Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Nie, Y.

Citation
Nie, Y. (2019, October 15). *Microblogging and Media Policy in China: Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/79516

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/79516

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/79516 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Nie, Y.
Title: Microblogging and Media Policy in China: Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative
Issue Date: 2019-10-15

Microblogging and Media Policy in China

Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

© Yuxi Nie 2019

Cover design by Yuxi Nie
Printed by UFB

Microblogging and Media Policy in China

Xinhua's Strategic Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

PROEFSCHRIFT

TER VERKRIJGING VAN
DE GRAAD VAN DOCTOR AAN DE UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN,
OP GEZAG VAN RECTOR MAGNIFICUS PROF.MR. C.J.J.M. STOLKER,
VOLGENS BESLUIT VAN HET COLLEGE VOOR PROMOTIES TE
VERDEDIGEN OP DINSDAG 15 OKTOBER 2019
KLOKKE 16.15 UUR

DOOR

YUXI NIE

GEBOREN TE XIANYANG, CHINA
IN 1987

Promotor:
Prof. Dr. S.R. Landsberger

Co-Promotor:
Dr. F.A. Schneider

Promotiecommissie:

Prof. Dr. R.P.E. Sybesma	
Prof. Dr. X. Li	Aalborg University Denmark
Prof. Dr. E. Peeren	Universiteit van Amsterdam

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... *iii*

List of Tables ..... *iv*

List of Figures ..... *vi*

List of Images ..... *vi*

Note on Conventions ..... *vii*

Glossary ..... *viii*

Chapter One A New Phase of China's Communication.....9

1.1 Introduction.....9
1.2 Controversy in China's Belt and Road Initiative.....20
1.3 Research Questions and Aims.....25
1.4 Structure of This Dissertation.....25

Chapter Two Concepts and Relations on Media, Discourse and Power.....29

2.1 Power and Discourse.....29
2.2 Communication Power in the Chinese Context.....33
2.3 The Notion of Soft Power.....41
2.4 Internal and External Communication.....45
2.5 Conclusion.....50

Chapter Three Methodology.....51

3.1 Policy Analysis.....51
3.2 Interview and Access.....54
3.3 Case Study of the Belt and Road Initiative.....56
3.4 Incorporating Digital Methods.....57
3.5 Discourse Analysis.....60
3.6 Conclusion.....71

Chapter Four Policy Reviews and Fieldwork.....72

4.1 Policy Reviews.....72
4.2 Qualitative Interviews.....82
4.3 Conclusion.....99

Chapter Five Online Players in the Belt and Road Discourse……..101

5.1 Analysis through Founder……....102
5.2 Analysis through Python……..…111
5.3 Conclusion……125

Chapter Six Quantitative Outlook……...127

6.1 Categorization……..128
6.2 Keywords Frequency……...143
6.3 Conclusion……148

Chapter Seven Qualitative Analysis……...…..150

7.1 Linguistic Features……...150
7.2 Analysis of Rhetorical Devices……170
7.3 Conclusion……192

Chapter Eight Conclusion……194

8.1 Introduction……..194
8.2 Summary of the Main Findings……195
8.3 Discussion of the Findings……...…198
8.4 Strengths and Limitations…….204
8.5 Conclusion……...…….207

References……..208

Appendices……..……235

Acknowledgements

This study has enriched my life by bringing in numerous challenges and rewards. Many wonderful individuals have contributed to this research over the past years. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me during this journey towards a PhD. My supervisors kindly offered me generous guidance and personal encouragement from the beginning to the end. I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof. dr. Stefan Landsberger, for his constructive critique and substantive support that helped me to improve my work and to steer through the critical moments. I would like to thank my co-supervisor, Dr. Florian Schneider, for sharing his extensive knowledge on methodology and providing me with invaluable comments on the fieldwork and writing. Their relentless advice has made this dissertation possible. I thank them both for having faith in me. I am also grateful to the Doctorate Committee, Prof. dr. Rint Sybesma, Prof. dr. Xing Li and Prof. dr. Esther Peeren for their very helpful comments that helped me to produce this final version.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and enthusiasm from many anonymous people who supported and facilitated my fieldwork. I wish to express how grateful I am to have met and learned from each of them. I was also very fortunate to have worked with Prof. dr. Daniela Stockmann, Dr. Ting Luo and Dr. Zheng Li in the ERC project "Authorianism 2.0" as a young researcher, through which I enhanced my research and administrative skills. It has been my honour to be part of the team.

My thanks go to the LIAS& LUCSoR PhD council for the joyful moments we shared together. Even though some of the members have already graduated from Leiden, our friendship will stay. My thanks go to Christopher Green, Nicholas Kontovas, Elly Mulder, Renata Schiavo, Maarja Seire, Maaike de Vries, Didem Yerli, Tijmen Baarda and Arianna Sacco. I should extend my gratitude to Dr. Dileepa Witharana, Dr. Shengfa Miao, Dr. Elena Burgos Martinez, Dr. Saeedeh Shahnepur, Dr. Thomas Mes, Dr. Surya Suryadi, Aleksandra Chmiel, Shuqi Jia, Hyojin Park, Alessandra Jonkhout, Olivia Dung, Agnieszka Kazimierczuk, Claudia-Corina Giese, Zexu Guan, Nikki Sterkenburg and Marieke Visser, who have tremendously encouraged me during the many inspiring academic discussions and debates. They have made my PhD journey in Leiden enjoyable and stimulating. I thank Johannes Eijsermans for revising the English language of this manuscript. All the remaining shortcomings are my own.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my adoptive family members and my mentors, Dr. Lewis M. Holmes and Dr. Madelyn Holmes. In the last twelve years, they have consistently inspired me to discover more of the world and guided me through life. They have introduced me to American literature and their own interdisciplinary scholarly works, and inspired me in my academic pursuit.

I am deeply indebted to my dearest parents, Prof. dr. NIE Jun 聂军 and Mrs. LI Mingli 李明莉, who have always had my back and have been such amazing role models in my life. They are my very first teachers who introduced me to intellectual articulation over dinner tables. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. I am also immensely grateful to my grandmother WANG Yuling 王玉玲 and grandfather NIE Liangwu 聂良武, who loved and cared for me, and taught me to always keep my backbones straight and to never give up. At the end, I would like to express my gratitude to my beloved husband, friend and partner in crime, Vincent Overdevest, for his understanding and support through the ups and downs of this journey.

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Documents on foreign policy

Table 4.2 Documents on media policies

Table 4.3 Documents on cyber security

Table 4.4 Documents on E-governance

Table 4.5 Documents on the Belt and Road Initiative

Table 4.6 Respondents in three groups

Table 5.1 Most active accounts in group 1

Table 5.2 Most active accounts in group 2

Table 5.3 Individual leading accounts on Weibo

Table 5.4 Actors on Twitter in categories

Table 5.5 Sentiments of the words related to places

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

Table 5.7 Sentiments of the keywords

Table 6.1 Categorization according to topic

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

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

Table 6.4 Categorization according to period

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

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

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

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

Table 6.9 Categorization according to geopolitical regions

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

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

Table 7.2 Examples of "cooperation" in tweets, with context

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

Table 7.4 Examples of "economy" in tweets, with context

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

Table 7.6 Examples of "new" in tweets, with context

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

Table 7.8 Examples of "development" in tweets, with context

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

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

Table 7.11 Examples of “boost” in tweets, with context

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

Table 7.13 Examples of “习近平” (Xi Jinping) and “主席” (*zhuxi*, chairman) in Weibo posts, with context

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

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

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

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

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

Table 7.19 Tweets that downplay the word “strategy”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 7.30 Examples of metaphors on Weibo

Table 7.31 Examples of symbolism on Weibo

Table 7.32 Examples of personifications on Weibo

Table 7.33 Examples of parallelisms on Weibo

Table 7.34 Examples of metaphors on Twitter

Table 7.35 Examples of personifications on Twitter

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

List of Figures

Figure 4.1. Hierarchical relations of the Chinese governmental departments

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

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

Figure 5.5 Message distribution in group 1

Figure 5.6 Message distribution in group 2

Figure 5.7 Sentiment analysis on group 1

Figure 5.8 Sentiment analysis on group 2

Figure 5.9 Word Cloud

Figure 6.0 Result of sentiment analysis of the tweets

Figure 6.1 Message distribution according to a timeline

Figure 6.2 Message distribution according to geopolitical regions

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

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

Figure 7.3: Visualizing culture and heritage from Xinhua net on Weibo

Figure 7.4: Visualizing culture and heritage from New China on Twitter

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

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

Figure 7.7: Infographics from Xinhua net on Weibo

Figure 7.8: Infographics from New China on Twitter

List of Images

Image 3.1 Analysing the English text in Yoshikoder

Image 3.2 Analysing the Chinese text in Yoshikoder

Image 3.3 Analysing the Chinese text in CNCorpus.org

Note on Conventions

1. I use Pinyin (all italics, unless otherwise stated) and simplified Chinese when introducing Chinese terms and phrases; I translate or explaine 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