

Framing advocacy event: Comparing news coverage and Facebook comments of the Belt and Road Forum in Pakistan and the USA

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With regard to the recent developments in public diplomacy, the increasing fusion of strategic communication appears necessary. China engages in public diplomacy with a strategic purpose to shape its national image abroad. Hosting diplomatic advocacy event is regarded as an instrument with expectations to present reliable and responsible image and promote international collaborations. The present research focuses on the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in May 2017 with the objective to analyze its outcomes and influence on the international news agenda, news frames, and foreign citizens' comments online. The quantitative content analyses are used to compare the media reports (N=364) and Facebook users' comments on the selected news (N=957) between the US and Pakistan. Results reveal that Pakistani media provided more diverse frames and attributed more positive evaluations to the BRF than the US media. However, Facebook comments expressed more unfavorable opinions toward the BRF and China's image with rare differences between two countries. In conclusion, the BRF has served as an eye-catching advocacy of Chinese foreign policy, as it influenced the news agenda in two selected countries. However, news frames vary due to the differences in media system and the involvement in the BRF. China's public diplomacy practices follow a traditional top-down communication which needs meticulous subdivision of target stakeholders, delicate messaging strategies, and integrated tactics.

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1. Introduction

With regard to recent developments in public diplomacy (PD), the increasing fusion of strategic communication appears and acts as a guiding principle (Löffelholz, Auer & Srugies, 2014; Pamment, 2014; 2015; Waisbord, 2014). This is particularly the case when discussions are subordinated to managing national image or reputation and to achieve political and economic objectives (Pamment, 2016). National image, as a sort of intangible asset, has become unprecedentedly significant for state governments (Anholt, 2016; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Kunczik, 2016; Manheim, 1994; Ndoeye, 2009; Wang, 2013).

China engages in public diplomacy with one of strategic objectives to reshape its national image (Hartig, 2016; Wang, 2008; Zhao, 2015). The past decade witnesses China's rise in economic achievements and struggle in rejuvenating its cultural and political influence in the world. The Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2017 confirmed the fact that China has been named by Europeans as the world's leading economic power than the US, while in contrast a median of 37% across the 38 countries surveyed express an unfavorable opinion (Wike, Poushter, Silver & Bishop, 2017). Therefore, China's greatest strategic challenge today is to manage its negative national image abroad (Ramo, 2007). As Hartig (2016) pointed out, China conducts public diplomacy in both proactive and reactive ways. In a proactive manner, participating in global affairs and hosting international events are regarded as the strategic approach to present national image and insert soft power.

The current priority of China is the Belt and Road Initiative (B&R) which is widely considered as an ambitious blueprint and a strategic diplomacy in the recent decade (Mayer, 2018; Rolland, 2017; Swaine, 2015). The initiative was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 intending to strengthen partnerships with countries along the two ancient Silk Road routines. This grand vision of transcontinental linkage stresses five cooperative realms including policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bond (Pencea, 2017). As the biggest diplomatic advocacy event in 2017, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) was held in Beijing on 14-15 May 2017. The summit welcomed 29 heads of state and governmental representatives from 130 countries, together with experts, NGOs, and international organizations (Guo, 2017).

However, there are inadequacies in effective assessment and systematic evaluation in Chinese public diplomacy programs (Wei, 2016). The specific advocacy event or campaign lacks of adequate theoretical framework and scholarly attention (Mayer, 2018). Effective evaluations enable reports to interagency policymakers in terms of designing strategies, planning high-

priority campaigns, sidestepping potential pitfalls, and reframing messages (Gonzalez, 2015). Therefore, focusing on the BRF, questions lie in whether this diplomatic advocacy has strategically served as an instrument to present China's expected image to influence the salience and frames in international news and affect audiences' perceptions in different countries. Based on the analytic framework of strategic communication, this empirical research intends to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of hosting diplomatic advocacy to shape national image.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Public diplomacy and strategic communication

Originated from 1965, the hybrid term "public diplomacy" has been studied in the various fields including mediated communication, public relations, international relations, and political science. Taking a broad definition, public diplomacy is "a communication process that states, non-state actors, and organizations employ to influence the policies of a foreign government by influencing its citizens" (Gilboa, 2015, p. 2). Scholars have articulated the objectives of public diplomacy to facilitate foreign policy goals (Sevin, 2015; Tuch, 1990), influence foreign citizens in expectation for attitudinal and behavioral changes (Gilboa, 2015; Gregory, 2011), achieve mutual understanding and relationship (Leonard, Stead & Smewing, 2002; Melissen, 2011), enlarge civic participation (Evans & Steven, 2010; Snow, 2009), and manage national image (Comor & Bean, 2012; Dutta-Bergman, 2006).

Public diplomacy is an interdisciplinary field in the fusion with strategic communication. In modernist, the term strategy is originally used in organization theory in the 1950s and is regarded as "a means of establishing the organizational purpose in terms of its long-term objectives, action programs, and resource allocation priorities" (Hax & Majluf, 1996, p. 99). In an oft-cited definition, strategic communication is "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 3). The relationship between PD and strategic communication is positioned distinctly. Some scholars consider public diplomacy as a subset of strategic communication (e.g., Taylor, 2009) while others subordinate strategic communication as one dimension of PD (e.g., Leonard, et al., 2002). In some occasions, scholars regard strategic communication as an overarching concept (e.g., Löffelholz et al., 2014).

Advocacy is "an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by undertaking an international communication activity to promote a particular policy, idea, or that actor's general interests in the minds of a foreign public" (Cull, 2019, p. 39). In light of the mediatization of diplomacy, Pamment (2014; 2015) proposed the analytical framework for interpreting how strategic communication practices within the diplomatic campaign. To be precise, the three areas of strategic communication include (1) agenda-building, the "negotiation of issues and identities through constitution of a diplomatic public sphere" related to the policy-area curation and the management of salience; (2) socialization, the "coordination and negotiation over the standards, codes and norms" within various mediated environments; and (3) strategic coordination, the

“management of identities, messages and representational modalities” referring to influence and outcomes (Pamment, 2015, p. 122). The previous study used case studies to demonstrate how the context is pervaded by a dependence on the media for sociopolitical knowledge during the Papal visit, the Royal Wedding, and the Queen’s visit to Ireland. However, the analytical framework has not been applied outside the British public diplomacy context. The present research adopts the analytical framework and situates in the China’s BRF for insight into the strategic purpose and the outcomes of agenda-building, mediated environment and receptive outcomes online.

2.2 China’s public diplomacy

In 1990s the term public diplomacy (*gong gong wai jiao*) is firstly translated to China (Zhou & Yang, 1990). Not until 2003 does its contemporary public diplomacy get a kick-start. The aggressive self-presentation at the early stage of has incurred a wide range of international critics. China’s greatest strategic challenge is to manage its negative national image abroad (Ramo, 2007). Public diplomacy is treated as an instrument of mutuality, exchange and reciprocal communication, but Chinese public diplomacy has a more strategic and functional purpose to achieve national interests by correcting national images (Hartig, 2016; Wei, 2016). China seeks for acknowledgement as a trustworthy, friendly, reliable and responsible member of international community (d’Hooghe, 2008; 2011). China engages in public diplomacy in both reactive and proactive ways (Hartig, 2016). On one hand, China reactively remedies the negative image that is considered to be tarnished by the Western discourse and media bias, while on the other hand China proactively participates in regional and global community to present positive image and insert soft power (Hartig, 2016).

China employs a diversity of strategies and practices to realize the two objectives. By investing in the state-sponsored media “going-global” strategy, China builds the global media network to voice a different perspective in the pluralistic world order and to shape its perceptions by foreign audiences (Li & Sligo, 2012; Rawnsley, 2009; Zhang et al., 2018). Besides, the Chinese embassies and diplomats adopt the social media such as Twitter which is forbidden domestically for building a digital network to “tell China stories well” (Huang & Wang, 2019). In order to manage a reliable and responsible image, China actively integrates itself in regional affairs such as the ASEAN and participates in international community such as G20 (Zhao, 2015). Besides, hosting mega-events is believed to construct favourable national images and encompass soft power (Alekseyeva, 2014; Grix & Brannagan, 2016; Hubbert, 2017).

China manages public diplomacy as a strategic tool to disseminate its message out and convince the world of the benign intentions. Hosting international mega-events can allow the positive event's images transferrable to the host country (Chen, 2012; Santos, Vareiro, Remoaldo & Ribeiro, 2017). The B&R entails the top-design for a coherent strategy and systematic public diplomacy mechanism (Zhao, 2015). China intends to integrate regional economic community and enhance stability and security for this historically turbulent region (Fallon, 2015; Ferdinand, 2016). However, the initiative might imply geopolitical risks of hegemonic competition and exceptionalism (Blanchard & Flint, 2016; Rolland, 2017; Sidaway & Woon, 2017). Existing literatures on the B&R mostly remain in the analysis of foreign policy, geopolitics and

international relations (e.g., Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Mayer, 2018). There is a lack of systematic evaluation of the communication outcomes and effectiveness (Wei, 2016; Mayer, 2018). This article focuses on the BRF, a diplomatic event to advocate the early-stage harvest of the B&R, and provides an empirical assessment to its communication outcomes.

2.3 National image research

National image is a sub-area of public diplomacy research. Jarol Manheim (1994) coined the term strategic public diplomacy to demonstrate how nations employ strategies to cultivate positive national image. An enhanced national image or reputation may ensure a favorable environment for a country's international business, products, services, tourism, culture, people, political relations, and events produced (Anholt, 2016; Kunczik, 2016). Favorable national image would help increase knowledge about the nation and consequently reduce misperception (Paulo, 2016).

National image research receives attentions from various disciplines. scholars from public relations and business studies focus on nation branding and destination image (Anholt, 2016; Fan, 2010), the country-of-origin effects on consumers attitudes attached to products and corporate reputation management (Passow, Fehlmann & Grahlow, 2005). Social psychology deals with the country stereotypes and national identity (Yousaf, 2017). Besides, national image is studied in regards to international relations and soft power (Frederick, 1993; Gilboa, 2015; Nye, 2008). In communication science, scholars examine national image through mediated presentation and audience reception (Buhmann & Inghoff, 2015).

Despite that practitioners mainly rely on aggregated indices (e.g. Nation Brands Index, Country Reputation Index) and academic literature favor conceptual and historical view, Buhmann and Inghoff (2015) proposed the country image model that consists of four dimensions. Precisely, the functional dimension indicates a country's political and economic effectiveness and performance; normative dimension assesses the integrity of norms and values; aesthetic dimension measures the attractiveness of culture and scenic place (Buhmann & Inghoff, 2015). The three dimensions ultimately affect the emotional dimension that means general feelings of affection and fascination for a country. This coherent framework ties the various disciplines together and coordinates the economic and political performance as well as the societal norms and culture values.

As Werron (2014) states, countries are increasingly observed by global media and publics in times of globalization and mediatization. Mass media act as a crucial contributor in formulating and disseminating the images of nation and predominant culture (Fan, 2010; Kunczik, 2016). Mediated national image is empirically investigated by the agenda-setting in international public relations (e.g. Manheim and Albritton, 1984), the agenda-building and strategic framing (e.g. Entman, 2008; Zhang et al., 2018), and the salience and attribution of positivity and negativity in international news (e.g. Huang & Leung, 2005; Saleem, 2007). In addition, media portrayals of a

foreign nation are considered to eventually influence the formation of public attitudes and even biases toward a country (Wilhoit & Weaver, 1983; Yousaf, 2017).

Perceived national image is defined as “a subjective stakeholder attitude toward a nation and its state” (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015, p. 115). The traditional approaches to gauge people’s perception are survey and interview. However, in the digitalized media environment, new public diplomacy is a paradigm shifting the emphasis to two-way communication. Social media platforms, on one hand, has challenged the "gatekeeper" structure of traditional diplomacy where foreign ministry acts as the sole dominant actor (Pamment, 2012). On the other hand, new media has enlarged landscape public participation in discussing foreign and domestic affairs (Snow, 2009). Social media allow a direct and instant way to gauge individual cognitive and emotional feedbacks online (Zaharna & Rugh, 2012; Russmann & Svensson, 2017). Thus, it is estimated as an effective tool to enhance credibility, improve national brand, monitor public opinion, enlarge civic engagement, and promote positive image in both domestic politics and foreign affairs (Harris, 2013; Su & Xu, 2015).

In summary, China engages in public diplomacy with a strategic purpose to shape its national image abroad. Hosting diplomatic advocacy event is considered as a strategic instrument to proactively present expected national image and influence the foreign media coverage and citizens’ perception. However, there are insufficient studies in Chinese public diplomacy systematically explore the outcomes and efficacy of a specific program. This article adopts the analytical framework of strategic communication suggested by Pamment (2015) to evaluate the diplomatic advocacy BRF in terms of agenda-building, socialization and strategic coordination. Based on framing theory (Entman, 1993) and the country image model (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015), this empirical research attempts to reveal the influence of the BRF on the media agenda, news frames, and people’s perceptions of Chinese national image on Facebook in selected countries.

As to country selection, the B&R involves over 100 countries, which set barriers in international comparison. Pakistan and the US are selected for further analyses based on three criteria: (1) international diplomatic relations with China, Pakistan shares a prior status than the US; (2) degree of involvement in the B&R, Pakistan deeply cooperate with China while the US isn’t directly involved; (3) English as official language. Three main research questions are formulated as follows:

RQ 1: Does the Belt and Road Forum influence the news agenda in the US and Pakistan?

RQ 2: How do media frames differ between the US and Pakistan in regard to covering the Belt and Road Forum?

RQ 3: How do people perceive China through Facebook comments on the US and Pakistan media posts about the Belt and Road Forum?

3. Methods

This is a comparative research employing the quantitative content analysis, in order to examine the outcomes of the BRF in salience in media agenda, news frames and audiences' perceptions online in the US and Pakistan. Two separate codebooks are generated for analyzing international news and Facebook comments. The frequency of news coverage can reflect the BFR's influence on media agenda in two countries during the timeframe. Comparison of news frames will demonstrate the media environment and societal norms in terms of attributions to the BRF and Chinese national image. The analysis and comparison of Facebook comments will reveal audiences' responses online as part of the outcome evaluation to the BRF. The software SPSS is used for data analysis

3.1 Codebooks

Codebook 1 attempts to reveal the international news frames of the BRF. The approach to detect news frames follows the method by Matthes and Kohring (2008) who suggest to split a news frame into four elements based on the Entman's (1993) classical definition that to frame is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p.52). After separately coding the framing elements, the hierarchical cluster analysis should identify the news frames. Hence, the codebook is consisted of topics, benefits and risks attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.

Topics involve generic items including politics, economy, security, culture, ecology and science. Benefits and risks attribution variables are induced from a qualitative analysis of 16 journal papers (see Arugay, 2017; Blanchard and Flint, 2017; Dollar, 2015; Fallon, 2015; Ferdinand, 2016; Huang, 2016; Liu, 2016; Mayer, 2018; Pencea, 2017; Rolland, 2015, 2017; Sidaway and Woon, 2017; Summer, 2016; Swaine, 2015; Tsui et al., 2017; Yu, 2017). Treatments indicate positive and negative suggestions revealing the stance of solutions. The above-mentioned variables should be binary coded as either 1 "mentioned" or 99 "not mentioned".

Moreover, the 21 variables in moral evaluation are deduced from the country image model involving functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions (Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2015). The following variables should be coded by: 1 "favorable", 2 "unfavorable" or 99 "not mentioned".

- Functional dimension (12 items: country innovativeness, products and services, business competence, national prosperity, economic strength, labor market, competence of political leadership, political stability, infrastructure, science and research, educational opportunity, level of education);
- Normative dimension (5 items: environmental protection, international responsibility, respect for other nations, civil rights, fairness of international economic and trade policy);

- Aesthetic dimension (4 items: cultural goods, culinary, history and customs, landscapes and scenery);

Codebook 2 examines people’s perceptions towards the news reports about the BRF on Facebook. Thus, the codebook mainly deduces variables from the country image model, including the above 21 items in functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions. Variables should be coded by: 1 “favorable”, 2 “unfavorable” or 99 “not mentioned”.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

The news reports are collected from LexisNexis database and official media websites. The “belt and road forum” is determined to be key words. Media selection is based on three overarching criteria: newspaper circulation, political polarization, and media sponsorship. As indicated in Table 1, 10 news media per country were selected, with 60 articles from the US and 304 articles from Pakistan. The timeframe from 17/01/2017 to 31/08/2017 is decided for collecting news with two reasons: firstly, 17/01/2017 is the day when China’s President Xi Jinping announced to host the BRF; secondly, Google Trends search amounts of the BRF vanished after 31/08/2017.

Table 1

Media Selections in the US and Pakistan

Type	Media in the US		Media in Pakistan	
	Name	N	Name	N
Newspaper	New York Times	3	Dawn	8
	Washington Post	7	The News International	37
	Los Angeles Times	10	The Nation	39
	The Seattle Times	12	Pakistan Today	35
	New York Daily News	3	The Express Tribune	19
	The Salt Lake Tribune	1	Pakistan Observer	32
	Journal of Commerce	5	Business Recorder	18
News agency	Associated Press	6	Associated Press of Pakistan	71
News network	CNN News	11	Geo News	15

Total	N=60	N=304
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Furthermore, Python was used to collect comments to news coverage about the BRF on selected Facebook pages. A total number of 957 Facebook comments (NUSA = 139, NPakistan = 818) were collected via Facebook API on 19 December 2017.

3.3 Reliability test

All the media coverage and Facebook posts were coded by two independent researchers. A coder training was conducted for reaching a consensus on the codebooks. To determine the agreement, 20 news reports and 50 posts from the sample were tested for the intercoder reliability. Using Krippendorff's Alpha, the intercoder reliabilities ranged from 0.83 to 1.0 for all the 45 variables. The overall reliability result was satisfactory ($\alpha=0.90$).

4. Results

4.1 Salience of the BRF in news

The curve graph in Figure 1 illustrated the distributions of coverage amounts by month in the US and Pakistan respectively. Monthly coverage amount increased from January, peaked in May, and vanished in August in 2017. In comparison, Pakistan media released much more coverage about BRF than the US media.

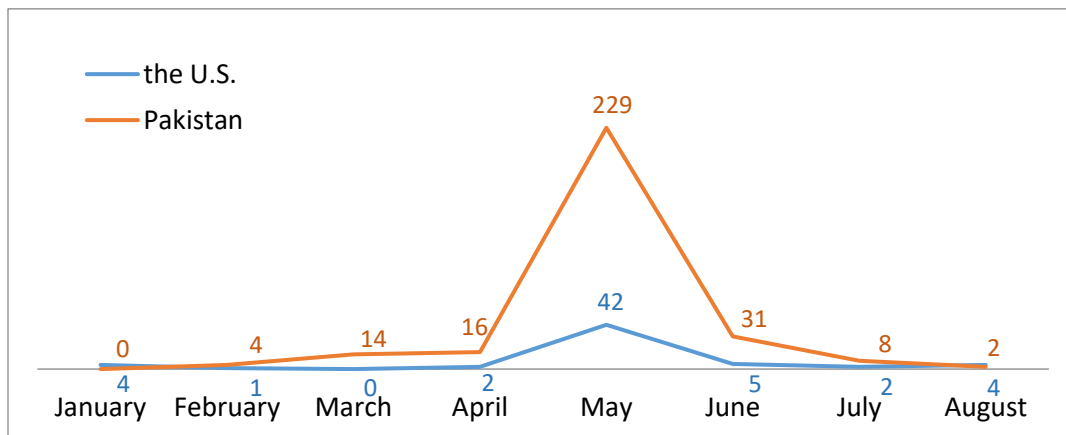


Figure 1. Distribution of Coverage Amount by Month in 2017.

4.2 News frames of the BFR

The hierarchical cluster analysis (the Ward's method) is conducted to identify cluster patterns. The author used the Elbow Method to compare heterogeneity of cluster solutions. In order to reveal the structural compositions of clusters, frames are determined by the salience in two criteria: first, within each cluster (vertical column), the frame element with percent above 60 as highly salient and percent between 30 and 60 as salient; second, a frame can be distinguished by cross-cluster comparison with elements above 75 percent (horizontal row). The frames are entitled according to the salient characters of the cluster memberships.

As a result, 3 clusters in the US coverage and 6 clusters in Pakistan coverage were detected. Table 2 demonstrated the three news frames in the US media. The news frames were named and described as:

- *North Korea threat frame* (N=20). This frame focused on latent security risks posed by North Korea. Politics and security were the core topics. The benefits were barely mentioned while regional risks were evaluated to a large extent. Geopolitical tension was the most referred risk.
- *Economic evaluation frame* (N=26). This frame concentrated on evaluation of economic outcome of the BRF. Economy and politics were the main topics. Benefits and risks were assessed equally. Benefits were interpreted more in Chinese national scale while risks were judged in all national, regional and global levels. Both positive and negative suggestions were provided in news.
- *Geopolitical risks frame* (N=11). This frame emphasized geopolitical problem faced by the BRF. Risks evaluation was highlighted in Chinese national degree, whereas risks were assessed in regional scales. Lack of political trust and instability of cooperation were the most mentioned risks. Negative treatment was suggested.

Table 2: Composition of frames on the BRF and China's national image in the US news

Frame elements	North Korea threat frame N=20		Economic evaluation frame N=26		Geopolitical risks frame N=11	
Topics						
politics	90		80.8		100	
economy	10		100		90.9	
security	75		50		45.5	
culture	0		15.4		18.2	
ecology	0		34.6		18.2	
science	0		15.4		0	
Benefits evaluation						
Chinese internal economy	15		88.5		54.5	
Chinese domestic reform	10		34.6		45.5	
regional international relations	25		42.3		72.7	
regional economic integration	20		69.2		36.4	
regional security	0		15.4		0	
globalization and pluralism	0		34.6		36.4	
global responsibility	0		23.1		0	
cultural heritage	5		11.5		0	
Risks evaluation						
dumping excess capacity	0		38.5		0	
lack political trust	45		61.5		81.8	
geopolitical tensions	75		69.2		63.6	
instability of cooperation	40		57.7		90.9	
involvement in terrorism	5		19.2		0	
exceptionalism/unilateralism	20		53.8		72.7	
hegemonic competition	35		61.5		63.6	
environmental challenge	0		34.6		54.5	
Treatments						
positive	0		42.3		9.1	
negative	25		50		54.5	

DARK GREY: elements account for above 60 percent within cluster (vertical); **LIGHT GREY:** elements account for 30–60 percent within cluster (vertical); **BOLD:** elements that stand out in cross-cluster comparison (horizontal, at least 75 percent)

Table 3: Composition of frames on the BRF and China's national image in the Pakistan news

Topics	China-Pakistan bilateral cooperation frame		Dealing with terrorism frame		Economic globalization frame		Cultural exchange frame		Infrastructure construction frame		Social economic development frame	
	N=71	N=41	N=59	N=10	N=96	N=19						
politics	100	82.9	83.1	30	70.8	73.7						
economy	83.1	26.8	94.9	40	86.5	89.5						
security	56.3	51.2	42.4	0	21.9	26.3						
culture	31	0	6.8	70	4.2	63.2						
ecology	9.9	0	0	10	5.2	21.1						
science	4.2	2.4	22	70	12.5	78.9						
Chinese internal economy	28.2	4.9	27.1	30	19.8	21.1						
Chinese domestic reform	7	0	10.2	10	7.3	5.3						
regional international relations	100	58.5	89.8	60	67.7	89.5						
regional economic integration	94.4	31.7	98.3	50	89.6	100						
regional security	60.6	24.4	39	0	11.5	31.6						
globalization and pluralism	81.7	17.1	78	20	42.7	78.9						
global responsibility	66.2	2.4	45.8	20	10.4	73.7						
cultural heritage	14.1	0	3.4	50	1	47.4						
dumping excess capacity	0	2.4	0	0	3.1	5.3						
lack political trust	1.4	14.6	5.1	0	14.6	5.3						
geopolitical tensions	29.6	41.5	30.5	0	20.8	15.8						
instability of cooperation	21.1	36.6	25.4	0	24	10.5						
involvement in terrorism	47.9	39	28.8	10	20.8	15.8						
exceptionalism/unilateralism	5.6	14.6	11.9	0	17.7	10.5						
hegemonic competition	15.5	17.1	8.5	0	15.6	10.5						
environmental challenge	1.4	0	0	0	3.1	0						
Treatments positive	78.9	26.8	81.4	90	58.3	94.7						
Treatments negative	1.4	29.3	3.4	0	13.5	0						

DARK GREY: elements account for above 60 percent within cluster (vertical); LIGHT GREY: elements account for 30–60 percent within cluster (vertical); BOLD: elements that stand out in cross-cluster comparison (horizontal, at least 75 percent)

As revealed in Table 3, the six news frames in Pakistan media were entitled and described as:

- *China-Pakistan bilateral cooperation frame* (N=71). Politics and economy were the core topics. Benefits evaluation focused on regional international relations and economic integration. Risks were mentioned less. News in this frame promoted the BRF and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- *Dealing with terrorism frame* (N=41). In this frame, topics focused on politics and security. Benefits and risks in all regional levels were equally mentioned. Coverage provided favorable evaluation to strengthen international connection and to cooperatively handle terrorism. Both positive and negative treatments could be witnessed.
- *Economic globalization frame* (N=59). This frame underlined economic influence of the BRF. Economy and politics were main topics. Economic integration, international relations, and globalization/ pluralism were highly mentioned as benefits. Positive treatment was advocated.
- *Cultural exchange frame* (N=10). In this frame, culture, research and science were the main topics. Scholarship, exchange and artistic performance were mostly mentioned. Apart from international relation and economic integration, protecting cultural heritage is the most mentioned benefit. News was mostly in favor of cultural theme and recommended positive treatment.
- *Infrastructure construction frame* (N=96). This frame emphasized economic and political topics. The main theme was infrastructure construction between China and countries along the Belt and Road. Benefit was mentioned mostly on regional economic integration. Positive treatment was promoted.
- *Social economic development frame* (N=19). This news frame mentioned all topics in the categories, while economy and science were discussed most. Benefits rested in all levels of national, regional and global economic integration and society development. News showed positive treatment to the BRF.

In brief, the US media frames referred to geopolitics, economy and security aspects. News coverage was inclined to report potential risks and problematic threats associated with the BRF and its related issues. In terms of China's national image, the US media provided favorable evaluations to economic items, while unfavorable judgments to politics and societal issues. In contrast, more diverse media frames were identified in Pakistan media coverage, including bilateral relations, terrorism, economic integration, infrastructure construction, culture exchange, and social development. Benefits were considerably underlined in regional and global scales, while risk was mentioned only in dealing with terrorism issues. Positive treatments were recommended largely. With respect to China's image, favorable evaluations could be observed in aspects of economy, politics and leadership, culture and history, scientific research, as well as education.

4.3 Comparison of frame elements.

The article used Crosstabs to compare frame elements between the US and Pakistan. Among six topics, political and economic topics were mentioned most while cultural and scientific topics were mentioned least in both two countries. Significantly, the US media covered more security topic ($\chi^2 = 8.231$, $df=1$, $p < .01$) and ecology topic ($\chi^2 = 12.025$, $df=1$, $p < .001$) than Pakistan media.

Among benefits attribution of the BRF, the US media covered more benefit to Chinese internal economy ($\chi^2 = 27.297$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), Chinese domestic reform ($\chi^2 = 23.707$, $df=1$, $p < .001$) than that Pakistan media did. Meanwhile, Pakistan media reported much more benefits to international relations ($\chi^2 = 34.868$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), regional economic integration ($\chi^2 = 41.172$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), and regional security ($\chi^2 = 13.678$, $df=1$, $p < .0017$), globalization and pluralism ($\chi^2 = 23.413$, $df=1$, $p < .001$) and global responsibility ($\chi^2 = 12.893$, $df=1$, $p < .001$) than that of the US media.

Among risks attributions, the US media covered much more risks than their counterparts in Pakistan, in terms of China dumping excess capacity ($\chi^2 = 29.529$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), Chinese political trust ($\chi^2 = 87.653$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), geopolitical tensions ($\chi^2 = 39.658$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), instability of cooperation ($\chi^2 = 27.126$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), Chinese exceptionalism ($\chi^2 = 35.746$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), hegemonic competition ($\chi^2 = 43.503$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), and environmental protection ($\chi^2 = 58.49$, $df=1$, $p < .001$). By contrast, the only risk mentioned by Pakistan media more than the US counterparts is the involvement in terrorism ($\chi^2 = 9.279$, $df=1$, $p < .01$).

With respect to national image evaluation, highly significant statistics reveal huge differences between media of the two countries. As for functional dimension, there are more favorable evaluations in Pakistan media reports, while more unfavorable judgments in the US articles towards these aspects: national products and services ($\chi^2 = 22.244$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), competence of national business ($\chi^2 = 10.889$, $df=2$, $p < .005$), economic strength ($\chi^2 = 17.465$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), labor market ($\chi^2 = 19.008$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), competence of political leadership ($\chi^2 = 80.431$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), political stability ($\chi^2 = 55.084$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), infrastructure ($\chi^2 = 28.523$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), innovativeness in science or research ($\chi^2 = 20.177$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), educational opportunities ($\chi^2 = 15.963$, $df=2$, $p < .001$) and level of education ($\chi^2 = 15.326$, $df=2$, $p < .001$). In addition, no significant results were observed in regard to dimensions “country innovativeness” and “national prosperity and wealth”. As for normative dimension, the US media reported much more unfavorably in regards to environmental protection ($\chi^2 = 53.255$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), international social responsibility ($\chi^2 = 86.85$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), respect for other nations ($\chi^2 = 87.588$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), civil rights ($\chi^2 = 38.313$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), and fairness of international economic and trade policy ($\chi^2 = 71.679$, $df=2$, $p < .001$). In comparison, Pakistan media provided mostly favorable evaluations to all the normative dimensions mentioned above. In aesthetic dimension, one highly significant result indicated that the US media evaluate in favor of Chinese culinary, while Pakistan media had no reference to it ($\chi^2 = 15.712$, $df=2$, $p < .001$). No significant results were generated regarding “cultural goods”, “history and customs”, and “landscapes and scenery”.

As to treatments recommended towards the BRF, Pakistan media reported more positive and promoting treatments ($\chi^2 = 40.553$, $df=1$, $p < .001$), while the US media suggested more negative and rejecting suggestions ($\chi^2 = 42.386$, $df=1$, $p < .001$).

4.4 Comparison of Facebook comments

After coding process, 586 selected Facebook comments were valid samples, which consisted of 61.2% in the total sample ($N=957$). The excluded 371 comments were: language not in English, advertisements, and emoji. In particular, 111 comments were collected from the US media posts and 475 comments from Pakistan media posts. The author also utilized Crosstabs to analyze comments on media posts in two countries.

In functional dimension, three variables were not mentioned at all in comments, including country innovativeness, educational opportunities and level of education. Comments on Pakistan media posts expressed much more favorable opinions to national prosperity and wealth of China ($\chi^2 = 28.767$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), while no comments on the US media posts mentioned this aspect. More favorable attitudes to economic strength of China in comments on Pakistan media posts ($\chi^2 = 17.368$, $df=2$, $p < .001$), while comments on the US media posts presented equal proportions of favorable and unfavorable opinions.

In normative dimension, two significant results were observed. Comments on Pakistan media posts evaluated more favorably to China's "respect for other nations" ($\chi^2 = 5.972$, $df=2$, $p < .05$) than that in the comments on the US media posts. Besides, compared to the US, comments on Pakistan media posts expressed both more favorable and unfavorable views to China's "fairness of international economic and trade policy" ($\chi^2 = 37.674$, $df=2$, $p < .001$).

In aesthetic dimension, only one aspect regarding "history and customs" was mentioned by Facebook comments. However, no significant result was calculated.

5. Discussion

The present research intends to provide a systematic evaluation of the Chinese advocacy event. The BRF 2017 is designed to be an eye-catching diplomatic advocacy to perform expected image and promote more international collaborations. From the view of strategic communication, three aspects are necessary to reflect the effectiveness of an advocacy campaign (Pamment, 2015). That is, firstly, the agenda-building (in this case, the salience of news reports on BRF); secondly, the socialization and identities in mediated environments (the detected news frames, attributions of benefits and risks, and mediated national image), and thirdly the outcomes of people's comments online. Based on framing theory and the country image model, news reports and Facebook comments are coded to empirically answer three research questions.

The first research question probes into whether the BRF accomplished its tasks to attract international media attentions. According to the analytical framework (Pamment, 2015), the

agenda-building aspect examines the construction of a diplomatic public sphere for negotiating issues and identities. Results confirmed that the BRF is a salient issue as it successfully attracted increasing news coverage in both two countries consisting of newspapers, news agencies and news networks, particularly in May 2017 when the BRF summit was hosted report. However, during the eight-month timeframe, the agenda-building outcome is more obvious in news released by Pakistan media than the US media.

The second research question intends to heuristically explain how the BRF was framed in the mediated environments in two countries. As results, more frames were detected in Pakistan news reports than the US counterparts. The economic achievement of the BRF appears similarly in the news frames in two countries. With regard to the security frame, the US media focus on North Korea threat while Pakistan media emphasize dealing with terrorism. In addition, culture exchange frame, infrastructure construction frame, and social economic development frame only appear in Pakistan media. Comparison of frame elements shows that media in two countries emphasize politics and economy topics simultaneously. Yet, the US media covered more security and ecology topics. As for benefits and risks attributions, Pakistan media attributed more benefits, while the US media attributed more risks to the B&R. In terms of national image, China is portrayed as more positive by Pakistan media, in terms of political competence, economic strength, cultural attractiveness and social development. In contrast, the US media cover China's national image in favor of economic development, whereas much more unfavorable in politics and social issues. As for treatments, Pakistan media revealed partial view to promote the BRF, while the US media provided neither support nor oppose actions. Most news articles end up with no recommendations.

The socialization aspect underlines negotiation over the standards and norms within various mediated environments (Pamment, 2015). According to the agenda of the BRF, China signed many crucial memorandums referring to student and scholar exchange, infrastructure construction, financial supports and environmental protection. However, these diverse topics either appeared partly in the Pakistani media or vanished in the US media. The degree of involvement in the B&R might be a vital factor. Due to the deep involvement like China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the closest diplomatic relations with China, Pakistani media provide mainly favorable reports and promote regional cooperation with a few critical suggestions. In contrast, the US not only does not involve in the B&R but also its Asia-Pacific Rebalance Strategy is contending with China's regional influence and competitiveness (Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Fallon, 2015; Ferdinand, 2016). The BRF is framed mostly unfavorable and risky with enormous critics in the US media.

With regard to different mediated contexts, when a consensus on a topic has been reached among country elites, critical voices would vanish to a vast range from media coverage (Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston, 2006; Entman, 2007). According to the international NGO Freedom House, the US ranks 23 while Pakistan ranks 65 in the freedom of the press scores 2017. Thus, media reports are more likely to follow governmental ideology in Pakistan when reporting the BRF. China's global media strategy tried to offer the foreign audiences a different perspective and a diversity of voice. However, Western media and audiences are sceptical about the motives,

credibility, propaganda functions and authoritarian values. Since China failed to strategically coordinate messages, the BRF that would have been framed and attributed as a diverse exchange and open dialogue turned out to be a propaganda-liked self-presentation. When articulating expected messages in the US context, China has provided informative messages but lack of persuasive and discursive communication strategies.

The third question explores perceived image in Facebook comments. Compared to the prominent differences in media coverage, rare distinctions were observed in comments on news reports in two countries. People assessed with equally favorable and unfavorable evaluations towards China's national image. When evaluating China's political leadership, Facebook comments from two countries give unfavorable accordingly. In terms of social values and norms, comments similarly rate more unfavorable evaluations towards China without international differences. Especially, comments on Pakistan media posts unfavorably judged Chinese labor market.

The strategic coordination aspect focuses on the influence and outcomes (Pamment, 2015). The messaging strategies of the BRF 2017 are not differentiated according to specific target country, let alone the massive unidentifiable and anonymous Facebook users. Although media play a crucial role in the formation of national image in people's mind (Kunczik, 2016; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; Werron, 2014), there is a huge difference between mediated image and perceived image. News from Pakistan media provided generally more positive evaluation to the BRF, but the Facebook comments expressed more unfavorable attitudes towards Chinese politics and economy.

The ultimate objective of public diplomacy is to engage foreign publics in order to change their thoughts and mobilizing actions (Gilboa, 2015; Gregory, 2011). However, national image in people's perception is inherently intricate and fluid. Even if a nation enjoys a somewhat favorable image, it is generally confined to some aspects, rather than the entire country (Fan, 2010). Therefore, an attitudinal or behavioral change is a long-term process. The construction of national image is a historical process involving political and social realities, international relations, economic power, mass media and popular culture (Kendrick & Fullerton, 2004; Wei, 2012). As the Spectrum of PD objectives with realistic timescale, it normally takes 1 to 3 years for awareness, 3 to 5 years to develop interest, 5 to 10 years to realize attitude shift and even longer to achieve behavior change (Gonzalez, 2015). Thus, it is reasonable that projected media image makes a difference from perceived image. In addition, although media is a contributor to people's formation of national image, other influential factors play vital roles as well, such cultural proximity, personal experience, education, and stereotypes (Yousaf, 2017).

Last but not the least, this article reminds that hosting a diplomatic advocacy event can be successful in create salience in news report, whereas it is limited in shaping foreign news frames and inserting influence on people's perception. Cull (2019) has classified four essential approaches to advocacy in public diplomacy as: direct appeal of speeches and campaigns, indirect appeal targeting opinion makers, crowding the message space, and empowering

partnership (p.47). China mainly follows the first approach to visualize the immediate audiences as the object of influence. The BRF is a typical Chinese advocacy practice in the recent decade, in which the government follows a traditional way of top-down communication. However, the contemporary advocacy campaign is identified with hybrid media environments and audiences (Cull, 2019, p.56). The one-way advocacy lacks of the meticulous subdivision of target stakeholders and delicate design of messaging strategies. It requires not only informative but persuasive, discursive and relational strategies in international communication. Moreover, diplomatic summit is a short-term instrument in essence, and its drawback lies in the sustainability in coordination and negotiation of a favorable national image. The B&R is a long-term ambitious policy which requires sophisticated planning and scrupulous evaluation focusing on specific stakeholders and societal contexts.

6. Limitation and Future Work

Limitations exist in this empirical research waiting for future research works. The 4D country image model (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015) is applied in this study to measure China's national image. Nevertheless, some items are too abstract to be operationalized into variables in content analysis, for examples, political stability and country innovativeness, which caused difficulty in intercoder reliability test to reach a high result. Hence, this article suggests to modify and revise the items when applying in content analysis.

As to methodology, this article is limited in comparing media coverage in only two countries, given the fact that the B&R involving over 100 countries. Although Urdu and English are co-official languages in Pakistan, several newspapers with high circulations for example Daily Jang, are published in Urdu. More international comparative studies are needed in the future research.

Due to the proliferation of visual-dominated social media platforms, such as Instagram and Youtube, the modality of image has become increasingly important. However, there is a research gap to analyze visual aspect in mediated national image research. The novel multimodal framing research might be a possible approach to examine both verbal and visual resources as well as their inter-modality relations.

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