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

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Cover Page



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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	新	图景为政府间合作提供了
	new picture for interconnection construction		
7	图景为政府间合作提供了	新	动力为产业发展创造了新
	new impetus for intergovernmental cooperation		
7	新动力为产业发展创造了	新	机遇也为中越和中新经贸
	new opportunities for industrial development		
10	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
	new prospects between China and Singapore in political relations, to deepen pragmatic cooperation		
10	深化务实合作和人文交流提供	新	动力习主席访新将为中
	new impetus to deepen pragmatic cooperation and cultural exchanges, Xi's visit in Singapore		

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

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	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” (*zhengcheng 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, zhengcheng 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	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，
	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,”
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”。
	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.

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):



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:



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:



Image 1 cultural exchange at 21st Century Maritime Silk Road International Expo Retrieved on May 20 2015



Image 2 Xunpu local culture in Quanzhou Retrieved on May 12 2014



Image 3 cultural exchange at the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road International Expo Retrieved on May 20 2015

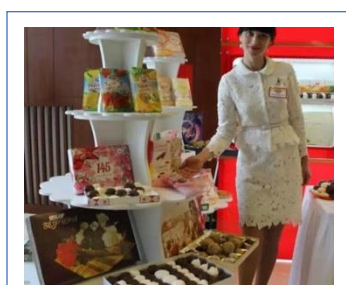


Image 4 Cultural Event for improving relations between China and Belarus Retrieved on May 12, 2015



Image 5 Big Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an Retrieved on Jul 5 2014

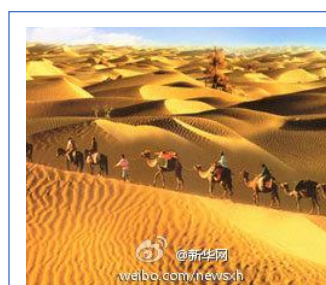


Image 6 Silk Road enlisted in World Cultural Heritage Retrieved on Jun 22 2014

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:

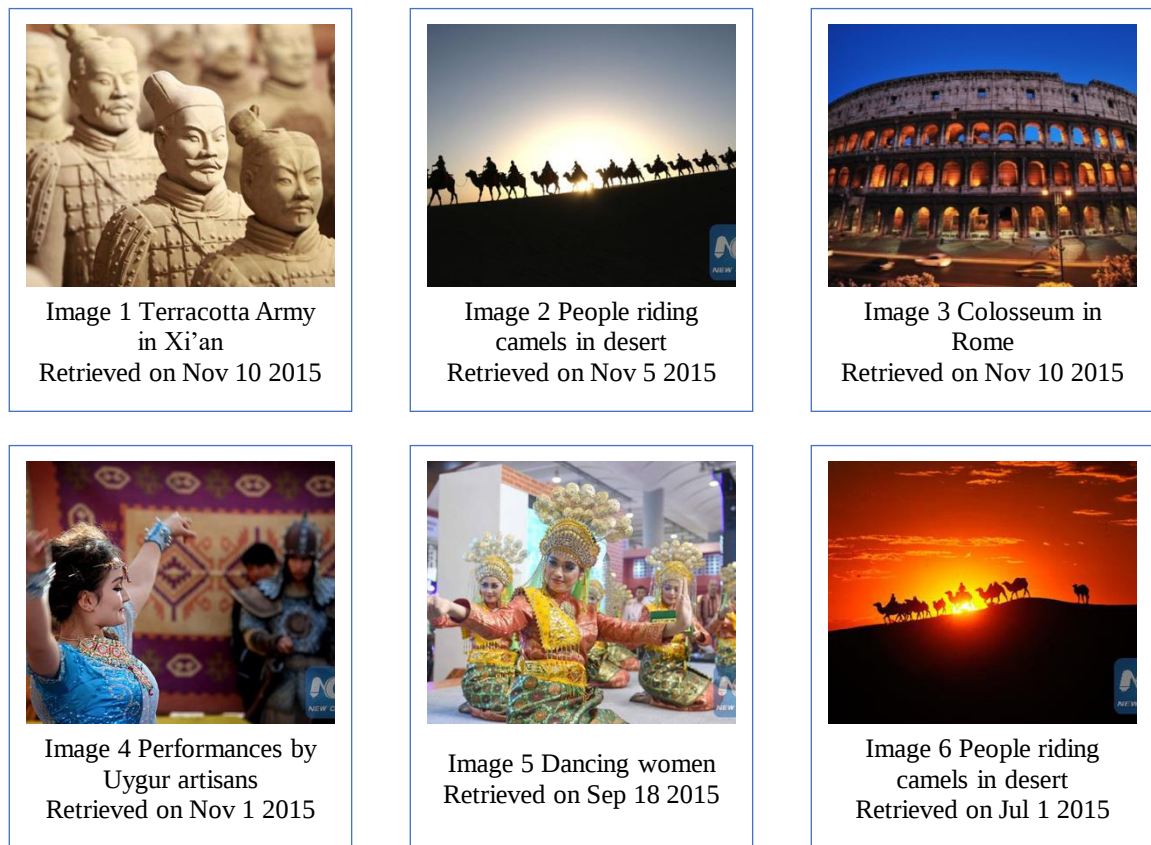


Figure 7.4: Visualizing Culture and Heritage from New China on Twitter

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:

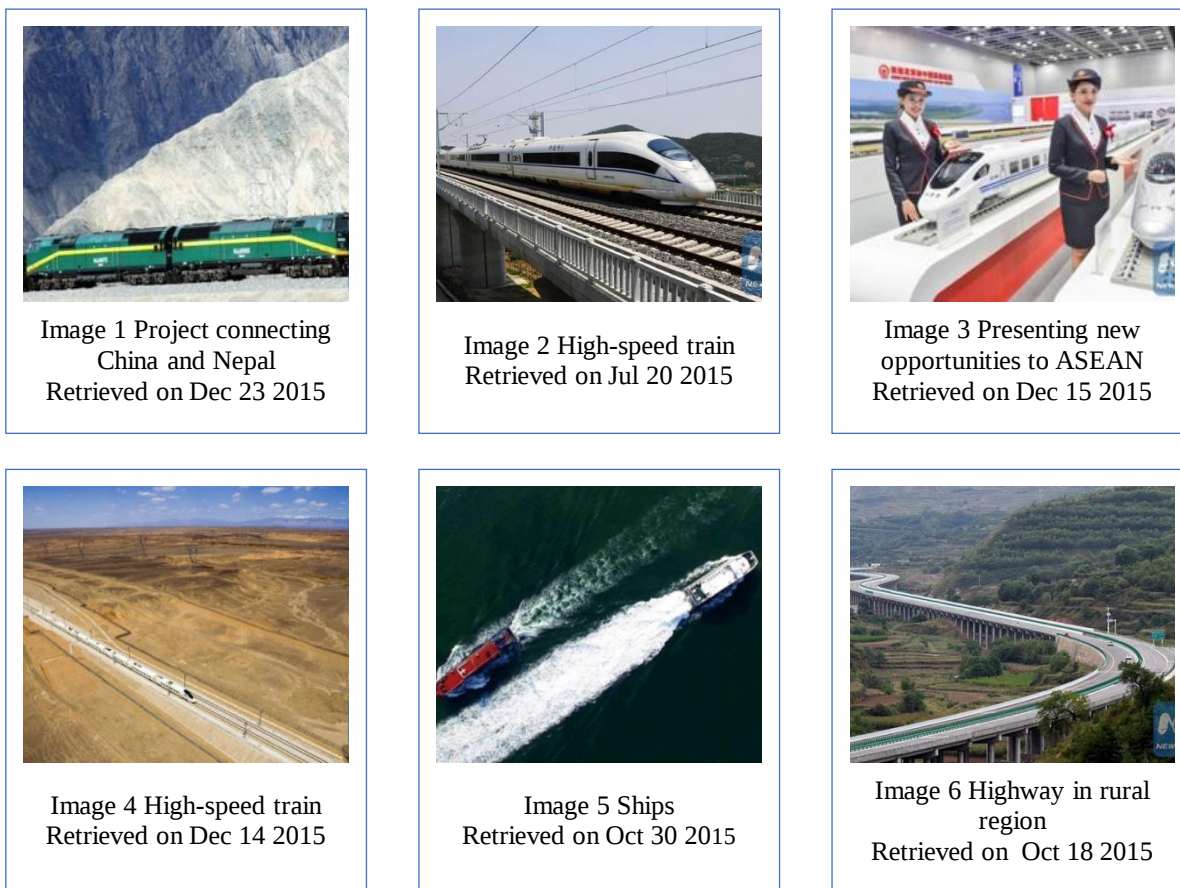


Figure 7.6: Visualizing the Belt and Road projects from New China on Twitter

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):

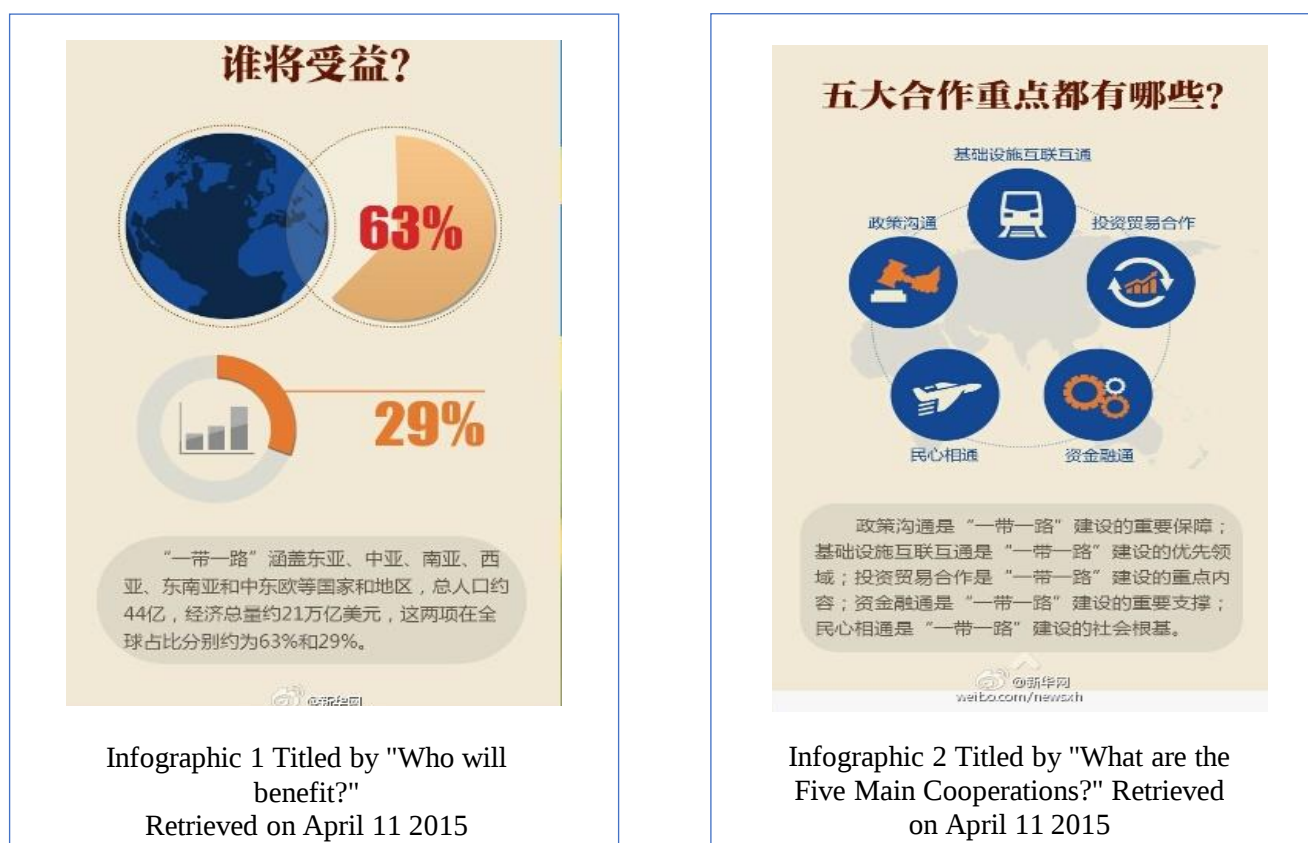


Figure 7.7: Infographics from Xinhua net on Weibo

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:

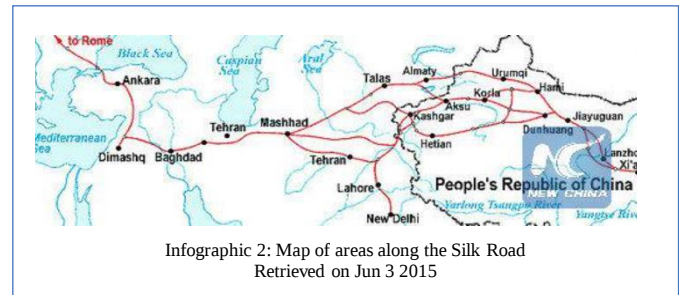


Figure 7.8: Infographics from New China on Twitter

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.