

Construction of China's National Image in the Jakarta Post: Taking the Report on the South China Sea on its Official English Website as an Example

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Abstract: *Indonesia is a very important partner for China. Indonesia has had a complex relationship with China in history. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, the two sides have become a comprehensive strategic partner, from alliance to severing diplomatic ties, and then to reconciling old friendship. "Concept", as a central concept in the constructivist theory of international relations, plays a crucial role in international relations. Studying Indonesia, the political leader of ASEAN, is very important for China. This article took the report on China in the Jakarta Post, a major English language newspaper in Indonesia, as a sample to systematically sort out and analyze the "China view" of Indonesians. Regarding the South China Sea issue, there were 9 worrying reports and 2 objective and neutral reports in 2019; in 2020, there were 8 worrying reports and 4 objective and neutral reports. The research results showed that the Jakarta Post's overall coverage of China was positive, and Indonesia's attitude towards China was positive, but there were still doubts about China. The South China Sea issue is Indonesia's biggest concern towards China. Indonesia is a very important partner for China. Indonesia has had a complex relationship with China in history. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, the two sides have become a comprehensive strategic partner, from alliance to severing diplomatic ties, and then to reconciling old friendship. "Concept", as a central concept in the constructivist theory of international relations, plays a crucial role in international relations. Studying Indonesia, the political leader of ASEAN, is very important for China. This article took the report on China in the Jakarta Post, a major English language newspaper in Indonesia, as a sample to systematically sort out and analyze the "China view" of Indonesians. Regarding the South China Sea issue, there were 9 worrying reports and 2 objective and neutral reports in 2019; in 2020, there were 8 worrying reports and 4 objective and neutral reports. The research results showed that the Jakarta Post's overall coverage of China was positive, and Indonesia's attitude towards China was positive, but there were still doubts about China. The South China Sea issue is Indonesia's biggest concern towards China.*

Keywords: China's National Image; Jakarta Post; South China Sea Issue; English Official Website; China View.

1. INTRODUCTION

The South China Sea issue is the focus of attention for major media outlets in Europe and America, as well as for ASEAN countries such as the Philippines. Indonesia, as the largest economy in ASEAN, holds a pivotal position in ASEAN's foreign affairs. Studying the reports of mainstream Indonesian media on the South China Sea issue and how to shape China's image is of great value in promoting good neighborly friendship and cooperative development between China and ASEAN.

To form a good national image on a global scale, there needs to be a long-term process. It requires the guidance of correct theories, support from various aspects such as economic strength, military strength, and political strength, as well as the improvement of national quality and the help of media institutions and multinational corporations. This article first presents the constituent elements and influencing factors of China's national image, then explores the causes and concepts of the South China Sea issue, and finally constructs China's national image in conjunction with the Jakarta Post.

2. RELATED WORK

News reporting not only conveys the content of the event itself, but also conveys the views of the media and journalists on the relevant events, thereby affecting people's interpretation of the news. Taking the South China Sea report of the Jakarta Post as the main body, this paper analyzed some selectivity in the structure of the report

and summarizes various media structures used by the newspaper in the reporting process, which can shape the image of China as a country. Li Qing believed that textbooks are a major content carrier for achieving educational goals. They are not only related to the basic issues of how to cultivate people and what kind of people to cultivate, but also a major psychological intermediary for shaping the image of the country. They have a direct impact on the formation of national identity, cultural confidence, and values of learners [1]. Wu Jianguo believed that building a national image is an important part of development strategy, and the media, as an effective means of information transmission, can achieve the shaping of the national image through appropriate communication strategies [2]. In terms of attitude sources, Deng Renhua tended to use knowledge-based resources to depict the real-time and efficient response to the epidemic, in order to demonstrate the national image that the Chinese government is responsible for [3]. Wu Qian believed that with the rapid development of the Internet and the improvement of civic awareness, the importance of national image construction is becoming increasingly prominent. Today, with the continuous deepening of international exchanges and connections, the world is becoming an inseparable whole [4]. Zhao Yuqian believed that as a visual rhetorical device or symbolic translation method, multimodal diplomacy has positive significance in promoting the dissemination of the major concept of "great power diplomacy", enhancing national image and international influence [5]. However, their research lacks further exploration of the South China Sea issue.

In the process of global economic integration, the international structure is undergoing readjustment, and the connections between countries are becoming increasingly close. The interaction between cooperation and competition is deepening. National image is the comprehensive expression of a country in the international community, as well as the comprehensive evaluation of it by other countries. It plays a significant political role in national exchanges and is related to a country's competitiveness in the international community. Therefore, scholars have always attached great importance to the study of national image.

3. METHODS FOR CONSTRUCTING CHINA'S NATIONAL IMAGE

3.1 Elements and Influencing Factors of National Image

The national image is a comprehensive evaluation of a country by the evaluation object, and its evaluation content is very broad: history and culture, institutional system, national status, people's quality, economic status, etc. [6-7]. These are all important components of a country's image, and they directly reflect the national image of a nation. From the nature of cognitive relationships, they can be divided into two categories: cognitive subjects and cognitive objects. The influencing factors of cognitive subjects mainly include: basic factors represented by the country's economy, military power, etc., which are the most critical factors for the country's image; it also includes structural factors that affect the overall operational structure of the country through laws, systems, cultural systems, and other factors [8]; in addition, there are also spiritual factors represented by national culture and national quality, which are centered around national culture and have an impact on the core symbols of national culture. Compared with the influencing factors of the object of knowledge, the influencing factors of the object of knowledge are more subjective, mainly reflected in aspects such as political attitude towards the object, information updating methods, and cognitive ability. The image positioning of a country has the most direct impact on it. The strategic position of a country in the international arena, its attitude towards handling domestic affairs, and its foreign relations all reflect its image positioning [9]. The strategic orientation of a country is a self-awareness and self-positioning of a country in the international political, military, and cultural context. It is not only a political declaration to the world, but also a political commitment to its own people. It contains a reflection of a country's political attitude and development strategy over a longer period of time. The establishment of its strategic position directly affects a country's international attitude and foreign policy, that is, its actions in the international arena, and thus have an impact on a country's national image. In addition, the moral qualities of citizens also have a significant impact on the image of a country. A person's poor performance overseas usually does not evoke a negative impression of their country among the people. However, in today's rapidly developing information age, a large number of recurring citizen misconduct can have a direct impact on the country's image. In the case of political conflicts, these citizen misconduct often rises to international status, As a result, the behavior of the nation has an impact on the image of the country.

The formula for calculating the click through rate of reports:

$$C = (P / U) * 100\% \quad (1)$$

Among them,represents click through rate;represents page views;represents total number of users. This formula is

used to calculate the click through rate of each report, which is the percentage of times users have visited the report compared to the total number of users.

The formula for calculating social media interaction rate:

$$I = (h_j / U) * 100\% \quad (2)$$

Among them, represents the number of interactions.

The formula for calculating the influence of reporting:

$$I_p = (R / T) * 100\% \quad (3)$$

Among them, represents influence; represents the number of times the report is cited; represents the total number of reports.

The calculation formula for national image evaluation:

$$E_p = (S / N) * 100\% \quad (4)$$

Among them, represents the total rating of users on the image of a specific country, and represents the total number of users.

3.2 Basic Characteristics of National Image

(1) Differences: National image refers to the overall and comprehensive evaluation of a nation by people, and the different evaluation results resulting from different cognitive objects are not difficult to understand. The national consciousness of citizens often differs greatly from that of other countries, which is the essential characteristic of national image. It should be pointed out that although the external and internal images of a nation are different, a good internal image of a nation plays a significant role in enhancing national unity, enhancing government credibility, and enhancing national patriotism. This must be noted by people [10].

(2) Duality: National image is a comprehensive evaluation that is manifested by the subjective concepts of the cognitive object of the subject. Therefore, national image is a subjective expression. The subjective attribute of national image refers to the significant differences in the evaluation of a country by different countries or people in real life, which is related to the personal qualities, political stance, and cognitive ability of the evaluation object. At the same time, ethnic imagery is objective. Although national image is the subjective reflection of the evaluation object's representation of the country, it can be divided into two forms of expression: true and false. Therefore, it can control the subjective cognition of the evaluation object, and to some extent, it has objectivity.

(3) Ethnicity: The image of a nation state is a distinct national characteristic. The rigor of Germans and the romance of French have both been recognized by the world. Their national character is not complicated, but it has a great impact on the image of a country. Ethnicity exists within a country, so it also includes a country. However, in the context of economic globalization, various ethnic traditions around the world have been impacted by cultures and traditions from other countries, and people's understanding and evaluation of culture are also improving. Therefore, a nation's culture should keep pace with the times and integrate with international culture as much as possible while maintaining its own characteristics. Only in this way can it be better accepted by people all over the world [11-12].

(4) Stability: The image of a nation is a comprehensive evaluation of a person's long-term development, and once formed, it is difficult to change in the short term. This is a problem that the country is facing in the new era, and it is also a problem that the country faces in external propaganda. Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, people had the impression of traditional stereotypes, backwardness, and ignorance. Despite the efforts of several generations, the national image still did not receive global recognition.

(5) Plasticity: Although the national image has a certain degree of stability, it is not completely unchanging and can be reconstructed in various ways. The reconstruction of a country's image largely depends on the government. By formulating development strategies, participating in and publishing important international events, and creating

international image communication channels, the aim is to give the world a new understanding of China.

3.3 South China Sea Issue

Indonesia is not a party to the South China Sea dispute, so it has no direct conflict with China. However, due to Indonesia's political leadership in ASEAN, it is particularly concerned about the South China Sea issue and plays the role of mediator and mediator in the dispute. Indonesia has expressed high concern about the development of the situation in the South China Sea. The Post reported that the South China Sea dispute is constantly escalating and has reached a "state of alert", posing a "test" to the relationship between China and ASEAN. China's territorial claims in the South China Sea are also a "threat to Indonesia's sovereignty", all of which demonstrate Indonesia's serious concern about the South China Sea issue [13]. Although Indonesia claims not to be a part of the territory, it is concerned about the overlap between the Natuna Islands and the waters claimed by China, as this would undermine Indonesia's sovereignty. Previously, Indonesia was the rotating chairman of ASEAN and was eager to make progress on the South China Sea issue. However, Indonesia also realizes that the South China Sea issue is related to sovereignty, the strategic value of the South China Sea, and China's rise, and cannot be resolved in a short period of time [14]. The most urgent task at present is to control this crisis, reduce tensions between controversial countries, and prevent potential conflicts. For this reason, Indonesia has repeatedly requested all parties in the South China Sea to return to the Code of Conduct for All Parties in the South China Sea and promote the development of legally effective norms of conduct in the South China Sea. The Indonesian Foreign Minister believes that sovereign countries should respect each other and follow the relevant United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to resolve disputes peacefully, rather than through violent means. Indonesia stated that although the South China Sea action regulations have failed to resolve territorial disputes, they have created a peaceful and stable atmosphere, making it easier to seek solutions. Indonesia adheres to the strategy of "checks and balances among major powers", so it supports US intervention in the South China Sea. Former President Susilo provided three cornerstones for the South China Sea issue: the first is that no country can rule this region, so maintaining a dynamic balance in this world is important; the second is the importance of maintaining peace, security, and order; the third is that territorial disputes should be resolved through peaceful means. Although there is no specific name, its intention is clearly to point to China. If China wants to lose the upper hand in the South China Sea, it must receive help from the United States in order to confront China. Similarly, China is also based on this concern and emphasizes that the South China Sea issue should be resolved through bilateral consultations, rather than at the regional and international levels.

However, Indonesia still wants China and the United States to be friends. The mentality of ASEAN is also the same. They want to use the United States to balance China, but at the same time, they are afraid that US intervention would exacerbate China's response to this. The British Post pointed out that due to the differences among ASEAN countries, ASEAN cannot reach an agreement with China on the South China Sea issue, and as a result, the level of ASEAN unity is also affected. ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, are concerned that the South China Sea issue may prevent ASEAN from establishing a unified diplomatic posture, thereby undermining ASEAN's "central position, unity, and peace" ASEAN Charter, and triggering sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea region. Indonesia and ASEAN are still concerned whether China can use military means to deal with the South China Sea issue. Indonesia and ASEAN have expressed great concerns about China's growing naval strength. Although the economic interdependence between China and ASEAN is deepening, China's "charm offensive" diplomacy has played a certain role in easing China's panic in the region, and the South China Sea issue remains a "reagent" to test the relationship between China and ASEAN. The concerns expressed by The Post on the South China Sea issue are increasing day by day. Some people have called on ASEAN to accelerate the resolution of the South China Sea issue. Otherwise, after China's military and economic strength increases, ASEAN can be unable to confront China, while China is more inclined to use force to solve the South China Sea issue. Some people have proposed renaming the "South China Sea" to the "ASEAN Sea" to emphasize ASEAN rather than China's dominance in the South China Sea.

3.4 Image of China Constructed by the Jakarta Post Report

The Jakarta Post's related reports construct the image of China by constructing a conflict framework, measure framework, and outcome framework. The Jakarta Post presents a diverse attitude on the South China Sea issue, conveying the complex emotions of Indonesia and ASEAN countries towards China. China and some Southeast Asian countries have sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea; the cooperation between China and ASEAN is also very close. Both sides do not want to lose their voice on the South China Sea issue due to economic and trade cooperation, nor do they want to undermine or damage their economic and trade cooperation as a result. Therefore,

against the backdrop of contradictions, China's diverse and contradictory imagery emerged in media reports.

One is the promoter of regional development. The Jakarta Post has also affirmed in some reports that China, as a responsible major country, is committed to maintaining peace and stability in Southeast Asia and actively promoting dialogue and negotiations among relevant countries. This can be seen from China's active participation in dialogue and promotion of regional peace and development. Despite the ongoing sovereignty disputes between China and ASEAN countries over the South China Sea, China is still willing to resolve this conflict through peaceful negotiations and actively promote cooperation and development between ASEAN and China.

The second is wary neighbors. China and Indonesia have maintained a friendly strategic partnership since 2013. The Jakarta Post has conducted extensive coverage on the South China Sea issue, aiming to help people understand the good relationship between China and Indonesia, and has repeatedly mentioned dialogue and cooperation between China and Indonesia.

The third is anxiety. From 2016 to 2018, the Jakarta Post extensively reported on the disputes between China and Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and other countries in the South China Sea. Between 2019 and 2021, newspaper coverage of the South China Sea focused on the conflict between Indonesia and China over the waters surrounding the Natuna Islands. Although the Jakarta Post repeatedly emphasizes Indonesia's status as a non sovereign country and strives to view the South China Sea from an observer's perspective, both the title and content give the impression that the tense relationship between China and the South China Sea is very close.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ISSUE IN THE JAKARTA POST

4.1 Different Types of Reports

This article uses the keyword "China" on the Dow Jones News website to search for reports on China by the Jakarta Post from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. By topic, it can be roughly divided into three categories: political reports, economic reports, and cultural reports.

In the Jakarta Post, political coverage is shown in Figure 1. There are 20 positive reports in diplomatic affairs, 35 objective and neutral reports, and 13 negative and negative reports. The tendency of reporting on political events is mainly objective and neutral, followed by positive and rarely negative. Moreover, most news is mainly presented with an objective and neutral attitude, with a lot of positive content. This kind of news related to China presents the image of an open, inclusive, peaceful, and just great country as a whole.

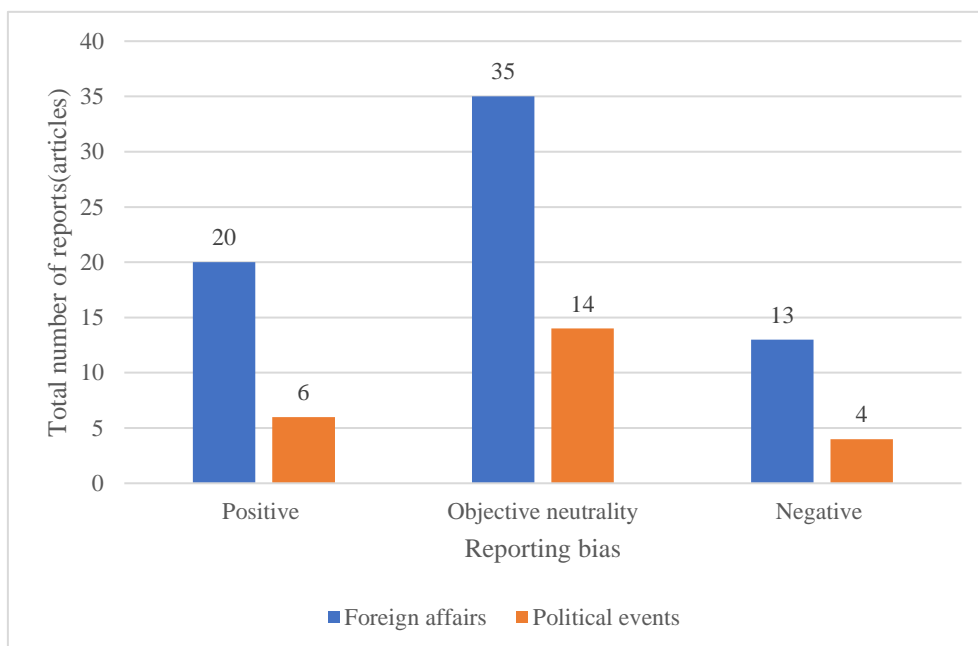


Figure 1: Political reporting

The economic report is shown in Figure 2. In economic reporting, objectivity and neutrality are still the main focus.

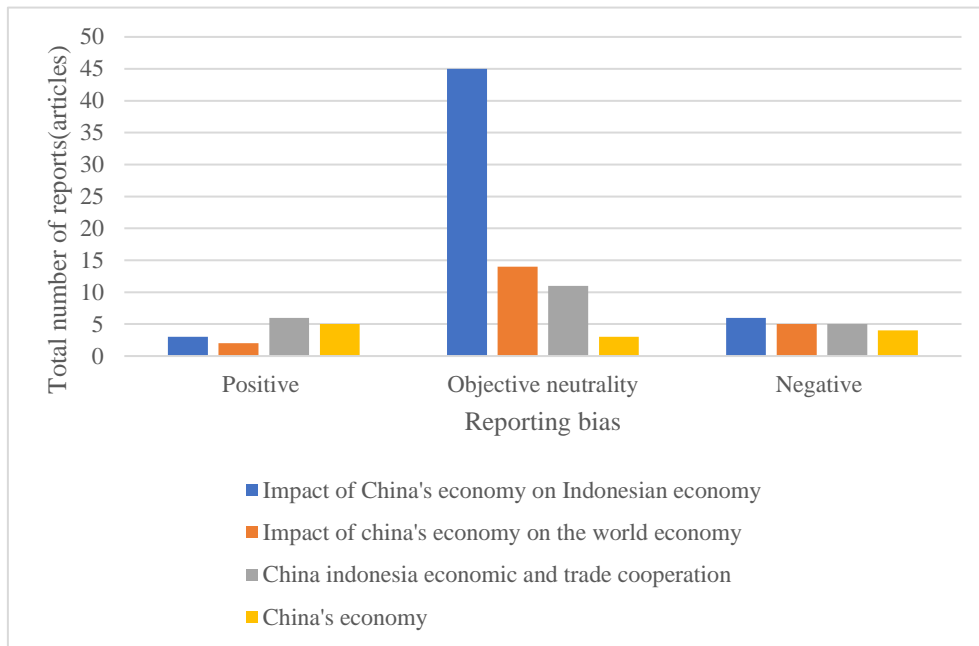


Figure 2: Economic report

The cultural report is shown in Figure 3. There are three negative reports on religion.

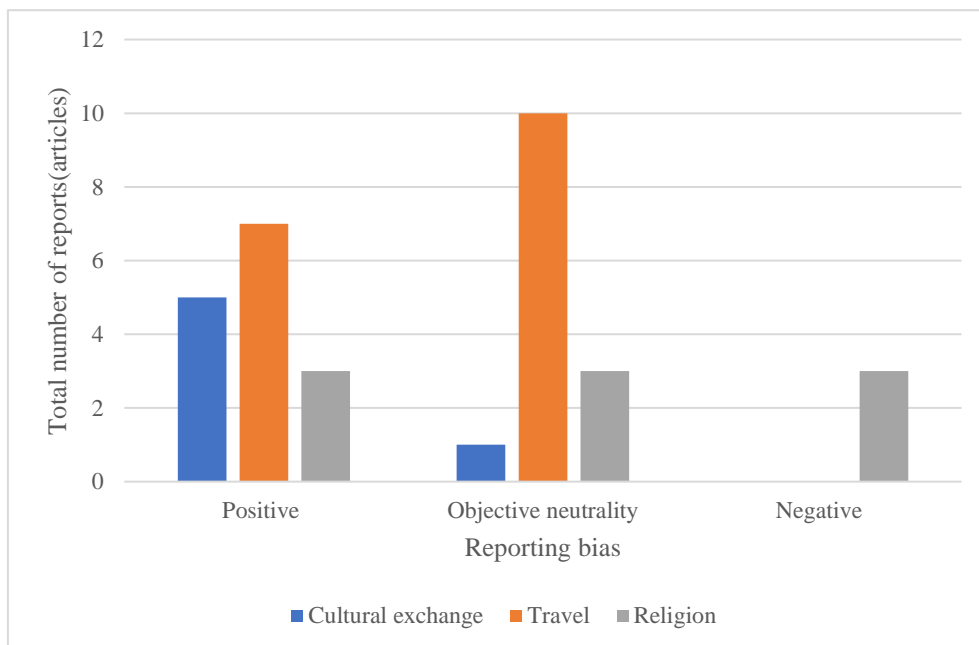


Figure 3: Cultural report

Praising the cooperation between China and Indonesia in cultural exchange, tourism, and other areas: In recent years, China and Indonesia have engaged in high-level cooperation in tourism, culture, and other areas. The Jakarta Post has also shown strong initiative in Chinese culture, mainly focusing on traditional Chinese culture, contemporary evolution, and cultural exchange between China and India. In terms of tourism, the Jakarta Post reported on the good development of China Indonesia tourism industry, especially Indonesia, which has become a major destination for Chinese tourists to Southeast Asia and plays a very important role in promoting cultural and economic cooperation between the two countries.

There is a misunderstanding about China's religious policy: In terms of religion, Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim community, deeply worries about the work and life of Islamic believers in Xinjiang, China. Due

to cultural and religious policy differences, Indonesia has also encountered some misunderstandings in its religious policy towards China. The Jakarta Post has also reported negative views on religious issues in China.

4.2 Reporting on the South China Sea Issue

The sources cited in the Jakarta Post's report on the South China Sea issue are shown in Table 1. Chinese official media accounted for 55%, while international media and institutions accounted for 30%.

Table 1: The proportion of sources cited in the Jakarta Post's report on the South China Sea issue

| Source type | Proportion |
|--|------------|
| Chinese official media | 55% |
| International media and institutions | 30% |
| Other sources (including civil society organizations and scholars) | 15% |

Regarding the South China Sea issue, there were 9 worrying reports and 2 objective and neutral reports in 2019; in 2020, there were 8 worrying reports and 4 objective and neutral reports. Different years of concern, objective neutrality, and positive reporting are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Concerned, objective, neutral, and positive reports from different years

| Time(year) | Worry(times) | Objective neutrality(times) | Positive (times) |
|------------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 2019 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| 2020 | 8 | 4 | 3 |
| 2021 | 6 | 3 | 3 |

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the Jakarta Post's report on China, overall, Indonesia's coverage of China is relatively objective. From the report, it can be seen that there is close economic and trade cooperation between Indonesia and China, but there is a lack of mutual trust and cultural exchanges in terms of political security. The South China Sea issue has always been an important issue between Indonesia, ASEAN, and China, and both Indonesia and ASEAN are concerned about China's response to the South China Sea issue. Enhancing the understanding of China among Indonesians is a good way. China not only needs to engage in short-term bilateral exchanges, but also attracts more Indonesian students to study in China, especially for doctoral and master's degrees.

Funding:

The National Social Science Fund of China (Grant Number: 19CGJ010).

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