



Research Path of News Narrative Difference between Mainstream Media in China and Kazakhstan under the Belt and Road Initiative

Yan Ruifeng¹, Nelya Rushanova^{2*}

(1.Faculty of journalism,Al-Farabi Kazakh National university,Kazakhstan | yanruifeng130@163.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9798-0364>;2.Department of Print and Electronic Media, Al-Farabi Kazakh National university,Kazakhstan | Nelya.Rushanova@kaznu.edu.kz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6757-1671>;2.Corresponding Author:Nelya Rushanova,Department of Print and Electronic Media, Al-Farabi Kazakh National university,Kazakhstan | Nelya.Rushanova@kaznu.edu.kz)

Abstract: Since the proposal of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China and Kazakhstan, as key partners, have been engaging in increasingly close cooperation in various fields such as economy, trade, and culture. As a crucial platform for information dissemination and public opinion guidance, mainstream media has constructed a cognitive framework for the people of both countries through its news narratives on the "Belt and Road". This article focuses on the narrative differences between Chinese and Kazakh mainstream media on issues related to the "Belt and Road". By systematically reviewing existing research findings, it proposes a research approach encompassing four dimensions: narrative subjects, narrative content, narrative discourse, and narrative effects. The aim is to reveal the media environment, cultural context, and national aspirations underlying these differences, thereby providing theoretical references for promoting mutual communication between Chinese and Kazakh media and facilitating cross-cultural communication in support of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

Keywords: "The Belt and Road"; China; Kazakhstan; mainstream media news narrative; difference

The achievements made by China and Kazakhstan in various fields such as energy cooperation and infrastructure construction can, on one hand, be regarded as vivid examples of the concrete implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, and on the other hand, constitute extremely important topics in the media coverage of the two countries. The news narratives conducted by mainstream media are not merely acts of information transmission; they also serve as a means to express national will, cultural concepts, and interest claims. Due to certain differences between China and Kazakhstan in terms of media systems, cultural traditions, and international discourse power, their narratives on the Belt and Road Initiative exhibit distinct characteristics. Currently, most academic

research on the Belt and Road Initiative-related reports by Chinese and Kazakh media focuses solely on content analysis, lacking a detailed systematic approach to the research path. This makes it difficult to fully and thoroughly explain the internal logic behind the generation of narrative differences and the mechanisms of their impact. Therefore, establishing a more scientific and reasonable research path to further analyze in depth and detail the narrative differences between the mainstream media of China and Kazakhstan holds significant practical importance for promoting cross-cultural communication of the Belt and Road Initiative.

I. Theoretical Basis of the Study on the Differences of News Narration in Mainstream Media of China and Kazakhstan



This study is based on news narratology, intercultural communication theory, and agenda-setting theory. News narratology treats news as a form of narrative, where media use means such as selecting who to tell the story, how to arrange the content, and what language to use to express it, thereby attributing specific meanings to events. When Chinese and Kazakh mainstream media report on the "Belt and Road," their narrative focuses differ due to differences in positioning and target audiences: Chinese media generally emphasize "common development" and highlight the concept of joint consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits; while Kazakh media tend to focus more on their own perspective, paying attention to the practical benefits and potential issues brought by cooperation. Intercultural communication theory suggests that cultural differences can influence the mode of communication. In Chinese society, people place greater emphasis on collective interests, so media often use expressions like "community with a shared future"; Kazakhstan, being in a region where multiple cultures intersect, emphasizes national interests while also valuing its equal status in the process of cooperation, so its reports tend to focus more on showcasing the proactive role played by its own country. Agenda-setting theory explains that the quantity of media coverage depends on the methods and approaches will influence the public's assessment of the issues significance^[1]. China media has long regarded "Belt and Road" as a key issue, continuously publishing related reports; Kazakhstani media, on the other hand, adjusts the intensity of their coverage based on the actual needs of domestic development. For instance, when energy projects are implemented or face external skepticism, they increase related reports and respond to issues of national concern.

II. Research Approach Construction of News Narration Differences between Mainstream Media in China and Kazakhstan

(1) Narrative Subject Dimension: Differences in Media System and Positioning

There are fundamental differences in the media systems of China and Kazakhstan. In China, a socialist news system is implemented, under which mainstream media bear the important functions of promoting national policies and consolidating social consensus. Their coverage of the "Belt and Road" initiative exhibits a distinct national stance, emphasizing the global value of the initiative. In contrast, Kazakhstan's media landscape is dominated by market-oriented outlets, with some state-owned media still retained. Under these circumstances, media positioning tends to cater more to domestic audience needs, with content focusing more on the specific impacts of the "Belt and Road" on Kazakhstan's economic and social development. Research can analyze the official positioning, funding sources, and audience profiles of mainstream media in both countries to compare their narrative starting points^[2]. For example, we can select China's Peoples Daily and Kazakhstan's Pravda as research subjects, analyze their media charters and reporting purposes, and delve into how the differences in positioning influence the direction of the "Belt and Road" narrative.

(2) Narrative Content Dimension: Differences in Topic Selection and Value Orientation

The Belt and Road coverage by Chinese and Kazakh media exhibits distinct differences in narrative content, which is the most intuitive manifestation. Such differences can be explored through a combination of quantitative content analysis and qualitative text analysis. By analyzing the reporting of China's mainstream media and Kazakh media from 2013 to 2023, it is evident that China's mainstream media often emphasizes macro-level issues such as economic and trade cooperation, cultural exchanges, and the establishment of multilateral mechanisms, thereby conveying the cooperative philosophy of "consultation, cooperation, and shared benefits." In contrast, Kazakh media more frequently focuses on infrastructure projects like energy corridors, railway logistics, and industrial parks, paying particular attention to their



actual impacts on the countrys industrial structure, regional development, and fiscal revenue. Further textual analysis reveals that Chinese reports frequently employ collectivist-oriented phrases such as "mutual benefit and win-win," "common prosperity," and "the spirit of the Silk Road," aiming to emphasize the holistic and moral aspects of cooperation. On the other hand, Kazakh media tends to use expressions like "national sovereignty," "sustainable development," and "local benefits," consistently highlighting the countrys interests while acknowledging the outcomes of cooperation. The core of the narrative is firmly placed, thus presenting a balanced state of pragmatic and prudent value orientation^[3].

(3) Narrative Discourse Dimension: Differences in Language Expression and Narrative Structure

Narrative discourse encompasses aspects such as language style, rhetorical techniques, and narrative structure, serving as a crucial element in constructing narrative meaning. In Chinas media, there is a tendency to employ highly evocative rhetorical expressions, such as "working together," "paving the way for a better future," and "writing a new chapter of cooperation." These expressions exhibit a solemn quality and carry a strong idealistic tone. Moreover, they often adopt a linear narrative structure of "historical background—current achievements—future prospects," integrating the Belt and Road Initiative into the broader context of the revival of Chinese civilization and the transformation of global governance. In contrast, Kazakhstani media tends to be more plain and restrained, avoiding overly emotional or symbolic expressions. Their reports mostly follow a structure of "problem identification—cause analysis—solutions and recommendations." On one hand, they highlight the various opportunities brought by cooperation, while on the other hand, they candidly address potential challenges, such as the impact of cross-border infrastructure on the ecological environment and the proportion of localized employment in foreign-funded projects. This demonstrates their

strong concern for reality and critical awareness.

(4) Narrative Effect Dimension: Differences in Audience Perception and Public Opinion Influence

The narrative effects pursued by media ultimately need to be implemented at the level of practical outcomes, which can be evaluated through audience research and analysis of public opinion. Through conducting surveys and in-depth interviews, it is found that the people of China largely rely on relevant reports from mainstream media to construct a positive perception of the influence of the Belt and Road Initiative on a global scale, thereby recognizing it as a key symbol of the countrys continuous growth and development and its contributions on the international stage. However, the people of Kazakhstan focus more on whether specific projects can genuinely improve peoples livelihoods, such as whether transportation becomes more convenient, whether job opportunities arise, or whether there is technology transfer. Social media sentiment analysis can further corroborate this cognitive divergence: in the cyberspace of China, most discussions about the Belt and Road Initiative present a relatively positive situation and are often closely linked to national pride and cultural confidence. However, on social platforms in Kazakhstan, such as Facebook and Telegram groups, there are concerns about whether the distribution of benefits is fair and reasonable, and whether there is...Rational yet skeptical voices questioning environmental risks and the sustainability of debt are often shaped by the countrys medias balanced coverage of these issues. This demonstrates how media narratives not only shape information content but also, on a deeper level, construct public perceptions of international cooperation and corresponding emotional attitudes.

III. The Generation Logic and Influence Mechanism of News Narration Differences between Mainstream Media in China and Kazakhstan

The narrative differences in the coverage of



"Belt and Road" by mainstream media in China and Kazakhstan mainly stem from three aspects: media systems, cultural traditions, and the international environment. In terms of media systems, China's media operates under the guidance of the Party and government, and its reporting must serve the national strategic interests. In contrast, Kazakhstan's media is influenced by both the government and the market, requiring a balance between national stance and public information needs. From the perspective of cultural traditions, China is influenced by ideas such as the "cosmology of the world," with its reporting emphasizing the concept of shared development. Kazakhstan, located in a region where nomadic and agricultural civilizations intersect, has a culture that is both open and highly focused on practical benefits, so its reporting often highlights the tangible outcomes of cooperation. Regarding the international environment, China is currently striving to enhance its international discourse power, which necessitates using media to project an image of a responsible major power. As a crucial country in Central Asia, Kazakhstan must balance various relationships when engaging in foreign cooperation, so its reporting typically maintains a relatively neutral stance.

This difference in narrative can directly influence the public's understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative in both countries, thereby affecting the social foundation of bilateral cooperation. Chinese media often elaborate on the significance of this initiative from a macro perspective, while Kazakhstani media tends to focus more on the concrete progress of local projects. Combining these two perspectives can present a more complete picture of cooperation. However, if some Kazakhstani media spread unverified claims, such as those about the "debt trap," it may lead to public misunderstandings and reduce trust in the cooperation. Therefore, the differences themselves are not the issue; the key lies in whether both sides can strengthen information communication, minimize misinterpretations, and thereby promote a more solid

consensus.

In summary, the narrative differences exhibited by mainstream Chinese and Kazakh media on the topic of "Belt and Road" are actually the result of the interplay and joint action of multiple factors such as media systems, cultural traditions, and national aspirations. By establishing a research path of "narrative subject—narrative content—narrative discourse—narrative effect," it is possible to systematically and meticulously analyze the various characteristics of narrative differences, the underlying logic behind their formation, and the mechanisms of their impact. In future research, big data analysis methods and interdisciplinary research approaches can be further combined, and the scope of research sample selection can be appropriately expanded.

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Yan Ruifeng (2001-), male, holds a master's degree and his research interests include secretarial studies, journalism and communication, and research on the inheritance and innovation of regional culture.