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Research article

News Framing of the China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Media Analysis

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Abstract:

Purpose: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) became international media headline news as a vision of China which was presented by Xi Jinping back in 2013. The policy actors of China, US, Western, and BRI partnering countries formulate a positive or negative public opinion about BRI through media. This article addresses the questions of how journalists are framing the BRI? What is the headline tone of journalists about BRI? Is international business media and journalists biased towards BRI?

Methodology: A qualitative media framing analysis of the articles published in two newspapers, The Wall Street Journal (N=68) and The Economist (N=32) during the period of January 2012 to June 2019 was conducted.

Findings: Articles from both business journals revealed that journalists cover BRI in three frames; (1) BRI: overview and economic development; (2) geopolitics under BRI, which sub-divided in four frames, (i) geopolitics: BRI and the United State of America, (ii) geopolitics: BRI and Europe, (iii) geopolitics: BRI and Africa, (iv) geopolitics: BRI and Asia; and (3) BRI and world order. The analysis also indicated that international business media is neutral, and journalists interpret, present, and exemplify official statements, reports, political views, and events about BRI.

Implications: The authors consider the implications of the study for international business practitioners who follow these business newspapers. Further, the application of media communication theories could open a new field of research for international business researchers with future practical implications related to projects, products, and business models.

Keywords: Media Frames; The Economist; The Wall Street Journal; Framing Theory; Belt and Road Initiative; China; Geopolitics; Public Opinion.

1. Introduction

Chinese President Xi Jinping brought forward a national vision as a grand project to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe, back in 2013. This project is recognized with several names as China's Belt

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and Road Initiative (BRI), One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. China describes BRI as an infrastructure project for international cooperation (Liu & Dunfor, 2016, p.335), means of world economic development (Intelligence Unit, 2017a), and China's grand connectivity project (Chung, 2017, p.4). The Chinese government made it a paramount national strategy (Du & Zhang, 2018).

It is arguable whether the BRI objectives are purely economic for the world, as China describes. Flint and Zhu (2019) argue that BRI has three goals and strategies: economic integration, regional influence, and global geopolitics in competition to the United States of America. Wang (2016) explains BRI as China's geopolitical move in Asia, Africa, and Europe in competition to the U.S.

Although, the interpretation of BRI goals and strategies depends on context, source, and relationship of stakeholders with the project; for example, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as part of BRI support it, and the U.S and European countries consider it as economic and security threat (Dusyk et al., 2018). The key stakeholders of BRI are governments and the people of the Asian, European, African countries, and the U.S.

The policy actors of stakeholder countries formulate positive or negative public opinions regarding China's Belt and Road Initiative through official public statements, official reports, and mass communication sources like electronic and print media. Policymakers use media to frame public opinions regarding social and economic issues and policies (Smith et al., 2016). Therefore, the Chinese government controlling the international media through strict rules of reporting in China (Reuters, 2019). As a strategy, Chinese policymakers manage national and international media to build a positive public opinion on BRI and overcome adverse public disclosure of competitive stakeholders such as Europe and the U.S (Griffiths, 2018).

It is then a natural question to ask whether international media houses and journalists are biased; they recirculate false facts about China's Belt and Road Initiative because they frame it negatively to build adverse public opinion. The authors argue in this study that it is essential to conduct media framing analysis of competitive stakeholders to verify the Chinese government's assumption that international media are formulating a negative public opinion about BRI. Further, considering the ethical standard of mass communication, in case of media bias, the journalists politicizing the profession, minimizing the interdependent and trust relationship of journalists and the public.

To confirm international media role, the authors conduct a media framing analysis to answer the following research questions:

(1) How are media houses and journalists of international foreign media framing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)?

(2) What is the tone (positive or negative) of media houses and journalists to cover China's Belt and Road Initiative?

2. Literature Review

The main idea of framing theory is that beyond the volume of coverage, the content of the coverage is also important and affects the perception of the audience (Emami et al., 2020). Scheufele (1999) describes framing as a process and frame-setting as making an issue or content bold and salient through a presentation. Birkland (1997) argues that the media system, including editors, journalists, and directors decide how to frame an event or crisis such as a disaster by creating a central theme and accentuate specific elements to narrate the story. In this framing process, the media creates a context to interpret the problem (Kuttschreuter, Gutteling, & De Hond). In fact, the frames are the products of interaction between media, society, and stakeholders (Scheufele 1999).

While media set the frame of reference for the interpretation of their audiences, they are responsible at the same time for the public opinion and the interest of other stakeholders. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) show that when reporting news events, journalists use a handful of non-specific frames in terms of conflict, responsibility, economic consequences human interest, and ethical and moral considerations.

To frame the crises and for better managing the narration of a news event, information subsidies apply to help an organization, institute, or government to embed their perspectives and goals in the coverage of news (Park, Bier, & Palenchar). In most cases, organizations primarily use information subsidies to deliver their message to the public through the news subject (Dier & Donohue, 2013). Turk (1985) suggests that information subsidies can be proactive and reactive. Proactive subsidies (e.g., press releases and press conferences) are triggered by public relations; while reactive subsidies (e.g., answers to the questions raised from society and asked by journalists) are initiated by journalists.

McCombs (2017) argues that framing is a dominant aspect of contemporary journalism. Hallahan (1999) suggests that framing plays a crucial role in public relations especially in crisis communication and framing theories explain how much media coverage of news events and crises affects the development of the issue. Entman (1993: 52) defines framing as “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 for the item described”. Framing directs the thought and feelings of social actors towards an event (Lee & Basnyat, 2013) and affects their reactions (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997).

Entman (1993) identifies four locations in the communication process, including communicators, text, receivers, and culture. He suggests “The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotypical images, source of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p. 52). The language is used by journalists to describe events and selected by organizational information subsidies to shape perceptions of audiences from that event. Edelman (1988) expresses that “It is language about political events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience; even developments that are close by taking their meaning from the language that depicts them” (p. 104).

Lee and Basnyat (2013) suggest that information subsidies are framed products. Information subsidies play an important role in the framing of news and consequently influence public perception of an event, issue, organization, or news subject (Andsager & Powers, 1999). Therefore, an organization can be better presented in media coverage if its public relations department provides journalists with information subsidies (Lee & Basnyat, 2013; McCombs, 2004).

2.1. Framing analysis

Public perceptions and interpretations about an event are shaped and influenced by the information which becomes salient in the environment (Heider, 1958). Framing theory suggests that media affect the public perception more than just create saliency, and they are shaped by how media frame a story (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) and define the story’s meaning (Hallahan, 1999). Among the various frames that are identified by the literature in regards to news, Neuman, Just, & Crigler (1992) identified a few of them that are used in U.S. news coverage, including conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality. In another study, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) analyzed news stories that are covered by five national newspapers and television during the period of Amsterdam meeting of European heads of state in 1997 and recognized five news frames including attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic, human interest, and morality. Some of the most important frames are as following:

2.1.1. Human interest frame: One of the mainframes is the human interest frame. This frame “brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Padin (2005) suggests that when a crisis or disaster happens, the human-interest frame stimulates the psychological pulse of people. Cho and Gower (2006) suggest that the human-interest frame is a significant predictor of blame and responsibility in a transgression crisis because it influences the audiences’ emotional response.

2.1.2. Conflict frame: This frame reflects conflict and disagreement among individuals or organizations. A study by Neuman et al. (1992) showed that the conflict frame was commonly used by U.S. news media, and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that this frame was the second most commonly used frame, especially for covering more serious news.

2.1.3. Morality frame: This frame covers the issues and subjects with the lens of morals, social prescriptions, and religious tenets. Neuman et al. (1992) showed that the morality frame was rarely used by journalists directly due to the journalistic norm of objectivity, and rather usually used indirectly through quotations or inference.

2.1.4. Economic frame: This frame reports an event or news subject in terms of its economic consequences on the audience or other people, groups, or organizations. If its economic impact is significant, the news value for audiences is considerable (Graber, 1993).

2.1.5. Attribution of responsibility frame: This frame is defined by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000, p. 96) as “a way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group”. They found that this frame was most used in serious newspapers.

2.2. Framing as a process

The power of framing lies in its focus on communicative processes. Communication a dynamic process involves frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions (De Vreese, 2005). Entman (1993) identified components of the frames including the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. These components participate in the process of framing in stages of frame-building, frame-setting, and individual and societal level consequences of framing (d’Angelo, 2002).

a) Frame-building refers to the factors that form the structure of the news frames and determine how media frame events and subjects (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The outcomes of the frame-building process are the frames manifested in the text (De Vreese, 2005). *b) Frame-setting*, on the other hand, refers to the interaction between media frames and the audience's prior knowledge. Frames of a news story may affect *and change* the receiver’s *perception and* interpretation of the event. Frame-setting performs elaborately to find out under which circumstances audiences reflect the frames that are presented to them by the media. *c) the consequences of framing can be seen in two individual and societal levels. Farming can change and alter the attitude of a person towards an issue (individual level) or may contribute toshaping processes such as political socialization and collective actions (social level).*

In framing processes, frames can be both independent and dependent variables. Media frames may be studied as the dependent variable, i.e., the outcome of the production process. Media frames may also be studied as independent variables, i.e. the antecedents of audience interpretations (De Vreese, 2005). Figure 1 depicts an integrated process of framing. It shows that linking frame-building and frame-setting develops news framing.

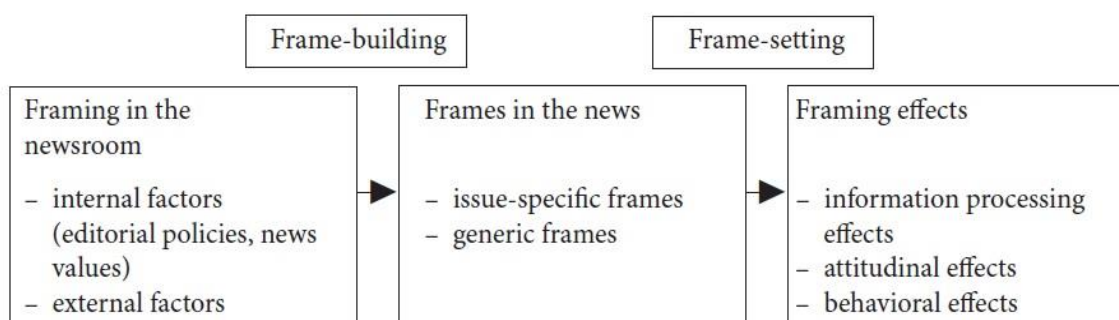


Figure 1- An integrated process model of framing (De Vreese, 2005)

2.4 Framing Theory and Media:

Framing is also defined as a theory (Scheufele, 1999), analysis (Endres, 2004), approach, process (McLeod & Detenber, 1999), a class of media effect (Price et al., 1997), and a paradigm (Entman, 1993). The concepts of frames through which individuals present their experience were introduced by Goffman (1947). Framing is to select a reality or an agenda and make it visible in a mass communication text, in such a way that it endorses a problem, moral evaluation, interpretation of the social and political issue, and offers a solution to a defined problem (Entman, 1993; Entman, 2007). Framing impacts public opinion on national and international concerns, such as geopolitics, international laws, investment projects, war, security, and religion (Emami et al., 2020; Buist & Mason, 2010).

Framing links the mass communication media, public opinions, and policy. The policymakers and governments use framing to define social and political issues, as well as their economic policy as part of their efforts to formulate public opinion (Azpiroz, 2013). The media houses and journalists use framing by expressing and assigning specific language and characteristics to people, actions, or ideas (Kuypers, 2010).

2.5. Media Framing and International Business

In the current era of globalization, it is an undisputed fact that media has a decisive role in the governance, policymaking, geopolitics, communication, and economy of nations (Jönsson, 2011). According to Global snapshot, 2.078 billion people out of the world population of 7.210 billion linked with social or electronic media directly or indirectly, which impacts international business (Larsen, 2017). A definite association exists among media, politics, and international business (Castan & Martinelli, 2018). China's BRI has conflicting descriptions, for example, explained as a world economic development project (Chung, 2017, p.4), and a geopolitical project, as well (Flint & Zhu, 2019). Further, China takes this assumption that international media are formulating negative public opinion related to BRI. Therefore, the authors question how international foreign media houses and journalists are framing China's Belt and Road Initiative? So far, this is the first study linking the framing theory of mass media communication with international business subjects. The scholars select two business media newspapers from the countries which are considered as rivals to BRI, the Wall Street Journal, and The Economist.

3. Methodology

The qualitative framing models guide to identify the context of news which media present to the public. Media frames illustrate an approach that influences human consciousness through communication towards social, political, and economic issues (Entman, 1993). Media build public perception of national and international events, projects, nations, and religions (Jönsson, 2011; Lambert, 2018).

To examine the international media framing of China's Belt and Road Initiative, 100-articles were analyzed from top international liberal-business-newspapers, The Economist (N=38), and The Wall Street Journal (N=68), from the UK and the U.S. The Economist (weekly newspaper) and The Wall Street Journal (daily newspaper) have the highest circulation of 1.2 million and 1.4 million around the world. Figure 2 shows the methodology.

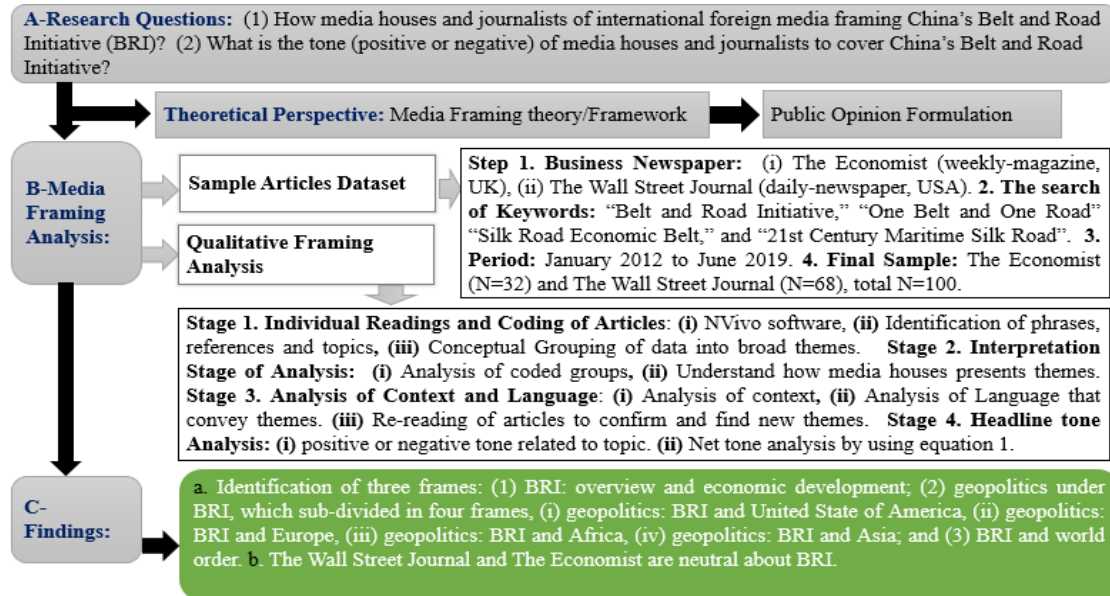


Figure 2. Research Design

3.1 Sample Articles Dataset

The articles dataset consists of news articles, columns, editors' opinion letters, and editorial-page commentary by following Lambert (2018) which contains keywords, "Belt and Road Initiative," "One Belt and One Road" "Silk Road Economic Belt," and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". The editor's opinion letters and editorial-page commentary letters are included in the dataset as it represents the public opinion (Ross, 2003) about social issues, events, and projects.

Initially, an in-depth search resulted in 46 and 269 articles from The Economist and The Wall Street Journal containing keywords mentioned above, anywhere in the news article. The articles were published from September 2013, when Chinese president Xi Jinping announced BRI officially, to June 2019. The duplicate and irrelevant articles which had these keywords but did not directly address BRI were excluded from the dataset, which resulted in a final dataset of 32 and 68 relevant articles from The Economist and The Wall Street Journal, respectively. Figure 3 shows details of articles per year.

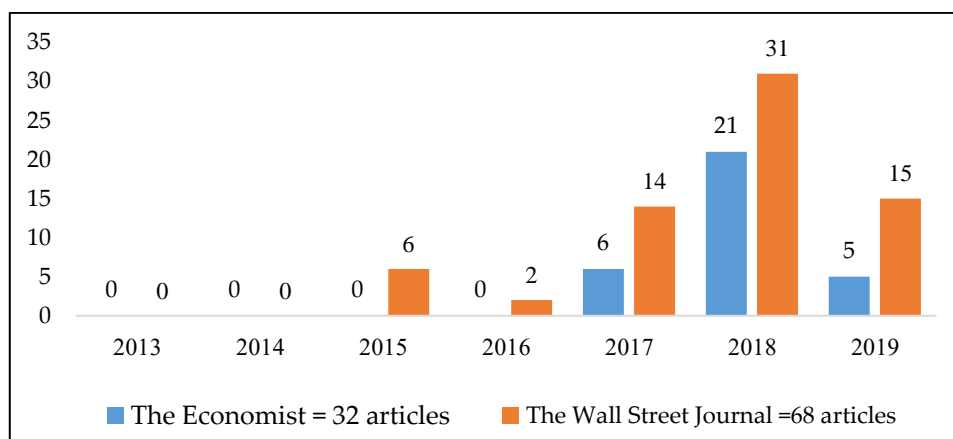


Figure 3. Distribution of the articles (Year and Media outlets)

3.2 Qualitative Framing Analysis

The authors adapted the frame analysis of Kuypers (2010) and Lambert (2018) to outline this study. The analysis consists of several stages as no predefined themes or frames exist on the topic. The first stage of analysis involved utilization of the NVivo software, preparing individual articles to identify the critical phrases, topics, and references. The identified phrases were coded manually in NVivo. The article's phrases are grouped into broad themes through coding in NVivo to understand the data and structure (Riessman, 2004; Bahoo, Alon, & Paltrinieri, 2020a).

The second stage is the interpretation of the analysis. The authors independently used the data to analyze the content (Bahoo et al., 2018; Paltrinieri et al., 2019; Bahoo et al., 2019) Each identified group was analyzed in NVivo. The analysis reflected classes or groups indicating how media houses and journalists wanted the themes to be presented and understood (Bahoo, Alon, & Paltrinieri, 2020b; Bahoo, Alon, & Floreani, 2021).

In the third stage, the authors examined the context and language of articles and how media houses and journalists convey the specific ideas in frames at the third stage of analysis (Creswell, 2014; Ahmed, Bahoo, & Ayub, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2020). The articles were reviewed to find and confirm new themes independently by authors . no new themes were found. However, conflicts related to theme identification and presentation were discussed and resolved by the authors.

Finally, in the fourth stage, the authors conducted headline tone analysis by following Bleich et al. (2018) to identify net tone (positive or negative) through following formula;

$$\text{Net tone (t)} = \frac{\text{Headlines with a positive tone (t)} - \text{Headlines with a negative tone (t)}}{\text{Total number of coded headlines (t)}} \dots\dots(\text{Eq.1})$$

(Source; Bleich et al., 2018, p.246)

The authors independently coded positive or negative tones of headlines related to BRI and the conflicts were resolved through discussion.

4. Results

The communication professionals' functions and reporting are based on the following assumptions/ characteristics related to BRI: first, journalists share the information which they believe is correct. Second, they rely on government official statements and interpretations. Third, they shape the news as a result of the political and economic relationship of China with the world. Finally, they also present experiences of BRI partnering countries for further elaboration.

The authors identified the following frames: (1) BRI: overview and economic development; (2) geopolitics under BRI, which sub-divided in four frames, (i) geopolitics: BRI and the United State of America, (ii) geopolitics: BRI and Europe, (iii) geopolitics: BRI and Africa, (iv) geopolitics: BRI and Asia; and (3) BRI and world order (See Figure 4 and A1). Further, the authors identified the net tone value of both media houses and journalists' headlines (see Table 1). The framing mechanism of journalists is discussed next. Some important quotes from both media houses about frames are given in appendix B.

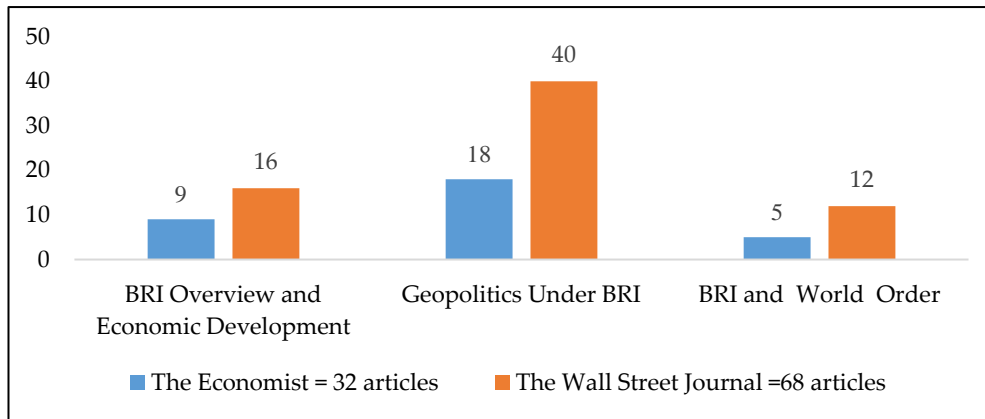


Figure 4. Distribution of articles based on identified frames.

4.1. Frame 1: BRI: Overview and Economic Development

The journalists employed a descriptive and positive frame to explain China' BRI. Advocates focus on presenting the overview and economic impact of BRI. Both media houses argue that Chinese President Xi Jinping brought forward the vision of China's BRI back in 2013. China's claims that BRI is a win-win cooperation to promote common development, prosperity, and friendship to enhance mutual trust and understanding among member countries (National Development & Reform Commission (NDRC), 2015). China promotes this vision through five cooperation priorities: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bond (NDRC, 2015; Cheng, 2019).

Further, President Xi Jinping presented a two-pronged vision of BRI. One is the Modernization vision, and the second is Common Destiny Vision. The Modernization vision related to economics and Common Destiny Vision is political in nature. The journalists cover these two conflicting visions as the imperialism of the rising power of China, which will lead to economic collapse and war ("Imperialism Will Be Dangerous for China," 2018). Neutrally, both media houses cover BRI as promotion of infrastructure connectively and investment through Eurasia and development of the maritime ties between China and African and Western countries. China made a considerable investment to connect maritime and road routes (Intelligence Unit, 2017b). It encompasses 68 countries across Central & Eastern Eurasia and the Asian maritime Pacific (Intelligence Unit, 2017a). It connects 63% of the global population and produces 1/3rd of the world's GDP (Schwartzel, 2017). It includes major religions, regions, industries, products, and civilization standards (Yu, 2019). China also planned to build a digital silk road under BRI ("China talks of building a 'digital Silk Road,'" 2018).

The journalists also equate BRI with the U.S post-WWII Marshal Plan to connect the regions, promote economic development and regional security (“Will China’s Belt and Road Initiative outdo the Marshall Plan?”, 2018). The U.S Marshall plan resulted in regional economic growth, NATO as a security framework, and Bretton Woods system to established U.S Dollar-standard for the global monetary system. Similarly, China promotes comparable multilateral, regional framework through BRI, which resulted in the following output: 16+1 Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, ASEAN+3, BRI economic corridor, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (Bahoo et al., 2018), Asian infrastructure investment bank, Silk Road Fund, New Development Bank, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Under the BRI, China establishing the Overseas Economic and Trade Cooperation Zones (OETCZ). Currently following six types of OETCZs are working; (Zeng, Zhao, & Hu, 2018): 1) Processing and Manufacturing (e.g., Pakistan Ruba Economic Zone, etc.); 2) Resource utilization (e.g., Russia Tomsk Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, etc.); 3) Trade and Logistic (e.g. Hungary Central European Trade and Logistics Cooperation Zone, etc.); 4) Technology Development (e.g. Thailand China-ASEAN BeiDou Industrial Park, etc.); and 5) Comprehensive industry (e.g. Thailand Sino-Thai Zone, etc.).

According to Government Guidance, Enterprise Decision Market Operation, China increased its OETCZs to 99 in 44 countries (Liu, 2018). The 75 OETCZs were established in 24 BRI participating countries, which hosts 3800 enterprises (MOFCOM, 2017). These OETCZs were established with a total investment of \$ 25.5 billion, which will generate nearly \$ 1.7 billion in tax payments to BRI countries. It also produces 220,000, local employment opportunities (Jin, 2018).

Overall, the media houses and journalists are neutral and positive in explaining the overview and economic impact of the BRI.

4.2. Frame 2: Geopolitics under BRI

China’s BRI has three goals and strategies: economic integration, regional influence, and global geopolitics in competition to the U.S. Moreover, the Common Destiny Vision in the articulation of President Xi Jinping is a regional political connection among BRI countries. The journalists of both media houses discuss and present geopolitical association, threats, advantages, and disadvantages of BRI to African, Asian, Western, Latin American countries, and the U.S under frame two.

The journalists use a negative frame while describing the BRI and geopolitics. They sub-divide geopolitics frame into the following four sub-frames: (i) geopolitics: BRI and United State of America, (ii) geopolitics: BRI and Europe, (iii) geopolitics: BRI and Africa, and (iv) geopolitics: BRI and Asia. The authors next present details of each frame.

4.2.1. Geopolitics: BRI and United States of America

This panel addressed public relations and other national and international institutions. In 2015, Financial Times described BRI with wording “Like the Marshall Plan,” the new silk road designed to

solve economic vulnerabilities. The rhetoric of calling China's BRI as China's Marshall Plan has become popular. China BRI and US Marshall Plan have similarities and goals to create the world order through political-economic investments and development aid, the relative difference of global position of rivalries as Russia in Marshall Plan and US in BRI (Shen & Chan, 2018).

China's BRI is a geopolitical "challenge" to US political, business, and trade interests in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe (Flint & Zhu, 2019). The journalists cover BRI in this frame as a geopolitical strategy of China to build political connections with Asian, African, Latin American, and European countries in competition to the US. The journalists interpret official statements, reports, and actions of the US government related to China trade and BRI. The recent trade war between China and the US shows resistance and economic rivalry (Shen & Chan, 2018).

The US government considers BRI a geopolitical strategy of China, and as a response, they formulated an international coalition known as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). TPP is a multilateral trade agreement among major countries of the Pacific Rim to counter the influence of China ("Obama's TPP Would Have Helped Limit China," 2019).

To counter the growth of China and BRI, the US government filed a consultation with the World Trade Organization against China for unethical trade practices and violations of intellectual property rights in April 2014. This consultation resulted in a global trade war between China and the US, and they implemented tariffs on mutual imports ("America and China are in a proper trade war," 2018). The US government also announced to counter their interest against China's hegemonic global objectives and defending their relationship with allies in East Asia, which will help US's forces to counter China expansions ("How to Win a Cold War with Beijing," 2018).

The journalists report cold war II between China and US after the press briefing of US Vice President Mike Pence on October 4, 2018, at Hudson Institute. Mr. Pence announced that the US government would respond to the rivalry of China to defend US economic and political interests ("Mike Pence Announces Cold War II," 2018). He added that China was using debt diplomacy through BRI in Asian, African, and Latin American countries. To counter China debt diplomacy, the US approved the Build Act of \$60 billion development financing program to counter China's BRI in Africa and Asia. US government would also defend their fifth-generation or 5G infrastructure from Chinese telecommunication companies (O'Keeffe, 2018). Therefore, US decided to ban Chinese Huawei (Strumpf & Asa Fitch, 2019). Generally, journalists cover a negative relationship between Chinese BRI and US.

4.2.2. Geopolitics: BRI and Europe

China's foreign affairs reflect the European contribution in terms of seeking modernization and constructing a multi-polar/interpolar world. The relationship between Europe and China was long-lasting, and Europe had been China's biggest trade partner for the last 12 years. Europe and China are having a total population of nearly 1.4 billion and large markets. The bilateral trade value between China-Europe was \$600 billion in 2014 (Minghao, 2016).

The bilateral and multilateral collaboration agreement 16+1 signed between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries under BRI. Hungary signed an MOU with China on integrating BRI with its "Opening to the East" and Opening to the South initiatives"¹. Poland also wanted to serve as a hub of BRI in Europe². French shipping operator ordered ten container mega-ships from China State Shipbuilding Corp (Paris, 2019). Recently, Italy signed to join BRI through the establishment of ports at the Venice and Trieste (Legorano, 2019). Meanwhile, fourteen European countries, including France and U.K. joined the BRI and China-proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, despite U.S. opposition³. Further, E.U. and China declared to work for the betterment of the environment and planet together ("Will China fill the vacuum left by America?" 2017).

In recent years, China and Europe's relationship facing new challenges of economic, political, and security nature. China and Europe are rediscovering each other relationship. China needs the support of world powers Russia, Europe, and the U.S. to complete the BRI⁴. The journalists of both media houses present a negative frame related to BRI and Europe in terms of geopolitics.

China is facing several problems (Minghao, 2016) such as first, the trust deficit between China and Europe on BRI. The journalists of both newspapers equate the BRI with aggressive imperial Germany, which eventually drew Europe into World War II ("Wilhelmine Germany Is a Better Analogy for China," 2019). European countries consider China as an economic and security risk. European countries believe that Chinese firms will be harmful to local firms ("Europeans fret that Chinese investment is a security risk," 2018).

Second, Europe believes that China influences through BRI can result in "divide and rule." The journalists also frame BRI investment as a security risk for European countries. According to a recent report by the European commission China foreign investment debt model under BRI and most extensive military ambitions posed security threats to E.U. ("Europe's China Dilemma," 2019). The U.K. also was concerned about the China usage of Royal Navy passages in the South China Sea and claimed its ownership ("The British government is growing warier of China," 2019).

Third, China and Europe must handle the U.S. and geopolitics factors. The US is a direct competitor of China in trade, development, and political power. The U.S. considers China as a threat to its control of the global economy and world order. The journalists report the concerns of the U.S. on joining the European countries under BRI with China. For example, recently, Italy signed an MOU with China for the construction of ports under BRI, but it is also a challenge for Italy to manage a relationship with the U.S., which opposes the China BRI (Legorano, 2019).

Overall, journalists and media houses present a negative political frame related to BRI in the context of Europe. Media professionals are interpreting the official statements, reports, and comments of European countries' governments.

4.2.3. Geopolitics: BRI and Africa

According to China, Belt and Road Initiative is a global strategy of China for Eurasia, Latin America, and Africa. Similarly, China is actively involved in cooperation with Africa, since 2000, and BRI is a new name for this relationship. Sino-Africa cooperation is old and reliable. China organized two cooperative frameworks the China-Africa cooperation summit, and China-AU strategic dialogue mechanism in 2000 and 2008 (Aoyama, 2017). In 2008, China deployed naval vessels to the coast of Somalia to deal with piracy issues and conducted UN peacekeeping operations in Africa.

First, the official meeting of the China-Africa Media Summit of 47 African nations and 120 communication companies held in Beijing in 2015 under BRI. The purpose of the summit was to provide China support to communication companies to Africa in competition to Western media (People Daily Online, 2015).

Xi Jinping revealed several basic plans for Africa under BRI strategy (Aoyama, 2017); First, China will construct a naval supply station and port at Djibouti to support the maritime trade route which connects with Europe. Second, China will provide \$60 billion in financial assistance to African nations for development. Third, China will establish a \$10 billion China-Africa Fund for production capacity cooperation of Africa. Fourth, China will provide a grant of \$6 million to the African Union (AU) established at the United National General Assembly.

The media houses and journalists are interpreting and framing the cooperation projects of China in Africa negatively through exemplifying the experience of Asian countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia. The journalists and writers of business houses covering the China debt under BRI to the world's poorest nations may lead to financial debt crises in Africa like Asian countries (Wong & Areddy, 2018). The financial debt crises in Africa will result in more poverty and instability.

China state-owned Civil Engineering Construction Corporation and China State Construction Engineering Corporation have built a multipurpose port in Djibouti under BRI, which was planned in 2015. According to journalists, China military and government took charge of this strategic asset (port) under the debt trap to East African country for 99 years, as the Djibouti government unable to pay the debt ("China Tightens Grip on East African Port," 2019).

Overall, business journalists interpret and frame the China debt model of BRI in Africa as political diplomacy, which is harmful to the poorest African nations. Chinese government's main objective is economic and political influence in Africa instead of the stability of the region. Therefore, the government is funding their citizens to travel to Africa as tourists to create an influential image of China in Africa ("China's high-spending tourists bring political clout," 2019).

4.2.4. Geopolitics: BRI and Asia

Wang Jisi first proposed the idea of BRI in a Global Times article to Chinese 5th generation leadership in 2012. He argued that the U.S. is boxing with China in the maritime East with its Asian pivot, and China should march to the West by expanding its economic and security ties with neighbors in Asia. Therefore, Xi Jinping decided to propose both Silk Road and Maritime Road under

the BRI and formulated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Silk Road Fund with geo-economical and geopolitical objectives.

Xi Jinping sees BRI as a concrete project that will support the China Dream and Asia Dream of promoting win-win cooperation and outcomes with its neighbors in Asia. Asia has an infrastructure gap of \$8 trillion funding as per the report of Asia Development Bank, and China used its comparative advantage in the construction industry to fill this gap under BRI (Callahan, 2016). China established AIIB and Silk Road Fund with %100 billion and \$50 billion to support the BRI.

The BRI covers nearly the whole of Asia through several projects. 24 Asian countries are a member of BRI, which include eight South Asian (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan), eleven Southeast Asian (Mongolia, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, East Timor), and five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) (Travel, 2019).

In Asia, Pakistan is the gateway of BRI and a significant recipient of Chinese development financing of \$62 billion under a sub-project called China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Bahoo et al., 2018). CPEC includes multiple projects of roads, railways, ports, energy, and technology to convert Pakistan's port Gwadar among the best port around the world. Gwadar port will connect with Djibouti port that is the principal maritime root towards Europe.

Journalists cover the sub-frame of BRI and geopolitics of Asia, negatively. The journalists argue that Pakistan is facing a financial crisis due to the debt financing and the debt trap of China under BRI. Pakistan is approaching International Monetary Funds (IMF) for a bailout package of \$8 to \$10 billion due to current financial crises ("China's Global Building Spree Hits Trouble in Pakistan," 2018). U.S. argues that Pakistan will stratify the Chinese debt with IMF bailout package and opposing the package ("U.S. Seeks to Avoid a Pakistan Bailout That Would Repay China," 2018). Pakistan's new government is expecting interest-free loans from China and accountability of completed projects under CPEC ("Another 'Belt and Road' Hostage," 2018).

Both media houses and journalists cover BRI as the Chinese debt trap and a new political and military influence of China on Asian countries. The journalists justify their coverage through the example of Sri Lanka, which is the victim of Chinese billions of debts under BRI. To settle down the debt, China took control of its strategic Hambantota port for 99 years ("More Belt and Road Backlash," 2018).

According to journalists, the Maldives could be the second victim of the Chinese debt trap under BRI, because its external debt will be 51.2% of GDP by 2021 due to Chinese development financing. China could take charge of the strategic assets of Maldives ("More Belt and Road Backlash," 2018).

The case of Sri Lanka has sparked dissatisfaction among other Asian members of BRI, such as Pakistan (demanding better terms), Malaysia (canceled existing agreements), Myanmar (scale back projects), and Maldives (new government wants to avoid Chinese debt). Recently, newly elected

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad government said no to Chinese project of \$ 20 billion under BRI due to Chinese debt diplomacy (“Chinese Investment in Infrastructure is Often a Diplomatic Trap,” 2019).

Russia and India are significant and essential countries in the geopolitics of Asia. China is unwilling to add India due to its U.S. relationship. Russia world largest country joined China’s Belt and Road Initiative after the sanctions of U.S. and Europe Union. Currently, Russia is part of two projects, the Moscow-Kazan high-speed railway, and the Yamal liquefied natural gas plant (Bennett & Bennett, 2016). The engagement of the Russian in BRI is a big success for China in Asia to start new Sino-Russia relationships (“The New Beijing-Moscow Axis,” 2019).

4.3 Frame 3: BRI and World Order

Journalists report this sub-frame of world order according to official statements and actions of significant stakeholders of BRI. China and U.S. stake in opposition to each other. The media houses cover implied thoughts of both China and the U.S. on BRI and world order. The media professionals link China efforts to establish a new world order with circumstances, characteristics of China, and the rest of the world.

China introduces BRI as a vision of win-win cooperation, an initiative of economic development, prosperity, and friendship among partnering countries, and follows it as a national paramount strategy (Du & Zhang, 2018). On the contrary, the Western world, and the U.S. contemplate BRI as a geopolitical tool of China to establish a new Sino-world order (Flint & Zhu, 2019). The rivalry of the U.S. against China’s BRI and trade war signals a broader global shift to the world order that has been evolving for decades. U.S. and China emerged as the 19th Century Great Power rivalries. China willingness to establish a new world order through China-centered ethics and rules will create a large change in modern historical and geopolitical trends around the world.

China's intentions resonate with the assertive global world order with illiberal political system, and China-centered rules under the camouflage of BRI and debt diplomacy, which is an issue of world security (“Behold the New Emperor of China,” 2017). Sino-world order is a security risk, Western countries and the U.S. support their argument with the communist political system of China. They argue that the appointment of Xi Jinping as a lifetime president justifies their opinion about the “new emperor of China” (“China’s leader, Xi Jinping, will be allowed to reign forever,” 2018). Therefore, the world order from a non-democratic 21st Century Emperor is a security risk for the world (“Behold the New Emperor of China,” 2017).

The U.S. and Western countries criticize Belt and Road Initiative as a political step by China’s non-democratic leader, who considers himself as guardian of globalization (“China’s President Xi Casts Country as Guardian of Globalization,” 2017). Although China betrays its own words by taking charge of strategic assets through debt diplomacy of Sri Lanka, and destabilizing and militarizing the region with the establishment of seven artificial islands in the South China Sea, ignoring the disputes

of other five nations and ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at Hague" ("Xi Jinping's Superpower Plans," 2018).

China itself defies the characteristics and behavior of a superpower through its policies instead of taking the role of guardian of the global economy ("China Says Prepared to Lead Global Economy if Necessary," 2017). Chinese government wants to fulfill its vision of world order through debt-diplomacy, which is reflected in Asia. They are trying to complete "China's Asian Dream" (order in Asia) through politics and debt diplomacy by building an empire along BRI ("Building an Empire Along the New Silk Road," 2017).

4.4 Headline Tone Analysis

The authors quantitatively analyze the headline tone of both media houses to examine the net tone by following Bleichi et al. (2018) and Benson (2013). The two independent researchers did the coding of headlines with "positive or negative" tones independently and resolved conflicts. The coding is based on the Chinese government's assumption that BRI is a global infrastructure project for world connection and development. Therefore, the positive tone articles present the benefits or details, and the negative tone articles show the risk or drawback of China's BRI. For example, the following headlines are coded as positive and negative.

Positive:

- Italy's plan to join China's Belt and Road Initiative ruffles feathers (The Economist)
- France's CMA CGM to Buy Chinese-Made Container Ships (The Wall Street Journal)

Negative:

- China Tightens Grip on East African Port (The Wall Street Journal)
- China's belt-and-road plans are to be welcomed—and worried about (The Economist)

Our approach and analysis of coding of headline tones show that 16 articles (50%) out of a total of 32 from The Economist (UK) have a negative tone and 16 articles (50%) reflect positively. In the Wall Street Journal (USA), 36 articles (52%) out of a total 68 contain negative tone, and 32 articles (48%) have a positive tone. Figure 5 shows the details. The findings are helpful in amending the assumption that foreign media are building a negative opinion about BRI.

The foreign media are reporting the events as they occur, for example, debt crises of Pakistan, and control of strategic assets of Sri Lanka. Further, the analysis of headline tones under each frame is given in Figure 6. The analysis shows that the most negative tone articles belong to the second (geopolitics and BRI) and third (BRI and world order) frame.

Finally, the authors conducted net tone analysis of headlines through equation 1 by following Bleichi et al. (2018). The net tone ranged between -1 to +1. The sets of headlines have negative, neutral, and positive tones if the results of the net tone analysis are between; -1 to 0, 0, and 0 to +1, respectively.

Table 1 shows an analysis of net tone for both foreign business media outlets. The results show that The Economist is neutral in terms of reporting China' BRI with a net tone of 0. The Wall Street Journal has a negative tone of -0.04 but still not too negative. Therefore, the authors conclude that reporting of foreign media houses is neutral towards China's BRI.

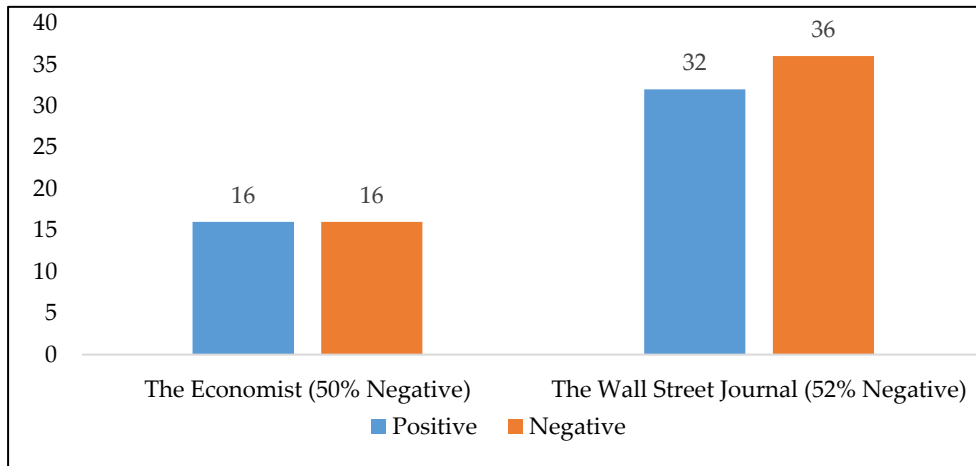


Figure 5. Distribution of articles based on tone of headlines

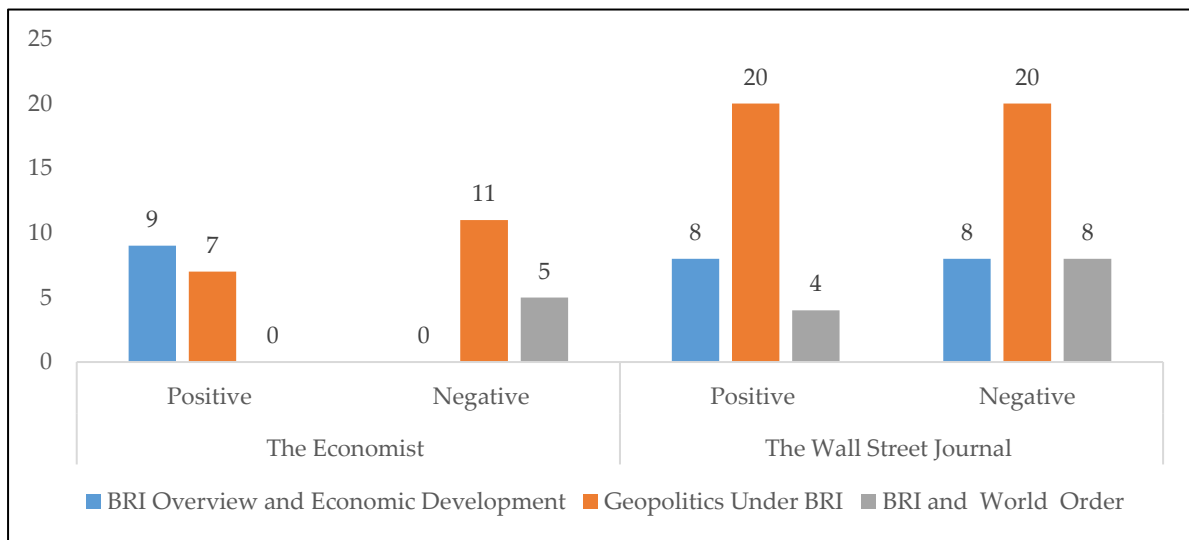


Figure 6. Distribution of articles in frames based on tone of headlines

Table 1. Net Tone Analysis

Tone	The Economist		The Wall Street Journal	
	Number (n)	Percentage (%)	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive	16	50	32	48
Negative	16	50	36	52
Total	32		68	
Net Tone		0		-0.04

Note: Tables show the net tone analysis of both media outlets; The Economist and The Wall Street Journal during the period of January 2012-March 2019. Equation 1 is used to calculate net tone.

5. Conclusion

The media framing analysis of China's BRI cannot be generalized to the large population of international news journalists and media houses, but it provides essential insights into how international media is reporting and covering the BRI to build public opinion. This study for the first time applied mass communication theory or framework of "framing" to an international business topic. Further, it is also the first study that examines media coverage of BRI as well.

The qualitative analysis of framing the BRI by the journalists of two top media houses shows that journalists formulate framing mechanisms by embedding the most negative and positive interpretations of the official statements, official reports, and actual events related to BRI. However, the journalists are neutral while reporting BRI.

The findings of this study contribute to the international business literature that formulating public opinion through mass communication sources like business newspapers is more common and put into practice. The journalists' coverage of China's BRI resulted in three significant frames; (1) BRI: overview and economic development; (2) geopolitics under BRI, which further sub-divided into four themes, (i) geopolitics: BRI and United State of America, (ii) geopolitics: BRI and Europe, (iii) geopolitics: BRI and Africa, (iv) the geopolitics: BRI and Asia; and (3) BRI and world order.

It is surprising to find that The Wall Street Journal is neutral related to China's BRI; even though the U.S. is the main rivalry to BRI. The Economist also covers the BRI neutrally. The journalists' main concern was related to the geopolitical motives of China under the camouflage of BRI.

However, the journalists of both media houses cover the geopolitical aspects of BRI negatively because they have access to countless stories about BRI as politicians, economists, governments, and investors are discussing it. The authors believe that one of the main reasons for the negative coverage is China itself, which falls short of revealing secrets and motives behind BRI. Chinese policymakers need to evaluate international media criticism positively to make BRI more successful.

One of the limitations of this study is analyzing only two business newspapers though the sample size of 100 is reasonable for business newspapers with daily (The Wall Street Journal) and weekly (The Economist) circulation from U.S. and U.K. The authors selected the business newspapers given the nature of the topic, which falls in the international business domain. However, future

researchers could examine the frames in general international newspapers to explore how the international media are framing BRI? Another possible limitation and future research direction to know is how Chinese (language) media are framing BRI nationally? It would be interesting to analyze, compare, and discuss the international and Chinese media coverage of BRI.

6. Implications

This study carries several implications for business practitioners, the general public, policymakers, and academic scholars. First, the media connotations of framing public opinions are more likely to be neutral and report facts related to BRI. However, study findings reveal that media tone is more negative when the story is about geopolitics and politicians, which may affect general public opinion negatively.

Second, the study findings present valuable results for business practitioners who are skeptical of facts, information, and coverage related to BRI offered by the Wall Street Journal and The Economist. They show both both media houses are reliable and unbiased in term of BRI because their tone is neutral.

Third, Chinese policymakers may find the article results useful by learning that the international media are neutral in reporting the BRI and only report actual adverse facts and events. They have to reconsider their assumptions that international media only negatively report BRI to build negative public opinion. They should consider the criticism positively to make improvements.

Finally, so far, this is the first study that applies communication theory or analysis or framework to an international business topic i.e. China' Belt and Road Initiative. This study expands the role of mass communication media to formulate a public opinion on real-life business projects, policies, and products. This study assumes that survival, profitability, and success of any business project highly depend on public opinions. Accordingly, the findings of this research add value to the existing literature of media communication and business by indicating that they are interconnected and it is essential to explore the media's role in international business.

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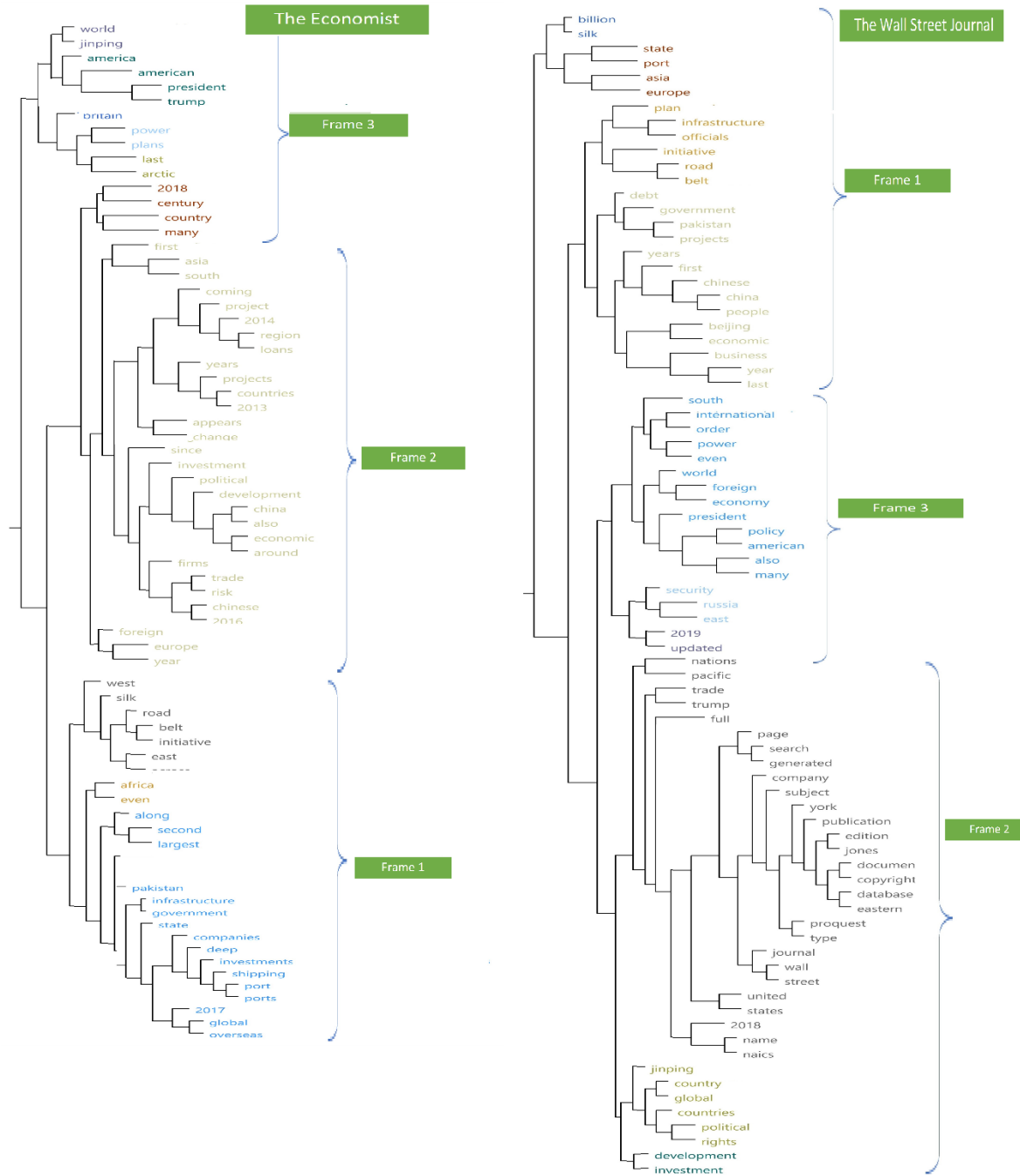
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Appendix A: Figure A1. Cluster analysis through NVivo for media houses.

The robustness check of frames through the Cluster analysis



Appendix B: Important media quotes represents frames.**Frame1: BRI: Overview and Economic Development**

The Economist- "OVER the weekend Xi Jinping welcomed 28 heads of state and government to Beijing for a coming-out party, which continues today, to celebrate the "belt and road" initiative, his most ambitious foreign policy. Launched in 2013 as "one belt, one road", it involves China underwriting billions of dollars of infrastructure investment in countries along the old Silk Road linking it with Europe. The ambition is immense. China is spending roughly \$150bn a year in the 68 countries that have signed up to the scheme" (Intellegence Unit, 2017a).

The Wall Street Journal- "Chinese investments including railways and power grids in at least 69 countries that mirror the ancient Silk Road, including parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe" (Schwartzel, 2017).

The Economist- "Xi Jinping, China's president, has revealed few details, beyond that it will encompass quantum computing, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, big data and cloud storage. In April he said it would involve helping other countries to build digital infrastructure and develop internet security. The digital Silk Road will help to create "a community of common destiny in cyberspace", suggests Chen Zhaoxiong, a vice-minister of information technology ("China talks of building a 'digital Silk Road,'" 2018).

The Economist- "China is making strides towards establishing itself as a maritime power. From mid-2016 to mid-2017 Chinese firms announced around US\$20bn-worth of investment in nine overseas ports, around double that for the year-earlier period" (Intellegence Unit, 2017b).

The Economist- "How China's infrastructure projects around the world stack up against America's plan to rebuild post-war Europe. Seventy years ago, America passed the Economic Co-operation Act, better known as the Marshall Plan. Drawing inspiration from a speech at Harvard University by George Marshall, America's secretary of state, it aimed to revive Europe's war-ravaged economies" ("Will China's Belt and Road Initiative outdo the Marshall Plan?," 2018).

The Economist- "How China's infrastructure projects around the world stack up against America's plan to rebuild post-war Europe. Seventy years ago, America passed the Economic Co-operation Act, better known as the Marshall Plan. Drawing inspiration from a speech at Harvard University by George Marshall, America's secretary of state, it aimed to revive Europe's war-ravaged economies" ("Will China's Belt and Road Initiative outdo the Marshall Plan?," 2018).

Frame2: Geopolitics under BRI**i. Geopolitics: BRI and United States of America**

The Wall Street Journal- "Letter writer Scott Pierce (March 18) says that, "President Obama had eight years in the White House to build an international coalition in favor of a tougher approach to China ("Obama's TPP Would've Helped Limit China," 2019).

The Economist- "ANOTHER week, a further ratcheting up of trade tensions between America and China. On September 17th President Donald Trump announced that he had approved a further wave of tariffs on Chinese imports. From September 24th, imports of products which in 2017 were worth as much as \$189bn, including furniture, computers and car

parts, will be hit with duties of 10%. The Chinese have promised to retaliate on the same day with duties on \$60bn of American exports. Unless peace breaks out before the new year, the American rate will increase to 25% on January 1st (“America and China are in a proper trade war,” 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- “In a speech Oct. 4 at the Hudson Institute, he acknowledged that four decades of attempts by the U.S. to make China a “stakeholder” in global norms and institutions had failed. The White House now promises to shift relations accordingly. Mr. Pence didn’t offer specifics, but there’s no shortage of steps the administration could take to assert U.S. interests against China’s hegemonic goals. It should recommit to defending American allies in East Asia and improving U.S. forces’ ability to deter Chinese expansion (“How to Win a Cold War With Beijing,” 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- “Vice President Mike Pence gave a guide to the approach in a speech last week at the Hudson Institute (where I am a fellow). Denouncing what he called China’s “whole of government” approach to its rivalry with the U.S., Mr. Pence vowed the Trump administration will respond in kind. . . . Congress approved the Build Act, a \$60 billion development-financing program designed to counter China’s Belt and Road strategy in Africa and Asia” (“Mike Pence Announces Cold War II,” 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- “In a new report, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission found Chinese dominance of networking-equipment manufacturing threatens the security of U.S. fifth-generation, or 5G, wireless infrastructure. The panel cited Chinese telecommunications” (O’Keeffe, 2018).

ii. Geopolitics: BRI and Europe

The Wall Street Journal- “China isn’t America but Imperial Germany. Both made massive infrastructure projects, designed to tie Europe and Asia, a centerpiece of their diplomacy. Wilhelmine Germany built a Berlin-Baghdad railway, China pursues its Belt and Road Initiative today. Germany’s aggressiveness eventually drew Europe into World War I (“Wilhelmine Germany Is a Better Analogy for China,” 2019).

The Economist- ““WE ARE not naive free traders. Europe must always defend its strategic interests,” said Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission. . . The target is China, whose firms have been on a shopping spree” (“Europeans fret that Chinese investment is a security risk,” 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- ““There is a growing appreciation in Europe that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China has shifted,” says the report issued by the European Commission. The paper knocks Beijing over corporate subsidies and closed markets and notes that China’s military ambitions “present security issues for the EU.” It says Beijing’s foreign investment “may result in high-level indebtedness and transfer of control over strategic assets and resources.” (“Europe’s China Dilemma,” 2019).

The Economist- “Mr. Williamson’s predecessor, Michael Fallon, had quietly announced the carrier’s Asian voyage over two years ago. Yet China, still fuming over a Royal Navy passage close to Chinese-claimed islands in the South China Sea last year, has elevated offence-taking into an art form. It hit back sternly, casting a deep pall over imminent trade talks between the two sides” (“The British government is growing warier of China,” 2019).

The Wall Street Journal- "French shipping operator CMA CGM SA has ordered 10 container megaships from state-owned China State Shipbuilding Corp. as part of a string of deals that Chinese President Xi Jinping signed Monday with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron" (Paris, 2019).

The Wall Street Journal- "Italy and China signed an agreement to cooperate on Beijing's global infrastructure plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, sealing an accord that has alarmed Italy's U.S. and European allies" (Legorano, 2019).

The Economist- "Mr Trump announced he would pull America out of the Paris accord on climate change. At an annual China-EU summit under way at the time, the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, declared that China and Europe together would demonstrate "solidarity with future generations and responsibility for the whole planet" ("Will China fill the vacuum left by America?," 2017).

iii. Geopolitics: BRI and Africa

The Wall Street Journal- "BEIJING—China's President Xi Jinping pledged \$60 billion in financing for Africa's development and waived some debt owed by the continent's poorest countries, batting away criticism that Chinese investments may be exacerbating a looming African debt crisis" (Wong & Areddy, 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "China Merchants Port Holdings is asserting control of operations at Djibouti's Doraleh container Terminal, maritime officials say, while state-owned China Civil Engineering Construction Corp. and China State construction Engineering Corp. have built a multipurpose cargo facility next door to handle cars, livestock, steel and other goods. Crew members of ships that recently docked at Djibouti said the new port resembles other Chinese-managed ports around the world" ("China Tightens Grip on East African Port," 2019).

The Economist- "The event was sponsored by the Chinese government, which takes pride in its travellers' growing influence. Since 2012 China has been the world's biggest source of tourists. Chinese travellers racked up nearly 150m trips abroad last year" ("China's high-spending tourists bring political clout," 2019).

iv. Geopolitics: BRI and Asia

The Wall Street Journal- "Financed and built by Chinese state-run companies, the soon-to-be-finished overhead railway through Lahore is among the first projects in China's \$62 billion plan for Pakistan.... Pakistan is now one of several countries grappling with the financial and political fallout of taking on so much Chinese debt.... Nadeem Javaid, chief economist of Pakistan's planning ministry, suggests China should rescue Pakistan with an interest-free loan. "It would be a kind of favor," he says. If not, "for what do we have this friendship?" ("China's Global Building Spree Hits Trouble in Pakistan," 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "The uncertainty will make it difficult for Mr. Khan to fulfill his campaign promises. Mr. Khan may resent demands for transparency. But the evidence suggests that many of the China projects were poorly conceived and the debt to build them will damage Pakistan's finances for a generation" ("Another 'Belt and Road' Hostage," 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "Pakistan's growing debt to China is emerging as a point of contention with the U.S., with Islamabad rejecting Washington's concerns Tuesday as the South Asian nation's incoming leaders prepare to possibly seek an international financial bailout in the coming weeks" ("U.S. Seeks to Avoid a Pakistan Bailout That Would Repay China," 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "Loading weaker countries with unsustainable debt is a habit of Belt and Road. Once projects default, China seizes strategic public works. Sri Lanka, owing billions to state-controlled Chinese firms, signed over a port last year -- and other countries noticed. . . Its external debt could hit 51.2% of GDP by 2021 thanks to Chinese projects. The IMF says servicing this debt will cost about \$92 million a year for four years, while the government takes in only about \$1 billion a year....("More Belt and Road Backlash," 2018).

The Economist- "Mahathir Mohamad has been plucking up courage to declare that, when it comes to Chinese investment in infrastructure, his is the Malaysia that can say no. At a projected cost of \$20bn, the East Coast Rail Link, planned to run down peninsular Malaysia's eastern seaboard before cutting west, is a big deal" ("Chinese Investment in Infrastructure is Often a Diplomatic Trap," 2019).

The Wall Street Journal- "As Russia's economic ties with the West fray, it has turned to China as a new market, with a massive cross

-border natural-gas pipeline going into operation as soon as this year. Driven by Russian natural-resource exports, bilateral trade surged by 27% last year, reaching \$107 billion" ("The New Beijing-Moscow Axis," 2019).

Frame 3: BRI and World Order

The Economist- "THE decision announced on February 25th to scrap term limits for China's president, Xi Jinping, pierces the veil of Chinese politics. It reveals that, at a time when the ruling Communist Party is presenting China to the world as a modern, reliable and responsible state, capable of defending globalization, the internal political system that the party monopolizes is premodern, treacherous, inward-looking and brutal" ("China's leader, Xi Jinping, will be allowed to reign forever," 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "The script for the Party Congress hasn't been revealed, but I am betting that Xi Jinping will not only be "re-elected" to a second five-year term as the party's general secretary and China's president, but also that he will effectively be crowned China's 21st-century emperor" ("Behold the New Emperor of China," 2017).

The Wall Street Journal- "BEIJING—China is using a forum to promote infrastructure-building across a swath of the globe in a bid to reshape the geopolitical world order" ("China's President Xi Casts Country as Guardian of Globalization," 2017).

The Wall Street Journal- "In the South China Sea, Mr. Xi has destabilized the region by developing and militarizing seven artificial features, ignoring the competing claims of five other nations and a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague that rejected China's claims there" ("Xi Jinping's Superpower Plans," 2018).

The Wall Street Journal- "'If it's necessary for China to play the role of leader, then China must take on this responsibility," Zhang Jun, head of the Chinese foreign ministry's office of international economic affairs, told a small group of foreign reporters in Beijing ("China Says Prepared to Lead Global Economy if Necessary," 2017).

The Wall Street Journal- "China recently completed a railway service to Tehran that delivers goods via Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Such projects abound. Benjamin Shull reviews "China's Asian Dream" by Tom Miller" ("Building an Empire Along the New Silk Road," 2017).

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