

A Corpus-Based Analysis of Public Opinion to the Belt and Road Initiative Represented by the Indian Leading English Newspapers

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Keywords: Belt and road initiative; Corpus; Indian english newspaper; Public opinion

Abstract. Based on the coverage of the “Belt and Road” in the Indian English Newspapers, this paper analyzes the public opinion presentation of the “Belt and Road Initiative” in India and its reasons using the corpus method. The study found that the Indian media’s attention to the Belt and Road changed with the changes in China-India relations. Public opinion on the Belt and Road has generally been negative. Most reports believe that the Belt and Road Initiative has the purpose of Chinese geopolitics.

Introduction

Belt and Road Initiative was carried out by President Xi Jinping in 2013 when he visited Kazakhstan, which has become an important approach in strengthening reform and opening up and guiding the process of globalization. The great scheme is not only relevant to Chinese people’s happiness and national rejuvenation, but also to the happiness of countries along the Belt and Road Initiative. With the advance of the initiative, more and more countries participate “the Belt and Road Initiative”. India, the neighbor of China, is a country participating Ancient Silk Road and a country along the “Belt and Road Initiative” now. As a regional power, India has the influence to Asia, therefore, the report of Indian press about “Belt and Road Initiative” represents the attitude of Indian society and government. Their reports directly and indirectly influence some countries, therefore, it is significant to analyze the cover of Indian press to “Belt and Road Initiative” to put forward the construction of the “Belt and Road Initiative”. The paper utilizes the corpus method, selects *The Indian Express*, *India Today*, *Times of India*, *The Economic News*, *The Economic Times*, etc, as the search sample to tease out their report and find out the public opinion representation and reasons of the India media to the “Belt and Road”.

Text Analysis of the Indian Media to the “Belt and Road Initiative”

The research intends to reflect the Indian media’s public opinion and attitude to the “Belt and Road Initiative” from the aspect of general report, the types of the report contents, the key words and reporting time.

The General Analysis of the Report. The retrieval time is from January, 2015 to July, 2018. In fact, the Indian media started to report to the “Belt and Road Initiative” in 2015, the key word is “Belt and Road”. 142 effective reporting articles are collected. (See table 1 and table 2)

Table 1 Numbers of report about the “Belt and Road” from major Indian Media

India Today	Hindustan Times	Times of India	Economic News	Indian Express	Total
79	3	6	3	51	142

It is found from the table above that *Indian Express* and *India Today* are the newspapers that makes the most report about the “Belt and Road Initiative”, these media has the broad impact on the Indian

public and is the major media for the ordinary people to know about the world affairs. Therefore, the attitude and opinion of the media has the direct and important influence on the average people.

The Main Content of the Report. The reporting focus is what the media talks about and it differs in different media. Although 142 articles are all news reporting, the theme about “Belt and Road” is various in different media’s report. In order to find out the types of the reports, the researcher covers the range of the main heading, subtitle and news lead. Table 2 is about the types of reporting in different media.

Table 2 Major types of Indian media about the “Belt and Road Initiative”

Reports about the contents and influence on the “Belt and Road” and the advancement of Chinese government	35
Other country’s reports to the Indian media’s attitude towards the “Belt and Road”	9
Other country’s reports to the construction of the “Belt and Road Initiative”	33
Reports to Chinese media and government’s attitude to Indian media’s reports	20
Indian newspaper’s reports about the “Belt and Road” (territory, economy and strategy)	27
Reports about India and other countries to compete against the “Belt and Road”	10
Others	3

The table above shows that the following types can be listed according to the reports from the Indian major English media. Firstly, the largest percentage is about the reports of the content, influence and Chinese government’s efforts to put forward the advancement of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, which covers 25%. It shows that Indian media expects the ordinary Indian people to know what is the “Belt and Road Initiative” and Chinese government’s measures. Secondly, the reports about other countries participation in the “Belt and Road Initiative” and their attitude, which is 24%. It represents that the Indian newspapers concern about other countries attitude and care about the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Thirdly, the reports about India’s attitude towards the “Belt and Road Initiative”, which include economy, territory and strategy; Fourthly, the reports about Chinese media and government’s attitude to Indian media’s reports. The number shows that Indian media did care about the “Belt and Road Initiative”; Fifthly, the reports about the measures taken by the cooperation between India and other countries in order to counterbalance the “Belt and Road Initiative”, which stands for the negative attitude of Indian government and media to the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Lastly, the reports about whether other countries are involved in Chinese “Belt and Road Initiative”, which reveals not all countries support the “Belt and Road Initiative”.

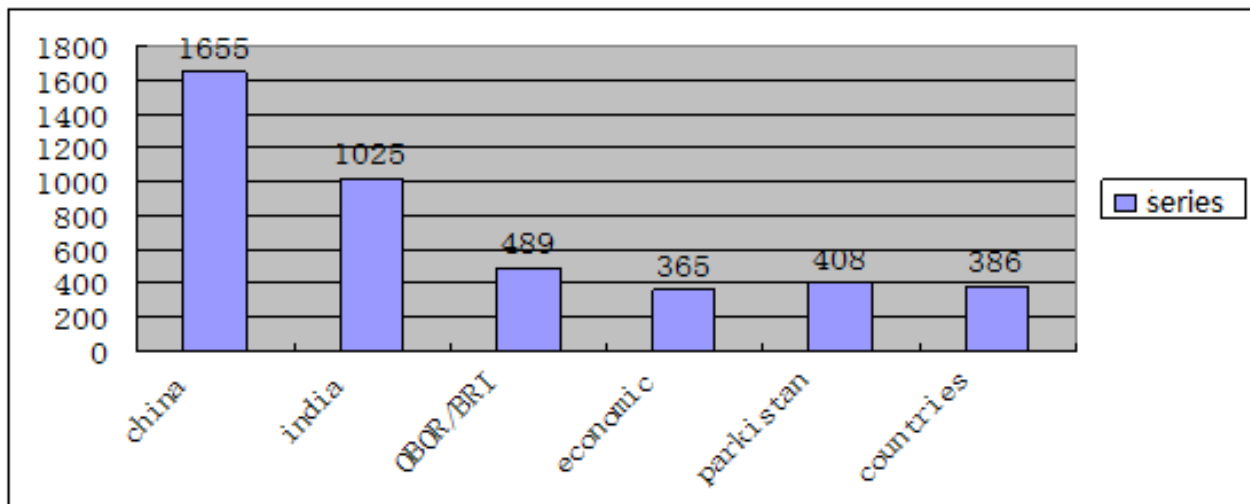
From the table above, we can find that the percentage of the second type is 4% more than the third type. The result shows, on the one hand, Indian media and government hold clear attitude towards the “Belt and Road Initiative”; on the other hand, the Indian newspapers pay much attention to the attitudes of the neighboring countries.

The Indian Media’s Emotional Tendency to the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Emotional analysis is to make semantic orientation analysis or polarity analysis of the discourse’s subjective attitude, emotion or opinion with the help of natural language processing, statistics or machine learning. Emotional tendency shows the tendency of the internal evaluation of the subject to the object. By the analysis of the Indian media’s emotional analysis, we find that the negative emotion takes up 97%, while the positive emotion only occupies 3%.

We make the following conclusion from the analysis. Firstly, the majority of the Indian media holds strong negative emotion to the report of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, which makes it clear that the Indian newspapers are not objective or reasonable, as the result, the Indian media’s intention is questionable: the media does not sincerely publicize the “Belt and Road Initiative”, instead, they try to resist the advancement of the plan. Secondly, it shows that the Indian media is concerned about the development and participation of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, but the Indian government and media are not willing to take part in it.

Key Words. The frequency of the word symbolizes the tendency of the public opinion and decides the emotion of the Indian media to the “Belt and Road Initiative”. According to the study on the theme of “Belt and Road” in major Indian newspapers, the researchers use Excel to keep the word whose frequency is more than 380. The statistics is revealed in Table 3.

Table 3 Statistics of word frequency of “Belt and Road” in Indian media’s reports



From the table above, we explore that the most frequent word is China, and India follows it, both words appear more than one thousand times, which illustrates the “Belt and Road Initiative” has been paid special attention from the Indian newspapers. “Belt and Road” is the third most frequent and “economic” appears the fourth one. The main purpose of the “Belt and Road” is not only to push the development of China’s economy, but also benefits the neighboring countries. Economy is the core target of the initiative. The fifth most frequent word is “Pakistan”. In the process of the development of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, China and Pakistan has built China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. As the sample project of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, the economic corridor strengthens the cooperation between two countries and plays very important role in the deep development of both states. The key word “Pakistan” not only shows the concern of the Indian media to Pakistan’s involvement to the construction of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, more importantly, it stands for the worry to India’s future under the pressure of the relationship enhancement between China and Pakistan.

The Analysis on the Public Opinion of the Indian News Report

Although the “Belt and Road Initiative” has aroused the active response of the neighboring countries, India holds fairly negative and inactive attitudes. Because of the fast development of the economy, China has great influence on the word’s politics, economy and diplomacy, which becomes a sharp contrast to India. The public opinion of the Indian news report about the “Belt and Road Initiative” reflects the contradictory psychology of India. The interpretation of the public opinion of the Indian media’s report is as followed.

First of all, the concern of the Indian newspapers to the initiative changes with the change of the China-India relations. The number of the reports varies according to the relationship between two countries.

Secondly, public opinion on the Belt and Road has generally been negative. The project of the “Belt and Road” brings great opportunity to the development of Pakistan, but Indian newspapers suppose the initiative possibly invade the territory of India. The core problem of Indian media’s report is about China-India border issue, territorial issue and sovereignty issue.

Thirdly, most reports believe that the Belt and Road Initiative has the purpose of Chinese geopolitics. For example, Diplomacy says “Chinese state-owned enterprise involving the belt and road initiative cannot distinguish their commercial purpose and political purpose.” The implication is Chinese enterprise are politically motivated.

Last but not least, the “Belt and Road Initiative” has caused worry and fear of the Indian government and media, and then of course they will find some ways to counterbalance with China in politics and tactics. There is a report in *Indian Express* which points out that Australia, the United States, India and Japan deliberate over the measures to fight against China’s “Belt and Road Initiative”, the reason is the Indian government doesn’t want to be the member of the initiative. Furthermore, India doesn’t expect the praise of the initiative from other countries because India doesn’t want to lose its influence and power in South Asia.

Summary

From the analysis above, we should recognize the fundamental attitude of the Indian government to the “Belt and Road Initiative”. We shouldn’t expect India will take the initiative to join it, and certainly can’t judge or guess Indian government’s attitude based on the idea that the “Belt and Road” will definitely bring some benefits and opportunities for the countries along the routes. There are a lot of uncertain factors in the relation between China and India, which doesn’t take China’s attitude as a transfer. Therefore, there is every reason to believe that Chinese government should have multiple alternatives to tackle the challengers of the future.

Acknowledgements

The paper is the research result of *Risk Early Warning and Countermeasure Research of China-involved Public Opinion to the Belt and Road Initiative Based on the Corpus*. It is the program of 2018 Social Science Foundation Program of Hebei Province, the number is HB18XW027.

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