

# Under the background of “Belt and Road”, Research on the Construction of Chinese Image by Dawn, Times of India and The Himalayan Times

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**Abstract:** This study found the focus of the three newspapers' coverage has been shifting from “interpreting” to “planning” and “progress” about the initiative, with the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC) becoming the focus of attention. Furthermore, in the construction of China's image, it is shown as the beautification of the economic image, “absence” of cultural image and demonization of political image in different degrees.

**Keywords:** The Belt and Road Initiative, Newspaper reports, Corpus analysis, Critical discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

“Image” is a collection of psychological characteristics projected on others by subjective individuals according to their own beliefs, values and expectations,<sup>[1]</sup> which is mainly composed of thoughts, emotions and tendencies. Cohen once pointed out that most of us get the impression of our country and society from the media.<sup>[2]</sup> Mass media can promote people's understanding of each other's countries or lead to misunderstanding.<sup>[3]</sup> From the media perspective, the national image can be defined as the expression of the positive or negative image of a country under the background of history, politics, economy, military, diplomacy and religion.<sup>[4]</sup> In short, the media conveys ideology through phrases, quotations, metaphors, rhetoric, collocation, context and other discourse structures, and plays an important role in shaping and constructing the national image.

The “Belt and Road” has become one of the important endorsements of Chinese national brand, this paper takes Times of India, Dawn and The Himalayan Times as research objects, using the knowledge base tools and framework analysis to explore the characteristics in the construction of its ‘Belt and Road’ discourse.

## 2. The Results of Research and Data Analysis

### 2.1 Data collection

In this paper, based on The Lexis than news database, in order to “The Belt and Road” for retrieving full-text retrieval, extracted from March 1, 2014 to July 31, 2019, built three small diachronic corpus, a total of 386 news text.

Dawn had the highest number of stories (236), followed by Times of India (99) and the Himalayan Times (51). In this study, the subject of news text is second-level coding, and word frequency statistics are carried out through the AntConc corporal analysis tool, which helps to master the discourse characteristics of the text. The results are shown in Figer 1.

| serial number | Frequency | Word                             | Frequency | Word                               | Frequency | Word                               |
|---------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| 1             | 1498      | China                            | 771       | China                              | 350       | China                              |
| 2             | 1450      | Pakistan                         | 717       | India                              | 248       | Chinese                            |
| 3             | 1126      | China-Pakistan Economic Corridor | 381       | Pakistan                           | 223       | Pakistan                           |
| 4             | 1036      | Project                          | 327       | Chinese                            | 192       | Road                               |
| 5             | 841       | Chinese                          | 279       | China-Pakistan Economic Corridor   | 170       | Project                            |
| 6             | 630       | Economic                         | 268       | Project                            | 150       | Nepal                              |
| 7             | 571       | Road                             | 227       | Road                               | 110       | Zone                               |
| 8             | 488       | Government                       | 218       | Economic                           | 100       | Country                            |
| 9             | 424       | Minister                         | 193       | Country                            | 99        | Minister                           |
| 10            | 404       | One                              | 172       | One                                | 99        | One                                |
| 11            | 392       | Development/Develop              | 150       | New                                | 94        | Beijing                            |
| 12            | 352       | Country                          | 136       | India                              | 88        | New                                |
| 13            | 344       | New                              | 134       | 'One Belt And One Road' initiative | 86        | Economic                           |
| 14            | 340       | Trade                            | 131       | Zone                               | 82        | Silk                               |
| 15            | 322       | Silk                             | 123       | Development/Develop                | 81        | 'One Belt And One Road' initiative |
| 16            | 290       | India                            | 112       | Silk                               | 81        | China-Pakistan Economic Corridor   |
| 17            | 267       | Zone                             | 111       | Corridor                           | 78        | Initiative                         |
| 18            | 260       | Corridor                         | 107       | Government                         | 74        | Government                         |
| 19            | 244       | Cooperation                      | 104       | Asia                               | 71        | Trade                              |
| 20            | 240       | Initiative                       | 101       | Cooperation                        | 66        | India                              |

*Figure 1. High-frequency word list*

## **2.2 Focus: Pakistan is the focus of attention.**

Times of India and The Himalayan Times covered the subject of "Belt and Road" and Pakistan, paying particular attention to the problems and challenges facing Pakistan in the construction of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. The "Belt and Road" Initiative is too large, unfair planning, environmental damage, controversial names, violations of national sovereignty and so on. In the keyword table, Pakistan is at the forefront, thus it can be seen that the development of the "Belt and Road" in Pakistan has become an important example for South Asian countries to refer to.

## **2.3 The difference between the construction of Chinese image discourse**

Dawn through the friend intimate, closer, safe and other words to build China as a close neighbor and Pakistan mutually beneficial friend image, negative words only hurt, referring to Chinese "Belt and Road" may harm the interests of Pakistani enterprises, the least contradictory; Words such as progress,

major, etc. acknowledge Chinese development potential and desire to cooperate with it, on the one hand applying unfair, problem, secret, worry, unilateral. Expressed his great concern and doubts about whether Chinese rise would threaten India, criticized the fairness and rationality of the Belt and Road Initiative, and, even under strong suspicion and prejudice, adopted words such as hope, openness, kneel. Describes a "passionate" image of China eager to work with India; the Himalayan Times's positive assessment of China is more like a compromise between dawn and the Times of India, but the actual contradiction is the strongest, through control. Words such as dominant, imperial and other words with strong ideological prejudices present a fear of China, thus building China closer to an innate image of power.

### 3. Conclusions and Discussions

China's image has experienced eight historical changes, from "brilliant mystery" in the early Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties to "rising" but anxious modern image. <sup>[5]</sup>In 2005, the Chinese government clearly put forward the identity appeal and positioning of "a responsible big country".<sup>[6]</sup>China's image has always been consistent with the development of the times in the pluralistic changes, but the "China threat theory" has always been a sword of Damocles hanging in the air of China's image, and "human rights issues" and "social issues" have always been the focus of attention in western society. In this study, we can still see the discourse expressions of constructing "negative China", such as "persecution of human rights in China", "neo-colonialism" and "Chinese hegemonism".

#### 3.1 *The beautification of "economic image" and the distortion of "political image"*.

The Chinese image constructed by the three newspapers presents the characteristics of "economic image" beautification and "political image" distortion. Among them, The Dawn and the Himalayan Times mainly show the beautification of the economic image, defining China as an important "partner" that cannot be missing in the economic development of other countries. Among them, The Dawn uses words such as friend, partnership, generous to build China into a friendly and generous economic power, and because of the high degree of agreement between the interests of China and Pakistan, the negative construction of the Dawn newspaper is lower than that of the Himalayan Times. Although the Times of India has affirmed Chinese economic influence to some extent, it is more keen to distort its political image, promote "neocolonialism", construct China as a "hegemony" image that uses economic advantages and military deterrence to interfere with the sovereignty of other countries, interpret Chinese investment in Pakistan as a means to achieve ideological hegemony, and argue that the promotion of the Belt and Road has further reduced Pakistan to Chinese "colonies".

#### 3.2 *Building Chinese image through the "Eye of the West"*.

All three newspapers have covered The Xinjiang issue in China, thereby constructing an image of a Chinese government that despises human rights and persecutes religious believers (had serious concern about Chinese government's violation of human rights in Xinjiang). This is in line with the public opinion in recent years that the Western media has turned Xinjiang's anti-extremist treatment into an act of persecution against Muslims. <sup>[7]</sup>P.N., Chief Secretary of the Former Prime Minister of India Hakasa (1999) once pointed out that "Indians view China through Western perspectives and Western studies conducted in English as a medium." This <sup>[8]</sup>"Western eye" and voluntary "Orientalism" viewing perspective is the same even today, 20 years later, and is moving from "observation" to "construction". The fundamental problem of this phenomenon is that Chinese initiative to construct its own image is still controlled by some western media, and Chinese foreign communication discourse system is still in a weak stage.

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