

Study of the Self-constructed National Image in the Reports on the Belt and Road Initiative in *China Daily*

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Abstract: Taking the news reports on the the Belt and Road Initiative from September 9, 2013 to December 31, 2020 in *China Daily*, the mainstream English media in China, as the research object, this study adopts the critical metaphor analysis method to make a quantitative and qualitative analysis of conceptual metaphors in the news reports on the the Belt and Road Initiative, and explore the self-constructed national image. The research finds that (1) there are 12 main types of conceptual metaphors in the news reports, including architectural metaphors, friendship metaphors, travel metaphors, traffic metaphors, plant metaphors, war metaphors, etc; (2) The 12 types of conceptual metaphors are unevenly distributed. Architectural metaphors are used most frequently (46.98%), followed by friendship metaphors (22.55%), travel metaphors (8.85%), and traffic metaphors (5.87%), which account for 84.25% of the total; (3) It has created a pragmatic, friendly, indomitable and courageous national image. This study has a certain reference for China's news media to shape the national image and spread the Chinese voice.

Keywords: The Belt and Road Initiative, Conceptual metaphor, Critical metaphor analysis, News reports, Self-constructed national image.

1. Introduction

National image refers to the recognition and evaluation of the political, economic, social, cultural, and geographical conditions of a country by both the domestic and external public[1]. The mass media plays an important role in conveying mainstream political ideology, constructing national image, and constructing identity[2]. The various discourse texts created by the media have become the main carriers for constructing, disseminating, and interpreting the national image. National media image is a group of symbolic, metaphorical, and representative images presented in media texts[3]. The national image largely depends on language expression, and is constructed by different stylistic devices[4]. As a powerful stylistic device, conceptual metaphor can reflect the ideology of the discourse constructor to a certain extent, and is one of the important means to construct realistic and produce meanings, having “persuasion” function and playing a special role in constructing the national image

“The Belt and Road Initiative” is a strategic concept proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, which is in line with the development of the times and with a view to long-term development. This initiative is a new platform for China to establish its own discourse system and build a good image as a major country. Therefore, this research takes *China Daily's* news reports on the “the Belt and Road Initiative” from September 9, 2013 to December 31, 2020 as the research object, analyzes the high-frequency metaphor types from the perspective of Critical Metaphor Analysis, and explores the self-constructed national image.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Metaphor Theory was introduced by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) in their book *Metaphors We Live By*. They argued that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon or stylistic feature, but also a universal way of thinking and a basic cognitive device that is present in all aspects of language use[7].

Charteris-Black (2004) proposed Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) by studying metaphor from pragmatic perspective, which realized the integration of cognitive metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis. This research paradigm explains metaphor from various aspects such as semantics, semantics and cognition, and points out that metaphor can reflect the linguistic choices made by the author in a specific context to achieve certain persuasive purposes, and has the function of stimulating emotion and influencing value and judgment. He also proposes the three steps for metaphor analysis: identification-interpretation-explanation, which can reveal the beliefs, attitudes and emotions of the discourse community[13], and the potential intention of discourse users[34]. Therefore, Critical Metaphor Analysis is an effective method that can analyze the discourse function of metaphor and its ideology and rhetorical basis, and can reveal the relationship between language, ideology and social context in depth.

The use of metaphors in news reports is a conscious discourse choice that can express hidden ideological motives and power relations, spread mainstream national values, influence audiences' thinking and attitudes, and become an important way and means of constructing the country's image. Therefore, news discourse makers usually use short, concise and meaningful metaphorical words in order to better convey policy concepts and construct the country's image. This has led the national government to pay more attention to the research on the construction of national image and provided academic researchers with new research ideas. After a literature search, many scholars at home and abroad have studied the construction of China's national image from the perspective of conceptual metaphors(Eric M Blanchard 2013[9]; Muhammad Afzaal et al.2019[10]; Xie Ruyue 2018[11]; He Jie 2020[12]; Liang Jingyu & Li Dejun 2020 [13]; Wang Xue 2020[14]; Zhao Yonghua & Lu Junyu 2021[15]; Yang Lin 2021[16]). However, most of these studies focus on the other-constructed China's national image by foreign media, and there is still a gap in the study of the self-constructed national image by domestic media, and few

scholars have conducted corpus studies on a specific news event.

The “Belt and Road” is an economic cooperation initiative put forward by China in the face of complex changes in the world economic situation, and is an important platform for cooperation, exchange and achieving win-win with countries along the route, aiming to establish closer and broader ties with other countries. News reports on the Belt and Road have become an important window for China’s foreign propaganda and for outsiders to understand China’s general policy. However, there is still a lack of research on the self-constructed Chinese national image in the reports from the perspective of conceptual metaphors. After combing the literature search, it is found that only Chen Qin et al. (2019) conducted a conceptual metaphor analysis of 40 news reports on the Belt and Road in *China Daily* to reveal the interaction between the use of metaphors and the construction of national identity, but the study based on a small corpus and lacked an diachronic analysis as well as a quantitative examination.

This study takes news reports on “the Belt and Road” in *China Daily* from September 9, 2013 to December 31, 2020 as the research object, and analyzes the types of conceptual metaphors and high-frequency metaphors in the reports from the perspective of Critical Metaphor Analysis, so as to explore its self-constructed national image.

3. Research Design

3.1. Establishment of Corpus

As the earliest national English newspaper in China, *China Daily* is the preferred English language media in China and abroad, and the only Chinese newspaper that has effectively entered the international mainstream and has the highest reprint rate in foreign media (from <https://baike.baidu.com/>), with high credibility and validity. This study used “the Belt and Road”, “the Belt and Road Initiative”, “One Belt and One Road” as the key words to collect the relevant reports from *China Daily* from September 9, 2013 (the beginning of *China Daily*’s reports on the Initiative) to December 31, 2020 (“the Belt and Road Initiative” achieved the milestone results and became the global consensus). The corpus is built by naming each report by date, e.g., 20150806 indicates August 6, 2015, and if there are multiple related reports on that day, they are named 2015080601, 2015080602, etc. After manual screening, the total number of news reports meeting the criteria was 3,946, and the number of characters purified was 2128,607.

This study explores the conceptual metaphors in the reports on the Belt and Road Initiative in *China Daily*, and aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) How many types of conceptual metaphors are there in the news reports on the Belt and Road Initiative in *China Daily*?
- (2) What are the most common conceptual metaphors used in the news reports on the Belt and Road Initiative *China Daily*?
- (3) What kind of national image constructed in the reports on the Belt and Road Initiative in *China Daily*?

3.2. Research Methods

This study adopts the corpus research paradigm and combination of qualitative and quantitative research method to identify and analyze the conceptual metaphors in the selected reports from Charteris-Black’s (2004) Critical

Metaphor Analysis framework. In the metaphor identification stage, author will first read the corpus carefully and identify candidate metaphors with reference to the metaphor identification program (MIP); then, the author will identify metaphor keywords in context and classified them; finally, the author will search the conceptual metaphors with the help of Antconc 4.1.0 and manually screened the non-metaphorical words to determine the actual frequency of each metaphor keyword. In the interpretation stage, the social relationships constructed by the metaphors were explored, and the relationships among the cognitive, cultural, and pragmatic factors behind the metaphors were explored. In the explanation stage, the relationship between metaphor and social context is examined to reveal the hidden ideology and the social influence produced.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Analysis of “the Belt and Road” metaphor types

Statistics show that the conceptual metaphors in the news reports on “the Belt and Road Initiative” in *China Daily* can be divided into 12 categories (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows that a large number of conceptual metaphors are used in the news reports on “the Belt and Road Initiative” in *China Daily*, and 321 metaphor keywords are identified, with the occurrences of 33,194 and a frequency of 96.7% for each metaphor keyword. Secondly, the metaphor types are diverse, including “architecture”, “friendship”, “travel”, “traffic”, “plant”, “war”, “artifact”, “human body”, and “performance” and other 12 metaphors. Third, the resonance values show that the distribution of these 12 metaphor types is uneven, among which, the building metaphor is the most frequently used, accounting for 46.98%, followed by the friendship metaphor (22.55%), the travel metaphor (8.85%) and the traffic metaphor (5.87%), which account for 84.25% of the total number of metaphors, much higher than the sum of other metaphor types. Therefore, this study selects these four major metaphors to analyze what kind of national identity constructed in the news reports on “the Belt and Road Initiative” in *China Daily* through conceptual metaphors.

4.1.1. Architectural Metaphors

“Buildings” include civil buildings that maintain human’s daily life and industrial buildings that are used for industrial production activities, meeting human’s material needs and ensuring the good functioning of society with solid and durable characteristics. In addition, “buildings” can also be used as a communication symbol to convey the specific ideology and unique spirit of the nation’s deep culture, such as the garden art and imperial palaces in China, which are the embodiment of cultural values and ideology. Charteris-Black (2004) mentioned that “A WORTHWHILE ACTIVITY IS A BUILDING”[6]. As an economic cooperation initiative, “the Belt and Road” has practical value, and the architectural metaphor has obvious positive associations, expressing the psychology of human beings’ desire for stability and goodness, and is often used to emphasize the rationality, solidity and permanence of a political or economic policy[18]. The construction process of “the Belt and Road” is like “building a building”, which requires the builder to coordinate planning, lay a solid foundation, and cooperation, mutual assistance with partners friendly. In this process, China and the countries along the route together take up the obligation of builders and actively participate in the

construction of “the Belt and Road” great foundation.

Table 1. Statistics of metaphors in the reports on “the Belt and Road” in *China Daily*

Types of Metaphor	Number of Metaphor Keywords	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage	Resonance Value	Percentage of Resonance Value
Architectural Metaphors	57	10,202	30.73%	581,514	46.98%
Friendship Metaphors	35	7,974	24.02%	279,090	22.55%
Travel Metaphors	31	3,535	10.65%	109,585	8.85%
Traffic Metaphors	36	2,018	6.08%	72,648	5.87%
Plant Metaphors	29	1,637	4.93%	47,473	3.83%
War Metaphors	24	1,888	5.69%	45,312	3.66%
Artifact Metaphors	35	941	2.83%	32,935	2.66%
Human Body Metaphors	18	1,709	5.15%	30,762	2.49%
Performance Metaphors	10	2,065	6.22%	20,650	1.67%
Game Metaphors	14	830	2.50%	11,620	0.94%
Anthropomorphic metaphors	14	242	0.73%	3,388	0.27%
Natural Metaphors	18	153	0.46%	2,754	0.22%
Total	321	33,194	100%	1,237,731	100%

Table 2. Statistical table of architectural metaphors

Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor Keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor Keywords	Number of Occurrences
build	1402	milestone	107	roadmap	15
plan	1309	pillar	96	foothold	14
platform	1074	set up	92	formulate	13
strengthen	1042	door	84	bridgehead	13
framework	607	landmark	67	underpin	13
implementation	479	window	64	frame	12
corridor	432	map	54	benchmark	12
construction	416	layout	39	rebuild	10
foundation	343	cement	36	carrier	7
founding	326	architecture	38	format	6
safeguard	307	undermine	31	chart the course	5
establishment	252	cornerstone	30	fortify	3
structure	247	collapse	28	renovate	3
open up	197	scheme	26	bridge the gap	2
bridge	178	portal	26	corner	2
blueprint	167	restructure	20	remold	1
carry out	157	map out	19	test field	1
ground	124	threshold	19	bedrock	1
consolidate	116	reshape	17	reconfiguration	1

Table 2 shows that the most frequently used architectural metaphor keywords in the news reports on “the Belt and Road Initiative” are build, plan, platform, strengthen, and framework, and the frequency of these five keywords accounts for 47.31% of the total frequency of architectural metaphor keywords. In order to build the platform and

framework of “the Belt and Road”, the Chinese government has planned far ahead and made a good long-term plan to ensure long-term and stable development. Although the development of “the Belt and Road” has a long way to go, the Chinese government is not shying away from it, but is still taking positive actions to strengthen all aspects of the

construction (build, strengthen), so as to build a solid, long-term foundation for this initiative. This shows that the Chinese government is committed to promoting the development of “the Belt and Road” from a high level and looking to the future.

(1) The Belt and Road Initiative and the proposal to *build* a community with a shared future for mankind are most important and most practical measures taken by China to boost opening-up. (Source: 2019010301)

(2) The China-proposed *plan* to build a trade and infrastructure network to revive the ancient Silk Road routes. (Source: 2018010801)

(3) This year, China will host the first International Cooperation Summit Forum on the Belt and Road Initiative, which Xi said will offer a *platform* for the countries to conduct candid exchanges and bring together their wisdom. (Source: 2017010202)

In examples (1) to (3), the discourse maker uses the building process and components to compare the development process and elements of the initiative, and interprets the development of “the Belt and Road” as the construction of “the Belt and Road”. The key words “build, plan, platform” were used to outline the macro overview and ambitious goals of the initiative to outline the macroscopic overview and ambitious goals of the initiative, and help audiences to have a clearer, more comprehensive and realistic understanding of the initiative. Examples (1) and (2) construct the imagery of the building results, with the goals of building a community with a shared future for mankind and planing to build a trade and infrastructure network, reflecting the bright prospect of “the Belt and Road”, which makes audiences feel the broad prospect and surging power of “the Belt and Road”. Example (3) likens “the Belt and Road” to a platform for the countries to conduct candid exchanges and bring together their wisdom. It also shows that the Chinese government is

committed to making “the Belt and Road” a road for countries along the route to work together in harmony and to move in the same direction, and activates the audience’s vision of strong and long-lasting national relations.

4.1.2. Friendship Metaphors

Friendship is an emotion that comes from a two-way relationship, i.e., an emotion that both parties share, which can meet the social needs of individuals, give them emotional support and enhance their happiness. The word “peng” in the oracle script refers to the shape of a string of shells threaded with thread or rope, meaning a measure of the number of shells, and later derived to mean more; “you” in the *Shuowen Jiezi* is elaborated as “two people with same interests tend to be friend. “Benevolence and love” is the core and foundation of Confucianism, which emphasizes the love of relatives and is regarded as a guideline for dealing with interpersonal relationships and the wisdom of communicating with people in the world. Among them, the traditional theoretical thought of “harmony in diversity” is even more respected nowadays, regarded not only as “the way to cultivate oneself”, but also as “the way to rule the country and safeguard the world”. The concept of respecting differences, embracing diversity, advocating equality and harmonious coexistence has become an important guideline for China in handling complex international relations, and a wise choice for countries with different social systems, development levels and ideologies to get along with each other. In the friendship metaphors, the characteristics of the relationship between friends are mapped to the relationship between nations, emphasizing the importance of national relations. The terms “partnership”, “neighbor”, “friendship”, “collective efforts”, and “mutual benefit” are used to refer to the friendly relations between countries with one heart and one mind, and the mutual appreciation and equal exchange between countries.

Table 3. Statistical Table of Friendship Metaphors

Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences
bilateral	1580	concerted efforts	83	shared interest	9
community	1256	unity	74	collective efforts	6
partnership	1020	friend	73	common efforts	5
joint	1072	neighbor	62	fraternity	4
friendship	706	bond	47	share benefits	3
partner	659	shared development	44	common will	3
work together	287	friendly relations	37	concerted actions	3
mutual trust	251	common ground	35	companion	2
welcome	203	amity	31	hold hands together	1
mutual benefit	182	cohesion	20	cordial relations	1
join hands	97	global village	14	mutual relations	1
common prosperity	92	team up	11		

Table 3 shows that the high-frequency friendship metaphor keywords in the news reports on “the Belt and Road Initiative” are bilateral, community, partnership, joint, friendship, etc., which convey China’s desire to cooperate with other countries and move forward hand in hand. The corpus search reveals that the words that go with “bilateral, partnership” are mostly positive words such as “facilitate, boost, promote, strategic,

cooperative”. They show the Chinese government’s efforts to promote the concerted efforts and common development of all countries, and its determination to pave the way to win-win situation, reflecting the Chinese nation’s harmonious world view, which is in line with the traditional Chinese culture of harmony and people-oriented thinking, and lets the audience deeply feel the friendship and sincerity of China. It

is a powerful rebuttal to the untrue statement of “China threat theory”.

(4) Premier Li Keqiang called on Wednesday for better alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the development strategies of Russia in order to enable new breakthroughs in *bilateral* cooperation in the economy, trade, energy and agriculture.(Source: 2020120303)

(5) President Xi put forward the Belt and Road Initiative, holding up the banner of peaceful development and actively developing economic *partnership* with countries along the two routes to jointly build a community featuring mutual political trust, integrated economy and inclusive culture with shared interests.(Source: 2019110611)

(6) Facing the world's profound changes unseen in a century, said Xi, China stands ready to make *joint* efforts with the international community to create an open and pluralistic world economy, a happy society that is inclusive and benefits all.(Source: 2019060803)

In example (4), the Chinese leader calls for new breakthroughs in bilateral cooperation with Russia in a variety of fields, showing that China is actively deepening mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries, pursuing mutual benefit and sharing, and committing itself to achieving real and substantial achievements. In example (5), president Xi Jinping points out that China regards the countries along the routes as “partners” (actively developing economic

partnership with countries along the two routes) and is willing to become brothers with each country along the route, to drive forward together, to support each other, and to show to the world that China is an open and tolerant big country. Example (6) reflects that the Chinese government is actively facing the world’s unprecedented changes in the past century and working together with the international community to build an open and pluralistic world economy, a happy society. The Chinese government is deeply aware of the importance of “a single thread does not make a thread, and a single tree does not make a forest”, and emphasizes the importance of pooling development efforts to build a better future for the human society, which demonstrates the image of a responsible and responsible country.

4.1.3. Travel Metaphors

A “trip” is “a purposeful activity that is a journey along a certain path to a destination”[18]. Charteris-Black (2004) argues that the “travel” metaphor is often used to positively evaluate national policies because the goal of implementing domestic policies has positive social evaluation implications. In the travel metaphor, travel-related words such as “route, map, pioneer, starting point, guide, obstacle” are used to express the development process of “the Belt and Road” and construct the metaphor that “the Belt and Road” is travel.

Table 4. Statistical Table of Travel Metaphors

Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences
opportunity	650	journey	94	embark	22
way	434	outlook	86	headway	20
path	402	starting point	82	orientation	14
challenge	209	guide	80	sight	14
step	203	guideline	72	harbor	12
direction	170	wave	71	scene	9
pace	161	footprint	50	sail	7
route	154	pioneer	47	set off	6
landscape	137	pave the way	28	spectacular	5
guidance	124	arrival	27		
gateway	123	pathway	22		

According to Table 4, the travel metaphors that are used more frequently in the news reports on “the Belt and Road” are opportunity, way, path, challenge and step. In the process of development, opportunities and challenges coexist, and “the Belt and Road” will inevitably encounter difficulties and challenges while realizing mutual understanding among people and world development, but in the face of adverse currents and treacherous waves, the Chinese government dares to ride the waves and open up new paths without reluctance, and moves forward together with the countries along the route towards the destination, fully showing China’s courageous and fearless spirit in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

(7) We deal with wave after wave of *challenges* and always look for *opportunities* out of the crisis and emerge from the challenges stronger than ever.(Source: 2019100801)

(8) With lower tariffs, a shorter negative list and a more favorable business environment, these endeavors will pave the *way* for a higher level of connectivity and interaction between China and the rest of the world.(Source: 2020092907)

In example (7), China does not give up in the face of wave

after wave of challenges, but patiently looks for opportunities in crises (always look for opportunities), which shows the enormity of the road construction, and also depicts an image of China that has overcome difficulties and is indefatigable. In example (8), in order to have a higher level of interaction and communication with the world, China paves the way by lowering tariffs, shortening the negative list, and improving the business environment, which expresses China’s efforts and sacrifices to expand a high level of opening up, and shows China’s firm belief in expanding the breadth and depth of its opening up to the outside world and its willingness to build a prosperous and better future together with other countries in the world. In short, such metaphors evoke the vision of achieving a better goal and inspire the countries along the route to identify with this path.

4.1.4. Traffic Metaphors

Transportation, as the name implies, is the link in charge of communication, transmission and delivery of people, goods and information, and is the pulse of economy and civilization. The development of human society and people’s daily life, such as production activities, trade, social interaction and

information transmission are inseparable from transportation. In the conceptual metaphor of “the Belt and Road is traffic”, operators, transportation components, driving actions, goals and paths are used as source domains, and national governments, development drives, development results, action goals and realistic paths are used as target domains.

The concrete concept of “traffic” is used to construct the abstract operation and development of “the Belt and Road”. The development process of “the Belt and Road” means that China and other countries along the route will work together and unite to drive to a new destination of economic development.

Table 5. Statistical Table of Traffic Metaphors

Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences	Metaphor keywords	Number of Occurrences
accelerate	298	on track	42	hurdle	8
drive	255	fuel	39	flow into	6
connect	244	growth engine	30	divergence	5
access to	184	passage	19	thoroughfare	5
engine	150	steer	18	derail	5
speed up	140	juncture	18	bypass	3
driving force	111	fast lane	16	leading force	3
link	88	obstacle	14	gear up	3
driver	81	barrier	12	get on board	2
channel	87	ride on	11	take a ride	2
pivotal	50	artery	10	intersection	2
signal	47	crossroad	9	new round of takeoff	1

According to Table 5, most of the traffic metaphor keywords in the news reports of “the Belt and Road” have positive meanings, such as accelerate, drive, speed up, fuel and engine, which express the meaning of accelerating development of “the Belt and Road” and showing the strong vitality and resilience of “the Belt and Road”; The words: connect, access to, link, channel, passage, and artery, express the smooth development of “the Belt and Road”, showing China’s commitment to transportation interconnection and its untiring efforts to build an open and comprehensive channel layout. However, there are also words with negative meanings in the traffic metaphor keywords, such as obstacle, barrier, hurdle and derail, which express that the development of “the Belt and Road” faces many difficulties and challenges, so as to warn the countries along the route that they should be cautious and not forget the danger in “the Belt and Road” construction.

(9) We will **accelerate** the modernization of our economy to better meet people’s ever-growing needs for a better life.(Source: 2019092803)

(10) China is gradually forming a new economic development pattern of dual circulation that relies on domestic circulation to **drive** its international circulation and promotes deeper and wider opening-up. (Source : 2020101903)

(11) You can **take a ride** on our express train or just make a hitchhike, all are welcome... (Source: 2014082401)

According to the table, the most frequently used traffic metaphor in the news reports on “the Belt and Road” is “accelerate”, which means to speed up, and can be derived as “to improve something fast”. In example (9), the image schema is that the transportation vehicle accelerates and moves ahead, and the goal of accelerating is to modernize the economy and better meet the people’s growing needs for a better life, indicating that “the Belt and Road” focuses on economic development, serves people’s lives effectively, and takes improving people’s well-being as the fundamental starting point and anchor point. The word “drive” in example (10) is the second most frequent word in the traffic metaphor keywords, implying stimulation and incentive, and steady

progress. China’s new economic pattern relies on domestic circulation to drive international circulation and deeper and wider opening up to the outside world, which shows that China’s economic construction cannot be separated from the world and that China and other countries have long been closely related and their destinies are closely connected. Example (11) compares China’s development achievements to an express train, a hitchhike, in which China allows countries along the route to ride on the express train of “China’s development” to achieve their own development. This shows that “the Belt and Road” is not a monopoly, but a win-win situation for all parties, reflecting China’s noble sentiment of harmonizing with all nations.

4.2. The Metaphors in “the Belt and Road” and Self-constructed National Image

National image is a combination of self-perception and other-perception, the result of a series of information input and output, a kind of information capital[20]. The national image depends not only on the objective reality of the country itself, but also on the active construction and communication of the mass media[21]. Critical Discourse Analysis suggests that group images are formed in the “mental space” of discursive construction[22]. Metaphor, as a cognitive mechanism, is the main discursive strategy for constructing this “mental space” because its persuasive function can express the author’s evaluation and underlying intentions. Discourse users use similar conceptual structures in the original and target domains to shape national image, mostly using source domains that have positive meanings for the “self”, thus strongly highlighting the positive message of the “self”. Statistical analysis shows that most of the semantic rhymes of the four types of high-frequency conceptual metaphors in the news reports on “the Belt and Road” in *China Daily* have positive meanings, indicating China’s willingness to move forward side by side with countries along the route to build a win-win road of cooperation for common development and prosperity, a road of peace and friendship with mutual trust and mutual assistance and all-round exchanges, and an international cooperation platform of a

community of human destiny.

Table 6. The Metaphors in “the Belt and Road” and Self-constructed National Image

Metaphor Types	Semantic Rhymes	Self-constructed National Image
Architectural Metaphors	Positive	Down-to-earth, hard-working, pragmatic and enterprising
Friendship Metaphors	Positive	Goodwill, harmony and friendship
Travel Metaphors	Positive	Perseverance, defiance and steady progress
Traffic Metaphors	Positive	Interconnection, stability, and harmony

The major metaphor in the report is the architectural metaphor, which regards the “the Belt and Road” as a great foundation, sending a signal that China will actively participate in the great construction, and use its sweat and wisdom to draw a delicate “painting” of the Belt and Road, which promotes the construction of a better world home. For example, the most frequent architectural metaphor keyword “build” in the corpus, and the phrases that go with it are mainly “a new cooperation platform”, “a new tape of large open economy”, which shows China’s long-term planning and unremitting efforts to build a good international cooperation relationship with the countries along the corridor with mutual understanding and trust. This metaphor shows a beautiful architectural blueprint for the world and foretells a stable and long-lasting economic development, constructing the image of a country that is down-to-earth, hard-working, pragmatic and enterprising.

In the friendship metaphor, the image of a friendly country is constructed by using words such as “friend, neighbor, common ground, join hands, and shared interest”. In Chinese Confucianism, “harmony” is a principle advocated by Confucianism to maintain ethics and morality, stabilize political rule and govern social order, and is the embodiment of the spirit of tolerance and rationality. Since ancient times, China has pursued an ideal society in which a public spirit will rule all under the sky when the great way prevails, and it has embodied a beautiful vision of a commonwealth society. Nowadays, Chinese leaders continue to follow this idea and put the idea of “commonwealth” into the practice of “the Belt and Road” to build a community of identity and interests for cooperation and development and mutual benefit with other countries in the world, which is also a sign that the idea of “the commonwealth of the world” has broken through the borders of home and country and moved to the world stage. China is committed to making “the Belt and Road” a platform for the welfare of all countries and people in the world, and welcomes people from all countries to share the fruits of the road, so as to build an image of a friendly China that is good to the world, rather than a paranoid and selfish profit-exclusive one.

Among the travel metaphors, “road” (routes, paths, ways) is the most frequently used metaphorical keyword, which not only refers to the trade routes along which China and other countries can communicate with each other, but also extends to the “road of development”, the road where China and other countries around the world work together to build a better future. Throughout the uncharted road exploration, the Chinese government has also demonstrated its determination to work with countries to overcome difficulties and move forward together (President Xi urges proactive role in implementing projects along routes to provide a “sense of gain”. (Source: 2016081801). This metaphor highlights the arduous process of the development of “the Belt and Road”

and the good goal of moving forward, reflecting that China and the countries along the route are working together in the same direction to achieve the common ideals and good pursuits of human society, thus constructing the image of a country that is resilient and steadily advancing despite difficulties.

The traffic metaphor uses many words such as accelerate, drive, connect, and channel to highlight the vigorous development and fast change of the “the Belt and Road”. It shows that China and other countries have pursued excellence on the development path, and constructed the national image of connectivity, stability, and harmony.

In general, the news reports on “the Belt and Road” in *China Daily* often use positive metaphors to build a pragmatic, enterprising, all embracing, indomitable, and courageous national image, so as to make the audience have a more specific and intuitive understanding of this initiative, improve their understanding and acceptance of the image of China, reduce the doubts and misunderstandings of foreign media about this initiative to a certain extent, protect the nation’s fair image, and realize the legalization and rationalization of self-constructed national image. Therefore, the discourse of the “the Belt and Road” is not only the political discourse of national strategy, but also the basic carrier of the construction of national image, and also the discourse logo of enhancing China’s cultural soft power and international influence.

5. Conclusion

This paper uses Critical Metaphor Analysis to interpret the metaphor selection mechanism in the the news reports on “the Belt and Road” in *China Daily*, and discusses the role of metaphor in constructing the image of China. Research has found that firstly, there are rich types of metaphors in the reports, involving 12 types of metaphors, including architectural metaphors, friendship metaphors, travel metaphors, traffic metaphors, plant metaphors, and war metaphors. Secondly, the distribution of 12 types of metaphors is uneven, with architectural metaphors being the most frequently used (46.98%), followed by friendship metaphors (22.55%), travel metaphors (8.85%), and traffic metaphors (5.87%). The total proportion of these metaphors is 84.25%, which is much higher than the sum of other metaphors. Finally, *China Daily* has constructed a national image that is pragmatic, enterprising, benevolent, resilient, stable, and steadily advancing. Therefore, in the face of increasingly complex international situations, we should attach importance to the role of official media in disseminating information and enhancing mutual trust between countries, and view external communication work from a strategic perspective. At the same time, news discourse makers should use metaphor as a tool of discourse, exert its explanatory and persuasive functions, to construct a good

national image, better export Chinese wisdom and spirit, and form a good international public opinion.

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