	14/03/2015 22:03
80	#小华看两会#【两会授权发布：政府工作报告中相关词语注释】①“一带一路”②“互联网+”行动计划③政府和社会资本合作模式④统一社会信用代码制度⑤临时救助制度 O 两会授权发布：政府工作报告中相关词语注释 两会授权发布：政府工作报告中相关词语注释 新华社北京 3 月 12 日电 政府工作报告中相关词语的注释。1、“一带一路”：2013 年 9 月和 10 月，习近平总书记出访中亚和东南亚国家期间，先后提出共	12/03/2015 19:02
81	【“一带一路”合作共赢】O 一带一路 合作共赢（代表委员议国是）一带一路 合作共赢（代表委员议国是）功能介绍 中国网是用 10 个语种 11 个文版发布信息，向世界介绍中国的中央重点新闻网站，是中国进行国际传播、信息交流的重要窗口。各地抢抓“一带一路”战略机遇，宁波港口开发东盟南亚等“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”新航线、福建加快打造“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”的重要枢纽、重庆着力完善“渝新欧”等国际物流大通道，区域协同发展效果显著。推进“一带一路”建设，加强与相关国家互联互通，是党中央、国务院统筹国内国际两个大局作出的重大战略决策，对于构建开放型经济新体制、形成全方位对外开放新格局，对于全面建成小康社会、实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦，具有重大深远的	11/03/2015 20:13

	意义。	
82	#小华看两会#一张图带你读懂“一带一路”经济发展战略	11/03/2015 10:38
83	【2015 中国外交“一个重点、两条主线”令人期待】“一带一路”，中美关系，中俄合作……适逢中国两会，外国媒体向中国外长提出的问题围绕这些重要领域开足“火力”。毫无疑问，随着中国外交走完 2014 年这个丰收之年、开拓之年、创新之年，外界更加渴望看清中国未来世界角色的内涵和力量。	10/03/2015 11:11
84	“一带一路”的理念是共同发展，目标是合作共赢。它不是中方一家的“独奏曲”，而是各方共同参与的“交响乐”。	08/03/2015 10:33
85	#小华看两会#外交部部长王毅：在推进“一带一路”过程当中，我们将坚持奉行“共商、共建、共享”的原则，坚持平等协商，坚持尊重各国的自主选择。我们将注重照顾各方舒适度，注重保持透明和开放，注重与各国的发展战略相互对接，注重与现有的地区合作机制相辅相成。O 王毅：“一带一路”不是中方“独奏曲”而是各方共同参与的“交响乐”	08/03/2015 10:31
86	#小华看两会#外交部部长王毅：在推进“一带一路”过程当中，我们将坚持奉行“共商、共建、共享”的原则，坚持平等协商，坚持尊重各国的自主选择。我们将注重照顾各方舒适度，注重保持透明和开放，注重与各国的发展战略相互对接，注重与现有的地区合作机制相辅相成。O 王毅：“一带一路”不是中方“独奏曲”而是各方共同参与的“交响乐”	08/03/2015 10:31
87	#小华看两会#外交部部长王毅：2015 年中国外交的关键词是“一个重点、两条主线”。一个重点就是全面推进“一带一路”。我们将进一步加强与各国的政策沟通，不断扩大彼此利益契合点。O 王毅：2015 中国外交关键词是“一个重点、两条主线”	08/03/2015 10:17
88	【奔跑的“一带一路”将给区域带来新福祉】全国政协委员、香港中国商会主席陈经纬、国家发改委学术委员会秘书长张燕生等就“一带一路”进行解读。嘉宾们普遍认为，“一带一路”将提供一个具有包容性的巨大发展平台，它将西贯欧亚非大陆，东连亚太经济区，其中隐藏着巨大的发展机遇。O 奔跑的“一带一路”将给区域带来新福祉	07/03/2015 22:25
89	【专家全面解读新常态下“一带一路”：为中国经济带来重要增长动力】李克强总理在今年的政府工作报告中三次提及“一带一路”，指出将推进丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路合作建设，加快互联互通、大通关和国际物流大通道建设。毫无疑问，2015 年被视为“一带一路”落地实施的关键年。O 专家全面解读新常态下“一带一路”：为中国经济带来重要增长动力	07/03/2015 22:24
90	#小华看两会#【商务部部长高虎城答中外记者问】“一带一路”建设怎样布局？进出口目标能否完成？贸易摩擦如何应对？……3 月 7 日，商务部部长高虎城参加十二届全国人大三次会议记者会，就我国对外经贸合作中的热点问题回答了记者提问。O 开创对外经贸合作新格局	07/03/2015 19:23
91	#小华看两会#商务部部长高虎城：按照党的十八届三中全会全面深化改革的总体部署和总理在报告当中提出的要求，我们在自贸区建设方面是立足周边、辐射“一带一路”，构建面向全球的高标准的自贸区网络，到目前我们已经与 20 个国家和地区建立了自贸协定，涵盖了我国国家近 30%的进出口贸易额。小华看两会 第十二届全国人民代表大会第三次会议和政协第十二届全国委员会第三次会议，分别于 2015 年 3 月 5 日和 3 月 3 日在北京开幕。	07/03/2015 11:09
92	#小华看两会#【中国“一带一路”助力世界经济爬坡过坎】在中国“两会”召开之际，各方期待“一带一路”倡议加速开花结果，有效推动地区经贸合作势头，优化全球公共产品供应格局，为正在爬坡过坎的世界经济提供新思路，注入新动力。O 中国“一带一路”助力世界经济爬坡过坎	02/03/2015 17:40
93	【21 世纪海上丝绸之路国际研讨会在泉州开幕】21 世纪海上丝绸之路国际研讨会 11 日在福建泉州开幕。来自中国、印度、泰国、新加坡等 30 多个国家的两百余名专家学者，将围绕“海上丝绸之路：价值理念与时代内涵”“共同建设、共同发展、共同繁荣”“抓住发展新机遇，拓展合作新空间”等议题展开深入交流研讨。	11/02/2015 17:14
94	【习近平：关键还是要把自己的事情做好】昆明南站是“一带一路”战略规划中辐射东南亚的重要基础设施。习近平听取了“八出省、四出境”铁路通道重要枢纽以及建设面向西南大通道等情况。他说，千里之行，始于足下，关键还是要把我们自己的事情做好，把“接口”做好，才能实现互联互通。via@新华视点	21/01/2015 01:07
95	【十大热词解码 2014 中国外交】回望 2014，与中国外交有关的热词扑面而来：“点穴式访问”、“一带一路”、“和平的、可亲的、文明的狮子”、“APEC 蓝”、“人群中的大块头”……一个个字符记录下一幕幕历史瞬间，一段段故事拼出中国特色大国外交的华彩篇章。O 十大热词解码 2014 中国外交	17/12/2014 20:12
96	【李克强：精心营造中国东盟海上合作新亮点】李克强 13 日出席第十七次中国-东盟会议时表示，建设 21 世纪海上丝绸之路有利于促进中国-东盟海上合作。中国建议将明年确定为“中国-东盟海洋合作年”，与东盟国家共同实施好海上合作基金 2014 年支持项目，欢迎东盟国家积极申报 2015 年基金项目。	13/11/2014 22:18
97	【李克强会见塔吉克斯坦总统拉赫蒙】李克强表示，中塔山水相连，真诚互助，两国关系达到前所未有的水平。希望双方以能源、交通、农业为合作重点，加快中国 - 中亚天然气管道建设，推进丝绸之路经济带建设，造福两国和地区人民。O 李克强：以邻为伴 推进中塔以及上合组织务实合作	08/11/2014 16:30
98	【习近平：推进“一带一路”建设要诚心诚意对待沿线国家】习近平强调，要本着互利共赢的原则同沿线国家开展合作，让沿线国家得益于我国发展。要实行包容发展，坚持各国共享机遇、共迎挑战、共创繁荣。	06/11/2014 16:06

99	【习近平：加快推进丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路建设】习近平强调，丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路倡议顺应了时代要求和各国加快发展的愿望，具有深厚历史渊源和人文基础。要集中力量办好这件大事，秉持亲、诚、惠、容的周边外交理念，近睦远交，使沿线国家对我们更认同、更亲近、更支持。	06/11/2014 15:11
100	【习近平：要以创新思维办好亚洲基础设施投资银行和丝路基金】习近平主持召开中央财经领导小组第八次会议时指出，发起并同一些国家合作建立亚洲基础设施投资银行是要为“一带一路”有关沿线国家的基础设施建设提供资金支持，促进经济合作。设立丝路基金是要利用我国资金实力直接支持“一带一路”建设。	06/11/2014 13:56
101	【国家文物局副局长：中国文化从未“闭关锁国”】考古发现认为，公元前 5 世纪中国就和中亚、西亚建立联系，之后在汉代打通了东西方交通的大道，而宋代以来“海上丝绸之路”从未断。国家文物局副局长宋新潮提出，基于以上发现，可以说中国的文化始终是跟世界文化联系在一起的。O 国家文物局副局长：中国文化从未“闭关锁国”	06/11/2014 09:59
102	【习近平为科伦坡港口城开工剪彩】17 日，习近平在斯里兰卡总统拉贾帕克萨陪同下，考察科伦坡港南集装箱码头，两国元首还共同为港口城开工仪式剪彩。停靠在附近海面的喷沙船以喷扬金沙的独特庆祝方式，表达对项目圆满竣工的期盼，祝愿“东方十字路口”科伦坡港在 21 世纪海上丝绸之路之路上焕发出新生机。	17/09/2014 20:00
103	【习近平：以建设 21 世纪海上丝绸之路为契机加强与马合作】马尔代夫是古代海上丝绸之路重要一站。习近平和亚明总统共同会见记者表示，双方同意以建设 21 世纪海上丝绸之路为契机，加强海洋经济、海上安全、海洋科研和环保、灾害防控等领域合作，着力推进一些重点项目，争取早日启动一些早期收获项目。via 新国际	16/09/2014 06:17
104	【习主席笔绘中蒙合作美丽图景】在对蒙古国进行国事访问之际，国家主席习近平 21 日在蒙古国《日报》、《今日报》、《世纪新闻报》、《民族邮报》、蒙古新闻网网站同时发表题为《策马奔向中蒙关系更好的明天》的署名文章。文章中，习主席用草原、牛羊、良驹、丝绸之路等展现了一幅中蒙合作的美丽图景。	21/08/2014 19:32
105	【彭丽媛和出席青奥会开幕式的部分外方领导人夫人一起尝试苏绣】彭丽媛 16 日同出席青奥会开幕式的部分外方领导人夫人在南京博物院观看非物质文化遗产展示时，一起坐在尚未完工的苏绣作品《丝绸之路》旁，在“非遗”传承人指导下尝试刺绣。(刘华/黄敬文)	16/08/2014 17:18
106	【西安大雁塔每年“改斜归正”1 毫米】大雁塔入选丝绸之路世界文化遗产，不少人发现竟然是斜的。管理部门表示它在斜幅达到最大的 101 厘米之后，每年约 1 毫米“改斜归正”，其稳定性基本没有问题。西安上世纪随着经济社会发展和人口增长，大量打井致地下水水位急骤下降，使大雁塔等出现倾斜。O 网页链接	05/07/2014 16:02
107	【刘云山：媒体是联通民心的桥梁】刘云山 3 日下午在人民大会堂会见来华参加丝绸之路经济带媒体合作论坛的外方代表。他希望发挥好论坛的建设性作用，促进各国媒体加强人员往来，共享新闻产品，深化交流合作，增进各国人民的了解与互信，为建设“一带一路”营造良好人文环境。O 刘云山会见丝绸之路经济带媒体合作论坛外方代表	03/07/2014 21:15
108	【你想来趟丝绸之路旅行吗？】丝绸之路在我国遗产点包括：汉魏洛阳城遗址、汉长安未央宫遗址、张骞墓、唐长安城大明宫遗址、大雁塔、小雁塔、玉门关遗址、麦积山石窟、炳灵寺石窟、锁阳城遗址、高昌故城、交河故城、克孜尔石窟、苏巴什佛寺遗址、北庭故城遗址……等 22 处。走起！via 央视新闻	22/06/2014 20:29
109	【“丝绸之路：起始段和天山廊道的路网”】线路跨度近 5000 公里，沿线包括中心城镇遗迹、商贸城市、交通遗迹、宗教遗迹和关联遗迹等 5 类代表性遗迹共 33 处。中国境内有 22 处考古遗址、古建筑等遗迹(河南 4 处、陕西 7 处、甘肃 5 处、新疆 6 处)。哈萨克斯坦、吉尔吉斯斯坦境内各 8 处和 3 处遗迹。O 中国等三国联合申报的丝绸之路项目申遗成功	22/06/2014 19:24
110	【河南“一城一门一关一道”：丝路东端的 4 颗文化宝石】随着丝绸之路跨国申遗成功，河南的“一城一门一关一道”4 处遗址点即汉魏洛阳城遗址、隋唐洛阳城定鼎门遗址、新安汉函谷关遗址、陕县崤函古道，跻身新的世界文化遗产之列。O 河南“一城一门一关一道”跻身新的世界文化遗产之列	22/06/2014 18:31
111	【新华社快讯】中国与吉尔吉斯斯坦、哈萨克斯坦联合提交的“丝绸之路：起始段和天山廊道的路网”22 日在第 38 届世界遗产大会上获准列入世界遗产名录。O“丝绸之路：起始段和天山廊道的路网”获准列入世遗名录	22/06/2014 16:06
112	【习近平：中阿双方决定把 2014 年和 2015 年定为中阿友好年】习近平 5 日宣布，中阿双方决定把 2014 年和 2015 年定为中阿友好年，并在这一框架内举行一系列友好交流活动。他说，中阿共建“一带一路”，应该依托并增进中阿传统友谊。民心相通是“一带一路”建设的重要内容，也是关键基础。O 网页链接	05/06/2014 14:05
113	【习近平：中阿共建“一带一路”应坚持共商、共建、共享原则】共商，就是集思广益，好事大家商量着办；共建，就是各施所长，各尽所能，把双方优势和潜能充分发挥出来，聚沙成塔，积水成渊，持之以恒加以推进。共享，就是让建设成果更多更公平惠及中阿人民，打造中阿利益共同体和命运共同体。网页链接	05/06/2014 13:48
114	【习近平：防止极端势力和思想在不同文明之间制造断层线】国家主席习近平 5 日表示，人类文明没有高低优劣之分，因为平等交流而变得丰富多彩，正所谓“五色交辉，相得益彰；八音合奏，终和且平”。中国和阿拉伯国家应一道努力，倡导文明宽容，防止极端势力和思想在不同文明之间制造断层线。网页链接	05/06/2014 13:07
115	【哈总统：非常支持中国“丝绸之路经济带”提议】“丝绸之路经济带”的提议非常好，我非常支持。两国之间的经济合作以及和其他中亚国家的合作，是由以前的丝绸之路所开启的。未来，丝绸之路将帮助我们更好地相互理解。O 网页链	20/05/2014 13:07

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116	【“蚝宅”处处见 簪花个个艳——走进“海丝”遗留的风景】 罍埔，背靠鹧鸪山，南临东海湾，“出则为海，退则为江”。宋元时期，这里曾是泉州海上丝绸之路的重要港口，远洋航船载着丝绸、茶叶、瓷器等货物运往世界各地。来到罍埔社区，处处可见的蚝壳厝、戴着簪花头饰的罍埔女……依然诉说着当年历史。	12/05/2014 14:17
117	【背景：郑州国际陆港】位于国家郑州经济技术开发区内，铁路港、公路港、空港、海港“四港一体”，定位为国家铁路一类口岸、多式联运服务中心、中欧班列货运中心、智慧物流信息中心，是郑州市打造丝绸之路经济带重要节点城市和中欧铁路物流核心载体。 via 新华视点	10/05/2014 19:24
118	#早安，中国# 【“海上丝绸之路”讲述中国往事】 肯尼亚东部印度洋沿岸是中国古代“海上丝绸之路”重要一环。据中国史书记载，郑和率船队七下西洋，访问了亚非 30 多个国家，远及麻林地（肯尼亚马林迪）和慢八撒（肯尼亚蒙巴萨港）。那里出土的 12 世纪以来中国古瓷及碎片，讲述着数百年中非贸易繁盛往事。	10/05/2014 08:51
119	【新华社启动“新丝路 新梦想”大型集成报道】新华社从 5 月 8 日开始推出“新丝路 新梦想”大型集成报道。“丝绸之路经济带”和“21 世纪海上丝绸之路”对促进国家发展、推动地区各国共同繁荣具有重要意义。 O 网页链接	09/05/2014 08:59
120	#早安，中国# 【张骞故里寻“丝路”】 参天古柏掩映之下，婆娑竹影摇曳之中，一对造型古朴的石虎相对而卧，守护着丝绸之路开拓者——张骞的陵墓。生活在 2100 多年前的张骞不会想到，自己作为汉武帝的使者，为寻找军事盟友两次走上西行之路，却无意间打开了中西交流的大门。新华社记者李明放摄	09/05/2014 08:39
121	【背景：丝绸之路明珠——喀什】喀什全称“喀什噶尔”，意为玉石集中的地方，自古享有“丝绸之路明珠”美誉。喀什地区面积 16.2 万平方公里，辖 1 市 11 县，总人口 422.8 万，有 47 个民族成份，其中维吾尔族占 91.62%。今年一季度地区生产总值 99.4 亿元，同比增长 15.6%。 via 新华视点	28/04/2014 22:45
122	【习近平参观德国杜伊斯堡港】国家主席习近平 29 日下午来到位于德国西部北威州的杜伊斯堡港参观，推动丝绸之路经济带建设。习近平表示，中方提出建设丝绸之路经济带倡议，秉承共同发展、共同繁荣的理念，联动亚欧两大市场，赋予古丝绸之路新的时代内涵，造福沿途各国人民。 O 网页链接	30/03/2014 06:56
123	#习主席出访# 【习近平：为本地区人民带来更多福祉】提高自贸区水平，2020 年贸易额达万亿美元；加强互联互通，倡导筹建亚洲基础设施投资银行；确定文化交流年；发展海洋合作伙伴关系，共建海上丝绸之路……组组数字、条条举措，习主席的演讲传递中国声音：携手共建中国-东盟命运共同体。 via @新国际 习主席出访 习主席于 22 日至 25 日对美国进行国事访问，并于 26 日至 28 日出席联合国成立 70 周年系列峰会。	03/10/2013 15:25
124	【习近平在印度尼西亚国会发表演讲】中国愿同东盟国家加强海上合作，使用好中国政府设立的中国—东盟海上合作基金，发展好海洋合作伙伴关系，共同建设 21 世纪“海上丝绸之路”。（据文字直播）	03/10/2013 11:56
125	#习主席出访# 【新时代 新丝路】习近平主席 1 1 日在会见吉尔吉斯斯坦议长叶延别科夫时说，中方愿同吉方紧密协作，沿着古丝绸之路建设新时代条件下的“丝绸之路经济带”，促进共同发展繁荣。叶延别科夫表示，愿以两国建立战略伙伴关系为契机，加快双方合作步伐，共建“丝绸之路经济带”。 via @新国际	12/09/2013 08:40
126	【习近平：愿同吉方共建“丝绸之路经济带”】习近平主席在会见吉尔吉斯斯坦议长叶延别科夫时说，中方愿同吉方紧密协作，沿古丝绸之路建设新时代条件下的“丝绸之路经济带”，促进共同发展繁荣。叶延别科夫表示，愿以两国建立战略伙伴关系为契机，加快双方合作步伐，共建“丝绸之路经济带”。 via @新国际	11/09/2013 21:11
127	#习主席出访# 【丝绸之路——起点&枢纽】中乌两国元首步入帖木儿家族历史博物馆。一幅地图引起习近平注意，卡里莫夫总统说，这是一幅古丝绸之路地图。撒马尔罕是帖木儿时期的首都，是古丝绸之路的枢纽，那里是我家乡。习近平指着地图右边一处地方说，那里是西安，丝绸之路起点，也是我故乡。 via @新国际	11/09/2013 09:08
128	#习主席出访# 【一针一线皆深情】国家主席习近平 8 日参观位于撒马尔罕市中心的列吉斯坦广场建筑群。这里曾是古丝绸之路上闻名遐迩的集市，一时商贾云集、文化交融。参观时，手工匠向习近平赠送他们耗时 8 个月特意织就的丝毯。习近平表示感谢：一针一线都体现出你们对中国人民的深情厚谊。 via @新国际 习主席出访 习主席于 22 日至 25 日对美国进行国事访问，并于 26 日至 28 日出席联合国成立 70 周年系列峰会。	11/09/2013 08:09
129	【习近平：仿佛行进在古丝绸之路上】撒马尔罕兀鲁伯纪念馆，中乌元首在古丝绸之路地图前驻足。撒马尔罕—西安，古丝绸之路将两国元首故乡相连。卡里莫夫总统说，今天我们并肩站在一起，两国人民心灵相通，撒马尔罕和西安不再遥远。习近平微笑颌首，我们穿越了时空，仿佛行进在古丝绸之路上。 via @新国际	10/09/2013 21:13
130	【习近平参观古丝路集市获赠丝毯 一针一线皆深情】习近平 8 日参观位于撒马尔罕市中心的列吉斯坦广场建筑群。这曾是古丝绸之路上闻名遐迩的集市，一时商贾云集、文化交融。参观时，手工匠向习近平赠送他们耗时 8 个月特意织就的丝毯。习近平表示感谢：一针一线都体现出你们对中国人民的深情厚谊。 via @新国际	10/09/2013 21:12
131	#习主席出访# 【高访日记：丝路遐思】车行在丝绸之路故道上，望着窗外一望无际的中亚草原、村舍牛群，一股豪情自心头油然而生。这是一片熟悉而陌生的土地。说熟悉，是因为中国史书不断提及这片土地。作为连接东西文明和商路的重要通道，历史上中亚这片土地金戈铁马不断，上演一代代的帝国兴衰。	10/09/2013 19:39
132	【习近平到访中亚最古老城市】撒马尔罕城静静屹立。帖木儿家族陵墓、列吉斯坦神学院、兀鲁伯天文台……鳞次栉	10/09/2013 19:31

	比的古迹无声诉说着曾经的壮丽。习主席在卡里莫夫总统陪同下走进古城，推开历史厚重的大门，看、听、思、问，古丝绸之路，留下中乌领导人推动不同文明对话的新足迹。 via 新国际	
133	【古丝绸之路上演故乡外交】习主席首访乌兹别克斯坦，卡里莫夫总统盛情邀请他到自己的故乡看一看：您是一位具有深厚历史感的大国领袖，熟悉中亚历史。习主席欣然接受：撒马尔罕具有悠久文化和历史，我的家乡陕西也是这样。中乌文明互鉴对话可以为两国战略伙伴关系发展夯实文化基础。 via 新国际	10/09/2013 19:29
134	#习主席出访#【复兴古丝绸之路】国家主席习近平7日在哈萨克斯坦纳扎尔巴耶夫大学发表重要演讲。俄中战略关系研究院副主任杰维亚托夫说，习近平演讲将中国与欧亚国家合作关系提升到新高度，建设“丝绸之路经济带”倡议将使沿途地区成为世界关注焦点。中亚地区与中国深化经济合作将复兴古丝绸之路。 via@新国际	10/09/2013 11:15
135	【文化古城塔什干一瞥】乌兹别克斯坦是一个有深厚文化底蕴的国家。首都塔什干是古“丝绸之路”上重要的商业枢纽之一，有文献记载的历史达1500多年。人口约250万，是乌政治、经济、文化和交通中心。按人口，塔什干是中亚最大、独联体内仅次于莫斯科、圣彼得堡和基辅的第4大城市。（沙达提摄） via@新国际	09/09/2013 15:57
136	#习主席出访#【完全正确的战略选择】习近平表示，中乌传统友谊源远流长。古老的丝绸之路早在两千多年前就将两国人民紧紧联结在一起。建交21年来，中乌关系全面快速发展。事实证明，中乌世代友好、互利合作是完全正确的战略选择。习近平8日抵达塔什干，开始对乌兹别克斯坦进行国事访问。 via@新国际	09/09/2013 09:13
137	【乌兹别克斯坦首都塔什干】乌兹别克斯坦首都塔什干是古“丝绸之路”上重要的商业枢纽之一，有文献记载的历史达1500多年。塔什干市区面积260平方公里，人口约250万，是乌政治、经济、文化和交通中心。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 22:05
138	【习近平抵达乌兹别克斯坦】古丝绸之路，传递友谊的脚步继续前行。8日，在结束对哈萨克斯坦的访问后，习主席一行飞抵此访第四站—乌兹别克斯坦。斜阳淡照、云淡风轻，习主席走下飞机，挥手致意。中国国家元首再次访乌将进一步增进互信、巩固友好、推进合作，谱写中国同中亚友好的新篇章。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 21:39
139	【习近平演讲故事系列之张骞出使西域】习近平7日在纳扎尔巴耶夫大学演讲时说，2100多年前，中国汉代的张骞肩负和平友好使命，两次出使中亚，开启了中国同中亚各国友好交往的大门，开辟出一条横贯东西、连接欧亚的丝绸之路。为促使欧亚各国经济联系更加紧密，他提出“丝绸之路经济带”的倡议。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 13:48
140	【21世纪新丝路】法国中国问题专家、巴黎第八大学地缘政治学博士皮埃尔·皮卡尔认为，习近平有关建设“丝绸之路经济带”的倡议十分新颖，这一倡议通过与欧亚国家建设21世纪的新丝绸之路，使古丝绸之路的经济和文化精神得以重新体现。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 13:37
141	【推动跨区域发展、合作和繁荣】印度资深战略分析家、陆军退役准将肖普拉说，习近平提出建设“丝绸之路经济带”的主张有重大意义，将推动跨区域发展、合作和繁荣。中国和印度在建设新丝绸之路方面有很大合作前景。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 11:41
142	【新层次】纳扎尔巴耶夫大学澳大利亚籍教师洛蕾塔·奥唐奈说，“丝绸之路经济带”是对古丝绸之路的全新发展，该理念旨在促进经贸繁荣，加深社会人文层面交流，尤其重视年轻人的交流。习近平在演讲中表示将邀请哈师生前往中国参加夏令营。这些举措目光长远，将把传统交往提升到一个新层次。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 10:26
143	【新高度】俄中战略关系研究院副主任安德烈·杰维亚托夫说，习近平的演讲将中国与欧亚国家的合作关系提升到新的高度，建设“丝绸之路经济带”的倡议将使沿途地区成为世界关注的焦点。中亚地区与中国深化经济合作将复兴古丝绸之路。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 09:51
144	#习主席出访#【习近平在纳扎尔巴耶夫大学演讲引好评】国家主席习近平7日在哈萨克斯坦纳扎尔巴耶夫大学发表重要演讲。海外人士纷纷表示，习近平在讲话中系统阐述了中国对中亚国家的睦邻友好合作政策，特别是他提出“丝绸之路经济带”的倡议，是一项造福沿途各国人民的大事业。 via@新国际	08/09/2013 08:49
145	#习主席出访#【习近平：共同建设“丝绸之路经济带”】声声驼铃、袅袅孤烟、心心相映、亲如手足……习近平主席在哈萨克斯坦纳扎尔巴耶夫大学的演讲，带着听众走进历史走向未来，深刻阐述“丝绸之路经济带”政策沟通、道路联通、贸易畅通、货币流通、民心相通。一幅中国同中亚友好合作的宏大画卷徐徐展开@新国际	07/09/2013 14:21
146	#习主席出访#【精彩言论】为了使欧亚各国经济联系更加紧密，相互合作更加深入，发展空间更加广阔，我们可以用创新的合作模式，共同建设“丝绸之路经济带”。这是一项造福沿途各国人民的大事业。——摘自习近平7日在纳扎尔巴耶夫大学发表的演讲。 via@新国际	07/09/2013 14:21
147	#习主席出访#【精彩言论】两千多年的交往历史证明，只要坚持团结互信、平等互利、包容互鉴、合作共赢，不同种族、不同信仰、不同文化背景的国家，完全可以共享和平，共同发展。这是古丝绸之路留给我们的宝贵启示。——摘自习近平7日在哈萨克斯坦纳扎尔巴耶夫大学的演讲。 via@新国际	07/09/2013 13:53
148	#习主席出访#【习近平抵达哈萨克斯坦】结束了二十国集团圣彼得堡峰会的密集日程，习主席一行从波罗的海畔启程，经过近4个小时的飞行，返回欧亚大陆的腹地，来到此访的第三站——哈萨克斯坦，从峰会外交转入双边外交。星空下，习主席走下舷梯，踏上了古丝绸之路的土地，续写中哈友谊新篇章。 via 新国际	07/09/2013 02:39
149	【“唐僧”埋骨寺院因拆迁之争欲退出申遗】西安兴教寺因不满寺院部分建筑将拆，提出退出丝绸之路中国段申遗。西	11/04/2013 23:00

	安官方称并非拆除整个兴教寺，将拆部分是后期新建的斋堂、僧舍等建筑，不属于文物。但寺院认为这些建筑拆除将影响寺院生活和宗教活动。双方表示将进一步沟通，尽量不影响申遗。（记者冯国）	
150	【兴教寺申请退出申遗】对埋有玄奘法师灵骨的西安兴教寺面临拆迁一事，今天下午兴教寺向西安提出退出“丝绸之路申遗”要求，书面报告递交西安长安区文物部门。同时，西安市申遗工作领导小组办公室发出声明，称“兴教寺的申遗工作将在充分尊重寺院意愿的情况下进行”。O 网页链接	11/04/2013 19:25
151	#早安 中国#塔克拉玛干沙漠,在维吾尔语里意为"走得进,出不来",浩瀚苍凉,连绵起伏的沙丘波澜壮阔。它是古丝绸之路南路必经之途,唐玄奘名之"沙则流漫,聚散随风"的大流沙。英国考古学家斯坦因称为死亡之海。和田附近湮没着"东方的庞贝" 汉-晋时期的精绝国都古城--尼雅遗址。这里也是我国石油资源的宝库。	06/03/2013 07:30

Appendix 6. Tweets from Xinhua's Account New China

Code	New China Tweets	Time
1	Cellular confinement systems, or geocells, are fighting desertification in Chinese city on #SilkRoad #XinhuaTV	04/01/2016
2	200+ sculptures made of 150,000 cubic m of snow are on display in NE #China, featuring #SilkRoad cultures #XinhuaTV	04/01/2016
3	China #BeltandRoad initiative not geopolitical tool, would not force anyone's hands: FM http://xhne.ws/xRA65?	29/12/2015
4	Yearender: #China builds more amicable, vibrant neighborhood with Belt and Road Initiative http://xhne.ws/dHozf?	28/12/2015
5	#BeltandRoad helps boost economic ties among China, Nepal and India: senior Nepali official http://xhne.ws/BuuRq?	23/12/2015
6	Follow us into Dunhuang, an ancient town along the Silk Road in northwest China's Gansu Province	17/12/2015
7	China's #BeltandRoad offers new opportunities to #ASEAN: Malaysian minister http://xhne.ws/FB1cf?	15/12/2015
8	#EBRD approves China membership application, a boost to #beltandroad initiative http://xhne.ws/MRj0F?	14/12/2015
9	China, United Arab Emirates pledge to boost cooperation within #BeltandRoad framework http://xhne.ws/rhfjs?	14/12/2015
10	China, central and eastern European countries sign memo to promote #BeltandRoad Initiative http://xhne.ws/rsLm4?	26/11/2015
11	#China in limelight: structural reform of military, scientific research, Belt and Road http://xhne.ws/6OM4I?	26/11/2015
12	China, ASEAN envision new prospects for cooperation under #BeltandRoad Initiative http://xhne.ws/jVIN4?	23/11/2015
13	Polish President: Poland could become logistics center for China's "Belt and Road" initiative	23/11/2015
14	#China's #BeltandRoad Initiative to give new impetus to world economic growth http://xhne.ws/gbMQA?	15/11/2015
15	New air route to link Xi'an & Rome, where ancient #SilkRoad starts and ends http://xhne.ws/732fd?	10/11/2015
16	China welcomes neighbors to join #BeltandRoad for common development http://xhne.ws/yEWO3?	07/11/2015
17	China beefs up maritime co-op with S Europe for 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road strategy http://xhne.ws/jhuBQ?	07/11/2015
18	China, Kazakhstan to form working group to promote construction of #SilkRoad Economic Belt http://xhne.ws/NIKOw?	06/11/2015
19	#China-proposed #BeltandRoad Initiative represents new way for advancing globalization http://xhne.ws/INEG6?	05/11/2015
20	Pieces of history! Untold story of legendary Silk Road recorded by thousand-year-old coins http://xhne.ws/mre8k?	03/11/2015
21	Impressive performances by Uygur artisans at a fair in ancient #SilkRoad town of Bachu, NW China's Xinjiang	01/11/2015
22	China's #BeltandRoad has been warmly received because it's mutually beneficial: economist http://xhne.ws/dX9Uh?	30/10/2015
23	#Europe's 2nd largest port eyes active role in China-proposed #Beltandroad initiative http://xhne.ws/q0nOR?	29/10/2015
24	#China, #Netherlands agree to boost cooperation in Belt and Road Initiative, AIIB http://xhne.ws/Mkhv0?	26/10/2015
25	#UK thrills world with moves to conjoin China's #beltandroad initiative with own development http://xhne.ws/coDLw?	24/10/2015
26	#BeltandRoad initiative helps #China become net capital exporter: @ThomsonReuters report http://xhne.ws/2B1rr?	22/10/2015
27	Op-Ed: #BeltandRoad will bring about 3 drastic changes to China and the world http://xhne.ws/4Wb8Z?	18/10/2015
28	Want to grow faster? Countries along route of #BeltandRoad initiative reaping early results http://xhne.ws/ySblr?	15/10/2015
29	How will China's #BeltandRoad initiative benefit the world? http://xhne.ws/gxtCc?	14/10/2015
30	Milan of Qarilik County in Xinjiang, preserves its history as an important town on the ancient "Silk Road"	14/10/2015
31	#SilkRoad initiative is China reaching out to countries of South to exchange ideas&commerce http://xhne.ws/dopub?	06/10/2015
32	How to "lock" moving sand dunes with trees is key to China's new Silk Road http://xhne.ws/o7BH2?	05/10/2015
33	#BREAKING: China welcomes US, other parties to join AIIB, land&maritime Silk Road initiative: #XiJinping @WhiteHouse	25/09/2015
34	Maritime #SilkRoad expected to give impetus to regional development as China-ASEAN expo opens http://xhne.ws/31Sj9?	18/09/2015
35	The 12th China-ASEAN Expo, #CAEXPO, featuring the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, kicked off in S China's Nanning	17/09/2015

36	Chinese, U.S. initiatives along #SilkRoad, not crash but chemical reaction generating merits http://xhne.ws/VljHh?	14/09/2015
37	Maritime Silk Road Society inaugurated in Hong Kong to explore development opportunities http://xhne.ws/9q0SY?	07/09/2015
38	#China's "Belt and Road" to boost #Dubai's role as trade hub: @DubaiEconomicCo official http://xhne.ws/gUdUG?	06/09/2015
39	Hong Kong SAR chief says #AIIB will further promote infrastructure construction of countries along #BeltandRoad	28/08/2015
40	Institutionalized platforms needed for Europe to better interact with "Belt and Road": expert http://xhne.ws/wthlp?	22/08/2015
41	Chinese fleet seeking to revive memory of ancient #silkroad greeted in Malta with water salute http://xhne.ws/V8ri9?	14/08/2015
42	#China woos private funds to build 1,000 camps for RVs, or campervans, along #SilkRoad, YangtzeRiver belt by 2020	10/08/2015
43	Conjoining #NewSuezCanal with China's #BeltandRoad initiatives benefits world http://xhne.ws/3sP75?	07/08/2015
44	FM Wang Yi says China is willing to align #BeltandRoad with ASEAN's development strategies http://xhne.ws/pGiGR?	05/08/2015
45	Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said #ASEAN Community will give impetus to China's "Belt and Road" initiative. https://amp.twimg.com/v/44501a76-6b00-4f89-84ed-f6e2aa8a774a?...	05/08/2015
46	More visitors go to #SilkRoad relics in W China province, fueling tourism-led growth http://xhne.ws/tnR6i?	03/08/2015
47	Belt and Road boosts #Muslim food exports in NW China http://xhne.ws/2wMpW?	01/08/2015
48	More China-made halal food is finding its way onto foreign tables due to growing trade #halal #BeltAndRoad https://amp.twimg.com/v/dc184b1f-6d7f-4ff4-a8bf-cd46af05dab6?...	28/07/2015
49	Officials, experts back China's #BeltandRoad initiative at Singapore Regional Business Forum http://xhne.ws/sV2N2?	27/07/2015
50	#BeltandRoad initiative brings win-win opportunities for China, Italy: officials http://xhne.ws/f44o5?	26/07/2015
51	Hong Kong, Singapore have much to contribute to #BeltandRoad and much to gain: HK official http://xhne.ws/WI86G?	24/07/2015
52	Modernization of #SilkRoad opens concrete possibilities of interaction between Italy,China: FM http://xhne.ws/3QuxY?	24/07/2015
53	Cultural diplomacy brings #China, Italy together on new Silk Road http://xhne.ws/hZ656?	23/07/2015
54	The 600-year-old Heshun ancient town in southwest China will take you to the ancient "South Silk?Road"	22/07/2015
55	China to push forward 6 int'l economic corridors along #BeltandRoad, promote long-term co-op http://xhne.ws/FfRCF?	21/07/2015
56	Want concrete benefit from #SilkRoad initiative? See Chinese customs report http://xhne.ws/C14PG? (file pic)	21/07/2015
57	Chinese companies ink 1,401 project contracts along #BeltandRoad in H1 http://xhne.ws/vjYSh?	20/07/2015
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111	China to give priority to port projects along "Belt and Road", opens up customs http://xhne.ws/iG4PB?	27/05/2015
112	#China's Silk Road crucial for Italian tourism: official @Expo2015Milano http://xhne.ws/mOW4C?	24/05/2015
113	6 Chinese provinces, 10 Italian major regions sign memorandum to promote #SilkRoad #tourism http://xhne.ws/vLZ9w?	23/05/2015
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127	U.S. scholars say China's #SilkRoad initiative "a great and historic endeavor" http://xhne.ws/taOIB?	04/04/2015
128	Belt and Road initiatives will bring huge benefits for Asia and rest of the world #Silkroad http://xhne.ws/EQ2xG?	31/03/2015
129	China unveiled action plan on Belt and Road Initiative on Sat. Here's full text: http://xhne.ws/6TVIe?	28/03/2015
130	China to provide 10,000 government scholarships to Belt-and-Road countries every year, an action plan says	27/03/2015
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137	China will focus on cooperation under 21st Century Maritime #SilkRoad, Silk Road Economic Belt http://xhne.ws/tCORH?	15/03/2015
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150	A woman with her child walk on a caravansary in Iranian city of Qazvin, an important station of the Silk Road	10/12/2014
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152	#China pledges 40 bln USD for Silk Road Fund	08/11/2014
153	Maritime Silk Road expo ends in S. China, deals worth US\$28.6 bln signed http://xhne.ws/Gwbrv?	02/11/2014
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160	Video: Egyptian merchant benefits from Silk Road http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDRTdA5qN0Y&feature=youtube_gdata?...	30/06/2014
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166	China's Xi urges joint efforts with Arab states to build silk road economic belt http://xhne.ws/MA32r?	05/06/2014
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173	Eurasian countries focus on silk road economy http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afA-LxuKJT8&feature=youtube_gdata?...	29/11/2013
174	#On the Silk Road# Insight--Experts investigate Silk Road's ancestors http://xhne.ws/OJpTx?	31/07/2013
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186	#On the Silk Road# Technology ensures efficient preservation of ancient relics along Silk Road	17/07/2013
187	Xinhua launched a campaign to raise public awareness of preserving Silk Road heritage. http://xhne.ws/Qlc2x?	04/07/2013
188	Oldest beacon on silk road well-preserved http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykzwYBtw_Mk&feature=youtube_gdata?...	06/12/2012
189	Silk Road revival will bring prosperity, stability. http://t.cn/zWdgYIJ? (Photo by Chen Jianli)	04/09/2012

Summary

This research project asks: what is the relationship between social media messaging and media policy in China? Under the current media regulations made by the government, what role does social media play in Chinese external and internal communication, specifically in the case of China's official news agency Xinhua? My project intends to find the answer by studying the interplay between Weibo, Twitter, and the Chinese state-owned media outlet Xinhua News Agency, an active actor on both platforms.

Xinhua, under the supervision of the Chinese central government, is a major official news outlet in mainland China. However, its openness to free flows of information has not been keeping up with the country's fast economic growth after the opening-up policy in the 1980s. The acceleration of global communications by social media has given rise to a major transition in China's external communication strategies. To cultivate a national image, the Chinese government has embraced various digital-media-led communicative strategies, and has established, revised, and adjusted a series of media regulations. These encourage traditional mass media outlets, like Xinhua, to utilize social media platforms such as Weibo and Twitter under the central government's guidance, while also aiming to preserve their leading roles in both internal and external communication. This study explores the interplay between digital media and the government's policymaking under the current leadership. By tying the research concerns of China's political communication and the empirical case of Xinhua's digitalization to broader conceptual issues, the study provides a prism through which the intrinsic relations of the government's communicative strategies and media convergence can be seen.

To find out how a mass media outlet as Xinhua integrates digital platforms into its reporting within the overarching regulatory system, I collected and studied the legal and policy documents from the central government's websites and Xinhua's official website in the first phase of my research. I also conducted a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with media practitioners, scholars, and policymakers during my fieldwork. The comparison between these policy papers and the interviews highlights the relations between policymaking and media changes. This phase of the research is to disentangle the political context of Chinese media production towards domestic and international audiences.

Audiences often treat social media platforms as actual forums for a more responsive discourse. However, whether this perceived role as open forum is recognized and utilized by the other end remains to be seen, and what the impact is on the government's media policy, is worth evaluating in its own right. In the second phase of my research, through digital tools, I first carried out a broad analysis of the public discourse of the Belt and Road Initiative on Weibo and Twitter. Having conducted the analysis on the performances of active players, I then adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyse in particular Xinhua's performance through its accounts on Weibo and Twitter. This study shows that even though Xinhua has vigorously expanded on social media messaging and has a large number of Weibo and Twitter followers, the comments, reports, and retweets are still far from interactive.

As an important part of Chinese diplomacy, the BRI shows that the Chinese government is calling for a greater role in international relations on the one hand; on the other, its establishment has caused contentions from within and outside China. My research explores how Xinhua has taken on this diplomatic task through a case study of China's current diplomacy on the BRI. To examine the Chinese state media's handling of the case, I conduct a discourse analysis of how Xinhua promotes the BRI on its Weibo and Twitter accounts. This analysis examines whether Xinhua adopts different communicative strategies on Weibo and Twitter, how Xinhua conceptualizes news values on social media platforms, and whether social media messaging differs from Xinhua's traditional way of communication. The study shows that, despite recent efforts to use social media to provide quicker and more transparent coverage, there is still space to improve the system itself. On Weibo and Twitter, the news agency's editorial choices show that maintaining China's "face" is often contradictory with the country's efforts of showing its openness. Adopting a policy of merely maintaining a positive image to the outside world can mislead both domestic and international audiences. Xinhua's performance thus demonstrates the challenges that China faces in its internal and external communication endeavour in the transforming period led by digital media.

My research draws attention to the importance of the discourse of political communication under the impact of digital media. China, with its transitional mass media system of the reform period, is turning into a highly mediated society. This study aims to open up avenues of future research into the performance of other news organizations on digital media platforms. My project aims to expand our understanding of how ICTs influence China's official news agency, Xinhua, in terms of the government's communicative strategy, and aims to develop theories as well as research methods that contribute to contemporary Chinese media studies. Based on the results, this dissertation ends with implications of the ICTs' influences on the state media outlets, suggesting that at this stage, the technological innovation alone cannot be seen as a reliable incentive for social change as China continues its opening-up policy.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoeksproject vraagt: wat is de relatie tussen berichten op social media en het mediabeleid in China? Welke rol spelen social media in communicatie binnen en buiten China met de huidige mediawetgeving, specifiek in het geval van China's officiële persbureau, Xinhua? Dit project beoogt het antwoord op deze vragen te vinden door de interacties te bestuderen tussen Weibo, Twitter en het Chinese nationale persbureau Xinhua, een actieve deelnemer aan beide platforms.

Xinhua is een groot officieel persbureau in China onder toezicht van de centrale Chinese overheid. Echter, de openheid van Xinhua ten aanzien van informatie-uitwisseling houdt de snelgroeïende economie van het land niet bij sinds het hervormings- en openingsbeleid van de jaren 80. De toename in globale communicatie door middel van social media heeft een noemenswaardige transitie teweeggebracht in China's externe-communicatiestrategieën. Om een nationaal imago te cultiveren, heeft de Chinese overheid verschillende communicatieve strategieën waarin digitale media leidend zijn, omarmd en diverse mediarijchlijnen opgezet, verfijnd en aangepast. Deze moedigen traditionele massamedia-organisaties, zoals Xinhua, aan om social-media-platforms zoals Weibo en Twitter te gaan gebruiken onder toezicht van de centrale overheid, en daarbij te streven naar een *status quo* waarin ze hun huidige leidende rol in zowel interne als externe communicatie handhaven. Deze studie onderzoekt de wisselwerking tussen digitale media en de beleidsvorming van de overheid onder het huidige bewind. Door de onderzoeksdoelen naar China's politieke communicatie en een empirische *case study* van Xinhua's verschuiving naar digitale media te verbinden met bredere, conceptuele kwesties, zet dit onderzoek de intrinsieke verbindingen tussen de communicatiestrategieën van de overheid en de convergentie van media helder uiteen.

Om te achterhalen hoe een massamedia-organisatie zoals Xinhua digitale platforms integreert in haar verslaggeving, zodat het in het overkoepelende systeem van regulering past, heb ik in de eerste fase van mijn onderzoek de wettelijke- en beleidsdocumenten van zowel de websites van de centrale overheid als van Xinhua's officiële website verzameld en bestudeerd. Daarnaast heb ik een serie kwalitatieve semi-gestructureerde interviews gehouden met mediaspecialisten, academici en beleidsmakers tijdens mijn veldwerk. De vergelijking tussen deze beleidsdocumenten en de interviews laten de verbanden tussen beleidsvorming en veranderingen in media zien. Deze fase van het onderzoek is bedoeld om de politieke context van Chinese mediaproductie gericht aan een nationaal en internationaal publiek te ontrafelen.

Het publiek behandelt social-mediaplatforms vaak als daadwerkelijke forums met een meer wederkerig discours. Of de andere kant (in dit geval, de Chinese media) zo'n rol als open forum zal erkennen en gebruiken, moet echter nog blijken. Daarnaast is het de moeite waard om te evalueren wat de impact hiervan is op het mediabeleid van de overheid. In de tweede fase van mijn onderzoek heb ik, met behulp van digitale hulpmiddelen, een uitgebreide analyse van het publieke discours van het *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI, "Gordel- en Weginitiatief": de Nieuwe Zijderoute) op Weibo en Twitter uitgevoerd. Na een analyse van het gedrag van de meest actieve deelnemers, heb ik gebruikgemaakt van kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve onderzoeksmethodes om de activiteiten van Xinhua in het bijzonder te analyseren op deze platformen. Deze studie demonstreert dat, ondanks de drastische expansie

van Xinhua op social media en het hoge aantal volgers op Weibo en Twitter, de berichten, rapportages en retweets nog verre van interactief zijn.

Als belangrijk onderdeel van de Chinese diplomatie toont het BRI aan de ene kant dat de Chinese overheid haar rol in de internationale verhoudingen wilt opschalen; aan de andere kant heeft de oprichting ervan zowel binnen China als erbuiten controversies teweeggebracht. Mijn onderzoek verkent hoe Xinhua deze diplomatieke taak op zich heeft genomen door middel van een case study van China's huidige beleid omtrent het BRI. Om te onderzoeken hoe Xinhua als officieel Chinees nieuwsorgaan met deze situatie omgaat, voer ik een discoursanalyse uit op hoe Xinhua het BRI op Weibo en Twitter promoot. Deze analyse onderzoekt of Xinhua verschillende communicatiestrategieën toepast op Twitter en Weibo, hoe Xinhua nieuwswaarde conceptualiseert op deze platforms en of deze vorm afwijkt van haar traditionele manier van communiceren. Deze studie toont dat, ondanks recente inspanningen om social media te benutten om sneller en meer transparante berichtgeving te garanderen, er nog steeds ruimte is voor verbetering. Op Weibo en Twitter tonen de redactionele keuzes van Xinhua dat het gezichtsbehoud van China vaak tegenstrijdig is met de pogingen van het land om zich als "open" te presenteren. Het slechts in stand houden van een positief imago naar de rest van de wereld toe kan zowel het nationale als het internationale publiek misleiden. Het optreden van Xinhua laat zo de uitdagingen zien waar China voor staat in haar interne en externe communicatie-inspanningen, gedurende deze periode van verandering waarin digitale media leidend zijn.

Mijn onderzoek vestigt de aandacht op het belang van het discours van politieke communicatie onder invloed van digitale media. Deze studie beoogt het openen van nieuwe wegen voor toekomstig onderzoek naar hoe andere nieuwsorganisaties zich gedragen op digitale mediaplatforms. Mijn project tracht inzicht te verkrijgen in hoe ICT China's officiële persbureau, Xinhua, beïnvloedt met betrekking tot de communicatiestrategie van de Chinese overheid. Het richt zich verder op het ontwikkelen van diverse theorieën en onderzoeksmethodes die bijdragen aan de studie van hedendaagse Chinese media. Op basis van de verkregen resultaten eindigt dit proefschrift met het benoemen van implicaties van de invloed van ICT op de officiële persbureaus, en laat zien dat het hoogst aannemelijk is dat in deze fase technologische innovaties op zich niet gezien kunnen worden als betrouwbare stimulans voor maatschappelijke veranderingen tijdens de voortzetting van China's hervormings- en openingsbeleid.

*Vertaald door:
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Curriculum Vitae

Yuxi Nie was born on 13 December 1987 in Xianyang, China. She received her upper secondary school diploma from Xi'an Hangtian High School in 2006. In 2010, she obtained her bachelor's degree in English Literature at Xi'an International Studies University (XISU). She received a master's degree in International Television Journalism at Nottingham Trent University in 2011. From 2012 to 2014, she worked as a teaching assistant in the School of Arts at XISU.

Starting from October 2014, Yuxi was registered as a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Area Studies of Leiden University (LIAS), under the supervision of Prof. dr. Stefan Landsberger and Dr. Florian Schneider. From July 2016 to January 2017, she worked as a research assistant for an ERC-funded project with Prof. dr. Daniela Stockmann in the Institute of Political Science of Leiden University. She also worked as a lecturer in LIAS from February to August 2019. Yuxi currently works as a lecturer in communication studies at Fontys University of Applied Sciences.



Microblogging and Media Policy in China
Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

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