

Framing of the Belt and Road Initiative by Selected India Online Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched by China in 2013. The Chinese government perceives this initiative as an economic cooperation effort aimed at addressing obstacles that impede development. The intricacies of the China-India relationship have caused India to perceive the BRI from a distinct perspective. The role of relationship type as an external factor in the frame-building process has been neglected until now. This study aims to determine the influence of China-India relationship types on the five generic frames formulated by Semetko and Valkenburg in 2000. The relationship types include cooperation relationship, competition relationship, and friction relationship. The frames under consideration encompass the *responsibility frame*, *human interest frame*, *conflict frame*, *morality frame*, and *economic consequences frame*. The study employs quantitative content analysis as its methodology, utilising this approach to analyse news articles sourced from selected India online newspapers, namely *The Times of India*, *The Hindus*, and *Hindustan Times*. A total of 658 news articles were selected in online newspapers, covering the period from September 2013 to September 2022. This study found that relationship types indeed play a significant role in the frame-building process. Cooperation relationship had a very weak positive correlation with the responsibility frame; the competition relationship had a very weak negative correlation with the responsibility frame and a weak negative correlation with the conflict frame; the friction relationship had a weak positive correlation with the conflict frame. Overall, it can be concluded that the highlighted relationship types do indeed influence the framing of news.

Keywords: *Media framing, frame building, belt and road initiative, China-India relationships, India online newspapers.*

INTRODUCTION

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Xi Jinping, Chinese President, proposed the concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt in a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan on 7 September 2013. Subsequently, Xi Jinping introduced the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" in a speech to the Indonesian Parliament entitled "Working Together to Build a China-ASEAN Community of Destiny". The BRI has been covered since its inception, but different countries have their own orientations and frame the BRI in distinct ways. Due to differences in social and cultural contexts, such as geography, development level and even religion, the understanding of the BRI significance varies widely from country to country. Among the countries along the BRI, India is the only country that is a neighbour, a major power, a developing country, and an emerging economy. This identity and strategic linkage not only reveal the structural contradictions between India and China and determines the importance of the bilateral relationship for both countries, but also means that the direction of the China-India

relationship inevitably has significant strategic implications for developments in the Indo-Pacific region (Feng, 2020).

The relationship types between China and India mainly include cooperation relationship, competition relationship, and friction relationship. Cooperation relationship is a process that seeks to be win-win. Competition relationship means that both sides have a relative advantage, although not necessarily zero-sum, which at least means that the relative interests of the other side are compromised, such as a decline in influence, suppression of voice, et cetera (Ye, 2018; Zhang, 2016). Friction relationship refers to a zero-sum game between two countries in which the relative advantage of one side is compromised by the absolute interests of the other.

Framing theory has been well explored and applied to the study of media coverage (Hoong et al., 2021; Ramli et al., 2021; Zawawi & Chang, 2020; Arandas et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2013; Liu & Ji, 2021). However, such studies do not introduce China-India relationships as a variable especially from the Indian's perspective, thereby contributing to the study of media content and framing study. The prevailing approach among scholars has been to select one Chinese newspaper and one English newspaper for comparative studies or to focus on the Chinese perspectives (Ma & Shang, 2018; Li, 2021; Xu, 2018). However, such studies have not selected online newspapers from India when the relationship between China-India is crucial for the success of BRI. There is a lack of in-depth and comprehensive framing on the coverage of the BRI from the perspective of India's media.

The research concentrates on determining the correlation between relationship types and frames through a study of India online newspapers' coverage of the BRI, using content analysis guided by generic news framing theory. The problem statement examines the research gap in previous studies that have yet to introduce China-India relationships into the framing theory to analyse the BRI. This research strives to address these gaps by examining the coverage of the BRI in three selected online newspapers in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing Theory

The concept of 'frame' is mainly derived from Goffman (1974) and Gamson with Modigliani (1989). Since its inception, it has been noticed by scholars in various disciplines and has gradually developed into an important theory. Framing theory has been widely extended theoretically in various research fields such as news communication, cognitive psychology, collective action and political communication, resulting in a rich set of concepts and research methods (Brian, 2022; Ramli et al., 2021; Zawawi & Chang, 2020; Arandas et al., 2019; Hoong et al., 2021). However, the lack of theoretical dialogue between disciplines has resulted in a 'fragmented' and 'blurred' status quo (Guo & Teng, 2018). Currently, there is diversity in the development of framing theory research, which is manifested in various aspects of conceptual use, research topics and research methods.

Scholars such as De Vreese (2005) have divided frames into two categories, depending on the content of the frame embodied in the communication text. One category is generic, which refers to frames that can be used for various issues and even in different sociocultural conditions., while the other category is issue-specific, which refers to frames identified for individual news issues and is generally more detailed (Du, 2018). A generic news frame transcends the limitations of a specific event or topic, exhibiting a distinct generality or universality that researchers can identify across different contexts. A specific frame is one

that applies to a particular issue or event, which is 'factual' and cannot be generalised to other contexts or situations.

This study uses generic news frames to analyse the coverage of the BRI by India online newspapers. The theory was formulated by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), who examined the frequency of five frames adopted in previous studies of framing.

Previous literature has recognized several frames which are common in journalism, although they are not necessarily simultaneous. The conflict frame stands out as the most prevalent among the five frames, as evidenced by studies such as Adiprasetyo (2020), Abdullah et al. (2019), Wang and Du (2020), and Yuan with Fan (2022). Subsequently, the responsibility frame, as explored by Naziz (2021), and the human interest frame, as discussed by Odoemelam and Hasan (2021), also hold significance in the literature.

Relevant Research Findings on China-India Relationships

The relationship types of China-India include cooperation, competition, and friction. The cooperation relationship is mainly reflected in maintaining regional peace, climate, economy, culture, and China-India strategic alignment (Ye, 2018). China and India need to find effective ways to develop cooperation by reducing misunderstandings and mistrust and expanding their constructive roles in the international system (Zhang, 2020). Zhao (2019) believes that the BRI is a public good that China is offering to the world. It aims to promote and distribute development opportunities by enhancing economic and trade cooperation, thereby promoting economic prosperity both within the BRI region and globally.

The competition relationship is mainly reflected in the status of the international financial system, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Central Asia, defence technology, defence posture, the IO order and the African order (Ye, 2018). The BRI has transformed China-India relationships from a managed confrontation to a fierce geopolitical rivalry. In the past few decades, China has experienced a significant increase in its economic and geopolitical sway across Asia, with an emphasis on its influence in Pakistan (Hussain, 2022). Both China and India are seeking their relative advantages, and China, which is more important than India in terms of economic and military power, has not given much importance to India in its past strategies and has approached its relationship with India based more on a global strategy (Xie, 2019).

The frictional relationship mainly includes United Nation status, Pakistan, territory and Tibet (Ye, 2018). Despite the ongoing friendly exchanges between India and China at the highest diplomatic levels and the espoused ideals of the 'Wuhan Spirit' and 'Chennai Consensus,' there appears to be a practical shift in their relationship. This shift is manifesting in the resurgence of traditional differences marked by competition, friction, and increasing instability. An in-depth examination of the extensive literature indicates that investigations into this facet of China-India relations have primarily centred on the China-India border dispute and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), particularly through the disputed Kashmir region involving India and Pakistan.

Coverage of the BRI in India Newspapers

The BRI has attracted widespread global attention since its inception. As one of the critical countries involved in the BRI, India holds a pivotal role in its development (Zeng, 2020). India stands as the world's largest consumer of newspapers and holds the distinction of having the highest circulation of English-language dailies among all countries. As a traditional and

widespread communication channel, mainstream Indian newspapers play the role of opinion shapers in the coverage of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and its alliance countries (Mao, 2019).

Indian newspaper editors have the following views on whether India should join the BRI. Sakhuja (2019) believes that the BRI has caused panic among Indian strategic circles. Its actions are perceived as being in favour of facilitating China's potential naval operations in the Indian Ocean and are viewed by India as part of China's strategic efforts to encircle China. Banerjee (2019) mentioned that through BRI, China is realising the Chinese dream of global power and regional hegemony. As a contributor to *The Indian Express*, Mohan (2014) supports India joining the initiative because India needs to cooperate with China to develop the economy (Mohan, 2014). He also believed that the "China strategy" of inviting India to join was very clever (Mohan, 2014).

Some scholars argue that *the Times of India's* view on the BRI has gone through three stages: India's unwillingness to accede, possible benefits, and still cautiously waiting and watching (Tang & Shi, 2018). Scholars have argued that while newspapers value coverage of China, they are biased (Zhao, 2017), portraying China as a coloniser and threat and India as a victim (Liu et al., 2019).

Some scholars have analysed framing through newspaper coverage of the BRI. For example, Wang (2020) analysed the English-language coverage of the BRI in *the Times of India* from 2017 to 2019, and conducted a framing theory study in terms of the characteristics of the Times of India and the characteristics of its audience.

All these studies reiterate the importance of studying the longitudinal frame given by Indian newspapers on the BRI as this is crucial to India's relationship with China, indicating the milestones of the international relations throughout the nine years. Previous studies had been heavily focused on China's perspectives on BRI, but scarce from the Indian stakeholders' perspective.

METHODOLOGY

The research utilised Quantitative Content Analysis, employing the five generic frames established by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). These frames encompass the responsibility frame, human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, and economic consequences frame. The responsibility frame presents a problem or issue so that responsibility for its cause or solution is attributed to the government or an individual or group (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The human interest frame brings a human or emotional perspective to presenting events, issues, or problems. The conflict frame highlights two conflicting sides of an issue, reflecting disagreements between parties, individuals, or groups. The morality frame refers to interpreting events or issues based on religious beliefs. Examples include references to morality, God, and other religious tenets in the news. The economic consequences frame is reported on the basis of the economic consequences of an event, problem or issue for an individual, group, institution, region or country.

To assess the visibility of the frames within a given unit of analysis, Semetko and Valkenburg's 18 attribute statements aligned with the generic frames were used. An affirmative mark was placed at "yes" if the coder believed that the attribute statement applied to the entire unit of analysis, and at "no" if it did not. Each affirmative response was scored 1 and negative responses were not scored. The cumulative scores for a particular frame were then averaged based on the number of attribute descriptions associated with that frame. The scores obtained ranged from "0" to "1", representing the visibility of the frame. A

score of "0" suggests no visibility, while a score of "1" signifies complete visibility. The study rigorously examined the reliability and validity of these attribute items.

The relationship types of China-India are divided into cooperation, competition, and friction relationships. Each relationship type corresponds to three attribute declarations. 'Yes' was marked if Coders thought the attribute statement applied to the entire unit of analysis, and 'no' if it did not. Each 'yes' was given one point, while no points were awarded for 'no'. The cumulative score of a particular relationship type is averaged based on the number of attribute declarations which contains. The ultimate score varies between '0' and '1' and indicates the visibility of that relationship type, with '0' being invisible and '1' being fully visible.

In the execution of this research, the sampling process was carefully handled where three Indian newspapers available in the research were selected. They were *The Times of India*, *The Hindus*, and *Hindustan Times*. These three online newspapers were chosen as they are the top three English newspapers in India by circulation (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2020). The Indian English newspapers play a significant role in safeguarding the rights and interests of Hindus, guiding public opinion and spreading culture, and have a far-reaching effect in presenting Indian's perspective to global audiences. The sampling procedure applied the period from September 2013 to September 2022. The period chosen started from the inception of BRI in September 2013 when BRI was announced by President Xi Jin Ping to September 2022, the ninth anniversary of BRI's execution. The ninth year marked a significant milestone as there were allegations that the BRI seems to be vanishing from China and India's leaders' initiatives (Wang, 2020). All data was sourced from the Lexis/Nexis database. Two coders underwent training and worked together on the coding tasks in the study. The two coders reached an agreement to engage in discussions and collaboratively seek solutions in the event of any issues arising while coding. To assess the consistency of coding, an inter-coder reliability test was conducted using a smaller sample randomly selected from the entire dataset. In accordance with Holsti's (1969) formula for determining the sample size for the inter-coder reliability test, both coders double-coded 10% of the sample, amounting to n=66 instances. The indexes of the news frames and the relationship types were 0.8436 and 0.8845 respectively, demonstrating sufficient agreements. All the articles on the issue during the study periods were taken into scrutiny. A total of 658 units of analysis were measured for the visibility of the five predetermined generic frames and three relationship types.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The unit of analysis was the news articles concerning the BRI that were covered by *The Times of India*, *The Hindus*, and *Hindustan Times*. In this research, a total of 658 news articles on BRI were identified. Table 1 shows the frequency and the percent of the BRI news in India online newspapers. In the India online newspapers, *Hindustan Times* contributed the most with 80.70%, followed by *The Times of India* with 13.37%, and *The Hindus* with 5.93%.

Table 1: News articles according to daily newspaper

| Daily Newspaper | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| <i>Hindustan Times</i> | 531 | 80.70 |
| <i>The Times of India</i> | 88 | 13.37 |
| <i>The Hindus</i> | 39 | 5.93 |
| Total | 658 | 100.00 |

Table 2 shows the frequency of news slants of daily newspapers in the entire sample analysis. *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, and *The Hindustan Times* have different tendency rankings. *The Times of India* has the highest percentage of negative news, followed by neutral/balanced news and positive news. *The Hindu* has the same proportion of negative and positive news, ranking first, followed by neutral/balanced news. In *Hindustan Times*, the neutral/balanced slant ranks first, the negative slant ranks second, and the positive slant ranks last.

The BRI proposed by China has triggered a massive response in India. Due to India's exclusion from the Nuclear Suppliers Group, its absence from the Belt and Road Initiative Summit in Beijing, and the standoff in Donglang between India and China, the relations between the two countries have shifted from a warm to a chilly state. In India, there are voices expressing scepticism, opposition, and rejection towards the BRI. As a result, the three mainstream newspapers in India have different tendencies to report on the BRI.

Table 2: Frequencies of news slants in daily newspapers

| News Slants | <i>Hindustan Times</i> | <i>The Times of India</i> | <i>The Hindus</i> | Whole Sample |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Positive | 51 (9.6%) | 9 (10.2%) | 16 (41.0%) | 76 (11.6%) |
| Negative | 145 (27.3%) | 52 (59.1%) | 16 (41.0%) | 213 (32.4%) |
| Neutral/Balanced | 335 (63.1%) | 27 (30.7%) | 7 (17.9%) | 369 (56.1%) |
| Total | 531 (100.0%) | 88 (100.0%) | 39 (100.0%) | 658 (100.0%) |

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within dailies

The Differences in the Visibility of the Frames Among Newspapers

Table 3 shows the means of the visibility of the frames. *The Times of India*, *The Hindus*, and the *Hindustan Times* appeared to have used more conflict frames in their news coverage. Except for *The Hindus*, all newspapers appeared to have used the least morality frames in their news coverage. The conflict frame exhibited the highest mean in *The Times of India*, followed by the economic consequences frame, responsibility frame, human interest frame, and morality frame. The conflict frame demonstrated the highest mean in *The Hindu*, followed by the responsibility frame, economic consequences frame, morality frame, and human interest frame. The conflict frame exhibited the highest mean in *Hindustan Times*, followed by the economic consequences frame, responsibility frame, human interest frame, and morality frame.

Table 3: Mean scores of the Visibility of the frames

| Newspaper | Responsibility | Conflict | Economic | Morality | Human | N |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----|
| <i>The Times of India</i> | .0824 (.14041) | .2803 (.26206) | .1932 (.27553) | .0076 (.04996) | .0341 (.09208) | 88 |
| <i>The Hindus</i> | .2628 (.24299) | .2650 (.29794) | .2393 (.28561) | .0256 (.08998) | .0205 (.06147) | 39 |
| <i>Hindustan Times</i> | .1036 (.16284) | .1820 (.23059) | .1350 (.20268) | .0031 (.0031) | .0143 (.05445) | 531 |

Note: Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.

The Differences in the Visibility of Relationship Types

As shown in Table 4, the overall mean scores of the visibility of relationship types in daily newspapers have been demonstrated. *The Times of India* had the highest mean in the visibility of friction relationship, and *The Hindus* and *Hindustan Times* had the highest mean in the visibility of competition relationship. *The Times of India* secured the second-highest mean score in the competition relationship, *The Hindu* attained the second-highest mean score in the cooperation relationship, and *Hindustan Times* garnered the second-highest mean score in the friction relationship. *Times of India* had the lowest mean scores for friction relationships, while both *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* had the lowest mean scores for cooperation relationship.

Table 4: Mean scores of the visibility of relationship types

| Newspaper | Cooperation | Competition | Friction | N |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|
| <i>The Times of India</i> | .1212 (.20949) | .1970 (.21818) | .2614 (.24990) | 88 |
| <i>The Hindus</i> | .2051 (.30219) | .2479 (.23839) | .1453 (.21350) | 39 |
| <i>Hindustan Times</i> | .0854 (.17081) | .1500 (.18623) | .1412 (.20663) | 531 |

Note: Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.

The Relationships Between Between News Slants and the Frames

ANOVA test was used to determine the relationship between news slants and the frames in India online newspapers. Upon detecting a significant difference, a Post Hoc test would be performed. Table 5 showed the ANOVA test results. The ANOVA test results showed there were significant differences between news slants and the responsibility frame ($F= 20.940, p = .000$), and between news slants and the conflict frame ($F= 6.712, p = .001$). More specifically, the news with positive slant had portrayed more responsibility frame than the news with negative and neutral/balanced slants, and the news with negative slant had portrayed more conflict frame than the news with positive and neutral/balanced slants in covering the BRI in India online newspapers.

The news with positive slant portrayed more responsibility frames in covering the BRI in India online newspapers. The findings echoed the study by Zhao (2018), who found *The People's Daily Overseas Edition* made full use of media events to shape the country's image when reporting on the BRI, portraying a positive and responsible image of China as a great power. The news with negative slant portrayed more conflict frames in covering the BRI in India online newspapers. These findings concurred with Ashok (2019) that BRI put India in a dilemma: On the one hand, India needs to cooperate with China in the maritime domain. On the other hand, India needs to constrain China's impact in the Indian Ocean in the long run.

In the positive report, India online newspapers emphasised the responsibility frame. India believes that the CPEC undermines India's sovereign integrity and that it is the responsibility of the Chinese government to inform and allay India's concerns. The CPEC, which is of great concern to India, runs through Kashmir. China has on several occasions stressed that the BRI, which includes the CPEC, is an economic initiative that is not directed at any third country and has nothing to do with the historical sovereignty and territorial disputes between any two countries. China has always insisted that history has created the Kashmir dispute, which should be addressed through dialogue between India and Pakistan.

China is working to achieve shared prosperity and help India modernise through the BRI, which now has nothing to do with the historical territorial dispute.

The Indian online newspapers have mostly viewed the BRI negatively, based on the Indian government's concerns about India's traditional security and the competitive relationship between India and China. Sometimes, in order to enhance the interest and understanding of the audience, Indian news writers localise the news based on localised culture, perceptions, and habits in order to create relevance between the news discourse and the audience and to enhance the interest and understanding of the audience in the news story, thus creating a solid cognitive demand.

Table 5: ANOVA results for the differences between between news slants and the frames

| Relationships | | SS | df | MS | F | P | Group 1 | Group 2 |
|-----------------|----------------|--------|-----|------|--------|------|----------|---------------|
| Responsibility* | Between Groups | 1.143 | 2 | .571 | 20.940 | .000 | Positive | .220 |
| | Within Groups | 17.869 | 655 | .027 | | | | Neutral/ .106 |
| | Groups | | | | | | | Balanced |
| | Total | 19.012 | 657 | | | | | Negative .079 |
| Conflict* | Between Groups | .772 | 2 | .386 | 6.712 | .001 | Negative | .249 |
| | Within Groups | 37.659 | 655 | .057 | | | | Positive .193 |
| | Groups | | | | | | | |
| | Total | 38.431 | 657 | | | | | Neutral/ .173 |
| Economic | Between Groups | .358 | 2 | .179 | 3.692 | .209 | | Balanced |
| | Within Groups | 31.713 | 655 | .048 | | | | |
| | Groups | | | | | | | |
| | Total | 32.071 | 657 | | | | | |
| Morality | Between Groups | .001 | 2 | .001 | .425 | .654 | | |
| | Within Groups | 1.093 | 655 | .002 | | | | |
| | Groups | | | | | | | |
| | Total | 1.094 | 657 | | | | | |
| Human | Between Groups | .005 | 2 | .003 | .717 | .488 | | |
| | Within Groups | 2.477 | 655 | .004 | | | | |
| | Groups | | | | | | | |
| | Total | 2.482 | 657 | | | | | |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Relationships Between Between News Slants and Relationship Types

ANOVA was used to determine the differences between news slants and the relationship types in India online newspapers. Table 6 showed the ANOVA results that there are significant differences between news slants and the responsibility frame ($F= 24.712, p= .000$), and significant differences between news slants and conflict frames ($F= 21.444, p= .000$) in India online newspapers. The news with positive slant covered more cooperation relationship than the news with negative and neutral/balanced slants, and the news with negative slant covered more friction relationship than the news with neutral/balanced and positive slants in India online newspapers in covering the BRI.

The news with positive slant covered more cooperation relationship in covering the BRI in India newspapers. The findings echoed the study by Mohan (2014) who favoured India joining the BRI and that India needed to work with China to develop its economy. The news with negative slant covered more friction relationship in India online newspapers in covering the BRI. The findings were in line with Nambiar's (2020) study that the BRI will threaten India's security and that the maritime infrastructure projects that China is actively pursuing in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives are conducive to supporting future Chinese naval operations in the Indian Ocean, as well as realising China's attempts to 'encircle' India. Banerjee (2019) stated that through the CPEC, China is realising the Chinese dream of global power and regional hegemony.

India online newspapers emphasise cooperation relationship in the positive stories. Negative news in Indian online newspapers focuses more on the friction relationship. The news slant of Indian online newspapers towards the BRI reflects India's inclination. The change in India's inclination to the BRI is related to relationship type of China-India.

The Chinese-Indian border issue left behind by the British colonial period and the twists and turns in the history of Chinese-Indian relations after the 1950s are related to India's attitude towards the BRI. Chinese-Indian relations have taken a tortuous course for historical, cultural, and psychological reasons, with friendship, cooperation, disagreement, and conflict intertwined. It is crucial to uphold peace on the border for the advancement of Asia and global development and stability.

When India and China experienced conflict in the Galwan Valley in June 2020, China-India relations were characterised by friction. Indian online newspapers are mainly negative. India's resistance and opposition to the BRI have been from official to private sources, with the rhetoric focusing on the fact that the CPEC, one of the six corridors of the BRI, violates Indian sovereignty by passing through Kashmir (Mei, 2018).

Table 6: ANOVA for news slants and relationship types

| Relationships | | SS | df | MS | F | P | Group 1 | Group 2 |
|---------------|----------------|--------|-----|------|--------|------|----------------------|---------|
| Cooperation* | Between Groups | 1.637 | 2 | .818 | 24.712 | .000 | Positive | .228 |
| | Within Groups | 21.694 | 655 | .033 | | | Neutral/ Balanced | .093 |
| | Total | 23.331 | 657 | | | | Negative | .058 |
| Competition | Between Groups | .029 | 2 | .015 | .379 | .684 | | |
| | Within Groups | 25.124 | 655 | .038 | | | | |
| | Total | 25.153 | 657 | | | | | |
| Friction* | Between Groups | 1.898 | 2 | .949 | 21.444 | .000 | Negative | .235 |
| | Within Groups | 28.991 | 655 | .044 | | | Neutral/ Balanced | .124 |
| | Total | 30.890 | 657 | | | | Positive | .105 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Relationships Between Relationship Types and the Frames

The correlation test was used to ascertain the relationship between relationship types and the frames in the coverage of the BRI in India online newspapers. Table 7 showed the correlation test results. Firstly, the cooperation relationship had a very weak positive

correlation with the responsibility frame ($r = .099$, $p = .011$, which < 0.05). There is no significant correlation between the cooperation relationship and other frames in the coverage of the BRI by India online newspapers, as their p -values are all greater than 0.05. The possible reason for this is that China's "BRI" aims to boost the economy. However, India does not feel the same way, understands it as more than an economic act, and does not believe India can cooperate with China. For example, Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs of India in *The Times of India*, said that Expanding and fortifying connectivity constituted a fundamental aspect of India's economic and diplomatic initiatives. Concurrently, India staunchly adheres to the principle that connectivity initiatives should be grounded in recognized international norms. In an indirect critique of the BRI, he highlighted that any infrastructure project should adhere to the principles of openness, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. It must be implemented in a manner that respects the sovereignty, equality, and territorial integrity of all countries. China has been repeatedly accused of using non-transparent financing models in the BRI which caused some countries to fall into a debt trap (Chaudhury, 2019). India's fears that the project has trapped some smaller countries in a debt trap have intensified, especially after China took control of the Hambantota port (PTI, 2019). In an interview with the *Global Times*, Vikram Misri, India's Ambassador, further stated that India's move on the BRI can only be achieved if it is sustainable, i.e., if it maintains India's continued economic growth in the BRI (PTI, 2019).

Secondly, competition relationship had a very weak negative correlation with the responsibility frame ($r = -.102$, $p = .009$, which < 0.01) and a weak negative correlation with the conflict frame ($r = -.257$, $p = .000$, which < 0.01) in India online newspapers in the news coverage of the BRI. There was no significant correlation between the competition relationship and the economic consequences frame, the morality frame, and the human interest frame in the news coverage of the BRI in India online newspapers, as their p -values are all greater than 0.05. China's BRI, which aims to create a new pattern of comprehensive opening up by linking land and sea and opening up in both directions, pose a "challenge" to India's regional ambitions in South Asia. India has also put forward its own regional integration plans: the Subcontinent Countries Economic Cooperation Agreement (SCECA), the Monsoon Plan and the Western Alliance Policy, and is actively promoting the construction of economic corridors with other South Asian countries. China and India are clearly competing in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean (Lin, 2016). Indian scholars argue that China does not share the core political values that underpin the existing rules-based international order. There is no doubt that China will stop bargaining and adapting to the existing order and try to build a new one. The development of the BRI will determine the success or failure of this endeavour for China (Kumar, 2019). In addition to impressive economic results, China has successfully raised hundreds of millions of individuals above the poverty line. China has a huge trade surplus with India at present. Now, China is transforming itself from an adapter to an enabler of globalisation. China is reshaping globalisation through the BRI (Chen, 2018). The BRI was initiated by China and China should be responsible for the difficult issues in the implementation of the Belt and Road, while India does not need to, India needs to decide whether it needs to participate in the BRI or not in the context of its own situation and its own policies.

The impact of India's competitive landscape on the BRI is that it has slowed down the progress of the BRI in South Asia. India holds the utmost significance among the countries in South Asia, and its size, population, economic power and technological level are unrivalled by any other country in South Asia. India's strengthened control over small and medium-sized

countries in South Asia has, to a certain extent, shaken the belief of these countries in strengthening their cooperation with China, forcing them to slow down the pace of cooperation with China (Chen, 2018). Of course, Engage India argues that India should not view the BRI narrowly, but rather in a broader context, as there are converging or mutually beneficial interests between India and China in the BRI, and that BRI will also help India to achieve growth in trade and investment, as well as to strengthen its ties with the Persian Gulf region and the European Union (Wu, 2018).

Thirdly, friction relationship had a weak positive correlation with the conflict frame in India online newspapers in the news coverage of the BRI. This suggests that the negative impact of Chinese-Indian relations has an impact on media framing. Especially during the year when the border conflict emerged, Chinese-Indian relations were strained, and more conflict framing emerged in the media. Therefore, it makes sense that India would have reacted 'defensively' after China's 'BRI', which is clearly connected. Moreover, the smooth progress of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor has hit a sore spot for India. India has attributed its long-standing obstruction of the Mujahideen sanctions bill to the United Nation and its frustration in joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group to China's obstruction. These factors have deepened the gap between China and India and have affected the framework of online newspaper coverage of BRI news in China and India. There was no significant correlation between the friction relationship and other frames in India online newspapers in the news coverage of the BRI.

Table 7: Correlation test for relationship types and the Frames

| Relationships | | Responsibility | Conflict | Economic | Morality | Human |
|---------------|---|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Cooperation | r | .099* | .070 | -.047 | .013 | -.046 |
| | P | .011 | .073 | .230 | .735 | .238 |
| Competition | r | -.102** | -.257** | .014 | -.027 | -.038 |
| | P | .009 | .000 | .728 | .488 | .327 |
| Friction | r | -.072 | .354** | .059 | .041 | -.043 |
| | P | .064 | .000 | .127 | .294 | .273 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

The study has effectively addressed all its objectives and provided empirical evidence regarding the correlation between relationship types and the frames. The findings of this research profoundly claim that relationship types do contribute to the frame-building process. It has been proven that the framing that appears on the news must undergo the test of both internal and external factors. Cooperation, one of inter-state relationships, is significantly correlated with the responsibility frame; the competition relationship is significantly correlated with the responsibility frame and the conflict frame; the friction relationship is significantly correlated with the conflict frame. Overall, the relationship types have been proven to possess a great influence in determining the visibility of the frames. In addition, the research results reveal that news slants affect the construction of relationship types and heavily influence the portrait of five generic frames.

This study, examining media frames on the BRI in India online newspapers, significantly informs Chinese and Indian foreign policies. Serving as a crucial reference, it captures the diverse narratives surrounding the BRI in India, guiding policy makers in making informed decisions. Moreover, the study introduces innovative perspectives to enhance the BRI's implementation effectiveness, addressing potential challenges and fostering collaboration. Its insights not only deepen mutual understanding between the nations but also contribute valuable recommendations for refining policies. In essence, this research plays a pivotal role in shaping strategic cooperation, offering a nuanced understanding of public discourse and contributing to the ongoing dialogue between China and India in the context of the BRI.

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