A Comparative Research of the Image of China in Sino-Indian News Reporting: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Galwan Valley Conflict Coverage in Global Times and Times of India

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Abstract: This study uses the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, combined with corpus technology, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the reports on the conflict in the Galwan Valley between 2020 and 2024 in Times of India and Global Times. The research aims to explore how the media of the two countries construct the image of China in their reports.The study found that at the textual level, Times of India tends to use negative reporting verbs and collocation to portray a threatening and aggressive image of China. In contrast, Global Times uses more positive reporting verbs to emphasize China's image of peace and development. At the level of discourse practice, the reports of the two media reflect different power operations. Times of India emphasizes India's security concerns by quoting official and expert statements, while Global Times emphasizes the rationality of China's maintenance of territorial integrity by quoting Chinese official and expert views.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; China's Image; Galvan Valley Clash; Global Times; Times of India

1. Introduction

Since the official establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India in 1950, the Sino-Indian border issue has always been a barometer of bilateral relations. On June 15, 2020, in the Galwan Valley within the Aksai Chin area of the western section of the Sino-Indian border, a physical conflict occurred between the armies of both sides, resulting in casualties. This incident marked another serious confrontation following the Sino-Indian border conflicts from 1959 to 1976, the "Ladakh" conflict in 2013, and the "Doklam" conflict in 2017. Since the conflict, China and India have engaged in multiple negotiations on the border issue. It was not until October 22, 2024, that the Indian Foreign Minister and the spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs successively stated that both sides had reached a solution to the border issues, signifying significant progress in resolving the four-year military standoff and temporarily restoring peace and tranquility to the border region. In response to this conflict and its aftermath, both Chinese and Indian media have published a large number of news reports. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) considers news discourse as a "social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258), reflecting news events and constrained by the ideologies and power relations within society. The two major English mainstream media in India and China are Times of India and Global Times. Analyzing the discourse of reports in Times of India involving the Galwan Valley conflict over the past four years and tracing the trajectory of its reporting can be beneficial for monitoring international public opinion, exploring the deeper meanings behind the discourse, and deconstructing the threatening image of China fabricated by the Indian media. Furthermore, for China itself, to establish its own discourse system on the Sino-Indian border, it is also necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of India's border discourse, in order to know both oneself and the other party. External promotion news constitutes a part of the national discourse and is an important means of spreading the country's image and enhancing its international discourse power (Liu, 2017).

2. The Critical Discourse Analysis of the Galwan Valley Conflict Coverage in Global Times and Times of India

2.1 Textual Practice Analysis

Thematic words are an important part for corpus linguistics to highlight the thematic content of a text (Zhang & Shi, 2023), referring to words that appear frequently in a corpus or text and are closely related to a particular context or topic. These words usually represent the core concepts, themes or topics of a text, and can effectively reflect the main content of the text or the object of study.

2.1.1 Selection of Thematic Words and Word Frequency

In order to analyze the construction of China's image in the media of China and India, this study uses the search and analysis software Sketch Engine, to retrieve the following three groups of China-related thematic words that appear more frequently in Global Times and Times of India. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 China-related Thematic Words in Global Times and Times of India

Thematic Words	Frequency (Global Times)	Frequency (Times of India)
China	832	635
Chinese troop	25	65
Chinese soldier	25	12

According to the table, it can be found that: the word "China" is mentioned 635 times in Times of India and 832 times in Global Times. Both sources mention China frequently, yet Global Times reports on China with a higher frequency, indicating a stronger emphasis on domestic issues. While Times of India is lower, although there are a lot of mentions, mostly focused on specific events. Additionally, Times of India mentions "Chinese troop" 65 times, much higher than the 25 times in Global Times, which shows that Times of India tends to construct China's image from the perspective of military power. The term "Chinese soldier" is mentioned 25 times in Global Times, significantly higher than the 12 times mentioned in Times of India, which shows that Chinese media pay more attention to individual soldiers in the conflict. While Times of India mentions the term "Chinese soldier" very rarely, but mentions the term "Chinese troop" more frequently, which indicates that the Indian media focuses more on the concept of group and does not emphasize the image of individual Chinese soldiers. This suggests that the Indian media are more concerned with the concept of a group and do not emphasize the individual image of Chinese soldiers.

2.1.2 Collocation Analysis of Thematic Words

Colligation is an element in the model extended units, which mainly refers to the co-occurrence relationship between words and grammatical structures (Zhang & Shi, 2023). In Critical Discourse Analysis, colligation is used to study the preference of specific words in certain grammatical structures, which in turn reveals the ideology behind the discourse. By analyzing collocations of the thematic words, the construction of China's image in Chinese and Indian mainstream media can be better analyzed. In this study, we will focus on the analysis of verbs and adjectives among the high-frequency collocations, as verbs can provide information about behavior changes and subject-predicate relationships, while adjectives can expand and elaborate the information embedded in the text, and examples of their collocations are shown in Table 2.

2.2 Discourse Practice Analysis

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis three-dimensional framework, in addition to text analysis, focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of texts in its second layer. He argues that these processes are social and need to be linked to the political, economic, and social contexts in which the texts are produced. The emphasis on discourse practice and the production, distribution, and consumption of texts can be linked to the texts themselves, and one way to make this connection is by analyzing the "intertextuality" of the texts (Fairclough, 2003: 66-67). Fairclough regards intertextuality as an interaction of power. He distinguishes it into manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality; the former refers to the obvious presence of other discourses within a particular discourse, while the latter refers to the complex relationships formed by the interweaving of different genres and writing conventions (Fairclough, 2003). This article will focus on the feature of manifest intertextuality.

"Discourse representation" is an important indicator for analyzing manifest intertextuality. Fairclough explains that when people "report" discourse, they must choose one way over another to describe it. Moreover, what is described includes not only their grammatical features but also their discursive organization (Fairclough, 2003: 109). Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of reported speech, he proposes four ways of discourse representation: direct discourse representation, indirect discourse representation, partial direct discourse representation, and unmarked

narration, which correspond to the traditional concepts of direct speech, indirect speech, partial quotation, and pure narration. News reports are filled with various forms of quotation, and these different channels of information and sources reflect the values and ideologies of different interest groups, showing to some extent the interrelationships between news texts. To achieve ideological goals or political interests, journalists, like politicians, tend to adopt strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Van Dijk, 1991; Yuan& Wang, 2020) — in most cases, negative information about oneself will not become the topic or headline of the news, while negative news about others will; positive features of oneself will be highlighted or discussed, while the positive features of others are often ignored, downplayed, or not mentioned at all (You & Li , 2023). It can be inferred that in the Galwan Valley conflict, mainstream Chinese and Indian newspapers such as Global Times and Times of India may also follow these strategies to construct their diplomatic positions and justify their actions.

2.2.1 Analysis of discourse reporting verbs

The reporting verb refers to the predicate verb that introduces the reporting discourse, which helps journalists to express their own attitudes obliquely when reporting others' statements (Volosinov, 1973; Thompson & Ye, 1991). Based on the emotions they may elicit, reporting verbs are usually divided into positive reporting verbs and negative reporting verbs (Geis, 1987). Actively reporting verbs helps to trigger rational, rigorous, and just emotions, enhancing the social influence of the source of the report. Negative reporting verbs carry a sense of hegemony and irrationality, which can cause fatal damagwe to the public image of the reporting source(You & Li, 2023), because neutral reporting verbs are often considered to introduce a statement without adding evaluation (Lai , 2016), the focus of this study is only on the use of positive reporting verbs and negative verbs.

Table 3 Comparison of the Use of Reporting Verbs in Global Times and Times of India

	Global Times			Times of India		
Rank	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
1	believe(39)	say(372)	claim（24）	add(91)	say (605)	call (26)
2	agree(29)	tell(86)	call（23）	agree(53)	according to (32)	claim (26)
3	add(25)	note(58)	warn（20）	believe(13)	report (25)	blame (5)
4	Announce（9）	according to (52)	insist（9）	think(13)	speak (21)	warn (5)
5		report(44)	refute（4）	acknowledge(8)	note (11)	complain (4)
6		cite(17)	criticize（3）	recall(4)	quote(8)	
7		quote(9)				
8		speak(9)				
Total：	103	647	83	182	702	66
(%)	12.3%	77.7%	10%	19.1%	73.9%	6.9%

2.2.1.1 Positive Reporting Verbs

The use of positive reporting verbs indicates the news reporter's affirmative attitude towards the subject being reported. As shown in the chart, the three most frequently used positive reporting verbs in both Global Times and Times of India are "believe", "agree", and "add".

Examples from Global Times:

(1) Chinese people believe that the PLA will never be gentle to the provocative Indian troops in the future.

(2) The two sides have agreed to disengage frontline troops in batches and take effective measures to ease the situation in the border areas.

(3) Jaishankar said the normalization of India-China relations serves the common interests of both sides, adding that India is willing to properly handle differences with an open mind.

Examples from Times of India

(1) He added that it was not the government but the country, which fights against the enemy nation and that the dispensation was answerable to the people of the country.

(2) They also agreed to have another meeting of the senior commanders soon to address the situation, which continues to prevent New Delhi from resuming bilateral exchanges with Beijing.

(3) The US believes that Indian forces were better prepared to face the Chinese provocation following the violent standoff in June in the Galwan valley in which 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese troops had lost their lives

2.2.1.2 Negative Reporting Verbs

Negative reporting verbs create a rude, irresponsible, and biased image of the original speaker, indicating the reporter's opposition to the original speaker's views. The most commonly used reporting verbs include "warn", "claim", "insist", and "urge".

Examples from Global Times:

(1)India claims this area is its territory, but the Chinese government has never recognized "Arunachal Pradesh", which is referred to as the southern part of Tibet or Zangnan in China.

(2) Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, calling on more negotiations to solve possible incidents.

(3) Some experts warned India not to attempt to provoke fresh conflicts along the border, as it would only result in unbearable consequences for India.

Examples from Times of India：

(1)In comments which seemed aimed at soothing frayed nerves here, Sun called for India and China to meet each other "half way" at a time they were faced with a complex situation.

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the image of China presented by Global Times in its reports is firm and supportive of China's tough stance. In Indian media reports, when India relays statements that are unfavorable to China, it mostly uses positive reporting verbs. However, when it relays statements that originate from China, it uses negative reporting verbs, in an effort to portray China as a rude and despicable villain.

2.2.2 Analysis of News Sources:

Fairclough, in his explanation of intertextuality, proposed four ways of discourse reporting: direct quotation, indirect quotation, partial quotation, and pure reporting, each coming from different sources of information. Generally, in order to achieve balance in reporting, news producers will select different perspectives when producing discourse. Overall, news sources can be divided into specific sources, uncertain sources, and unknown sources. Typically, "Individuals (journalists) can choose media that cater to their views" (Lockling, 2019: 1), and they can decide whose voice to present in the news. Reporting sources can generally be classified from two perspectives: the accuracy of the source and the identity of the reporter (Zhang , 2004). However, due to the large sample size of this study, it is not possible to statistically analyze each news report's sources and quotation content one by one, and corpus technology cannot trace all quotations. Therefore, the author selected the most frequently used neutral reporting verb "said" as the screening condition in the corpus and used "the subject of said" as the target in the "concordance" to manually categorize the sources. The author will manually select some texts for qualitative analysis according to different types of sources, thereby revealing the hidden deep meaning behind the quotations.

Table4 Reporting Sources in Global Times

Source	Official	Experts	News	Others
Frequency	87	108	37	29
%	33%	41%	14%	11%

Table5: Reporting Sources in Times of India

Source	Official	Experts	News	Others

Frequency	180	16	36	26
%	60%	5%	12%	8%

From the two tables above, it can be seen that the highest proportion of reporting sources in Global Times is authoritative experts, followed by official sources. In contrast, the primary reporting source for Times of India is official, and the subjects of these two types of sources are relatively specific. Official sources mainly refer to spokespersons for the foreign ministry, foreign ministers, and experts who are scholars in the field of international relations as well as experienced practitioners from various industries. In contrast, the subjects cited under "other" are more vague, such as "netizens," "an officer," "the couple." Specific sources often lend authenticity and authority to the discourse. The practice of using anonymous sources is partly because "journalists must protect sources who do not wish to disclose their names or affiliations" (Peng , 1997: 30), and on the other hand, it is because journalists often place the quoted statements or the institutions they belong to in a more prominent position than the news providers themselves.

Examples from Global Times:

(1)Some netizens shared their comments on the pictures of those bridges named after those heroes, and one netizen said "the heroes have never gone far away from us."

(2)In another activity on Wednesday, Jaishankar said , "It's important for our （India's） relationship with China to come back to normal.

(3)As Indian TV anchor Arnab Goswami said , India is not a satellite state of the US.

(4) In fact, it will not happen," Bambavale said , noting that "therefore we will have to ensure that there is peace and tranquility on the border if the rest of the relationship has to move ahead.

Examples from Times of India：

(1)A Chinese national from Beijing working in Gurgaon for a Chinese mobile firm initially refused to talk, ..."There is talk of border standoff and tensions, but we know Indians are very warm people and that is why I have told my family that all is fine here and they should not worry," he said

(2) The US Defence Department said China has prioritised military spending over the last decade to focus on expanding its capabilities to be operated in disputed regions along its border, including India and Bhutan to contested waterways in the East and South China seas.

(3) The US believes that Indian forces were better prepared to face the Chinese provocation following the violent standoff in June in the Galwan valley in which 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese troops had lost their lives.

Global Times and Times of India differ in their choice of news sources and the goals they hope to achieve. First, Global Times will use clear Chinese official sources and domestic experts' views in many cases to state China's position on the Galwan Valley Clash and call on the Indian side to resolve the conflict reasonably; It also cited American authorities and Indian media to further prove India's distortion of facts. In addition, when citing hidden news sources, Global Times tends to quote comments from Chinese netizens and readers, which indirectly shows that China's actions are just and legitimate. Times of India quoted a large number of official remarks. When quoting Chinese officials, it is intended to highlight China's tough attitude and unreasonable image. And frequently quote official US statements to emphasize the rationality of India's behavior and the threatening image of China. When citing hidden news sources, it portrays India as a peaceful and friendly image to contrast with China's slander against India.

3. Conclusion

This article deeply explores the image of China constructed by Global Times and Times of India in the conflict report of the Galwan Valley from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, combined with corpus technology, the research analyzes from three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice. The study found that at the textual level, Times of India tends to use negative reporting verbs and collocation to construct a threatening and aggressive image of China, while Global Times uses more positive reporting verbs to portray a peaceful and cooperative image of China. At the level of discourse

practice, the two newspapers reflected different power operations in their reports. Times of India emphasized India's security concerns and China's tough stance by quoting official and expert remarks, while Global Times emphasized the rationality of China's territorial integrity by quoting Chinese official and expert views. In the face of controversy, both Global Times and Times of India narrate facts considering their respective national interests to garner greater international support. However, such biased narratives risk deepening misunderstandings. Therefore, while maintaining a clear stance in news reporting is essential, it is equally crucial to avoid extremism and emotional rhetoric.

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