

Reporting Public Diplomacy at Home: Taiwanese Media News Coverage of the New Southbound Policy

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Abstract

Public diplomacy is about attracting foreign public attention; however, domestic public support is no less critical. The domestic public's support and understanding are equally essential to diplomatic activities abroad, and it depends on the information they receive about the policy. When the Taiwanese government claims that NSP (New Southbound Policy) received positive support from the public, how do they make those claims? What kind of information about the NSP is received by the Taiwanese public? This study analyzes the NSP-related news in Taiwanese media to answer this question. It focuses on Liberty Times Network (LTN) and United Daily News (UDN) coverage of the NSP since 2016. The text and sentiment analysis of their reports show that although they have different political orientations, overall, both LTN and UDN are generally positive in their reporting on NSP, although UDN is more critical. These results indicate that media polarization occurred in the report, sentiment analysis shows that the difference was insignificant. This situation may indicate that in the case of the NSP case, media polarization in Taiwan is not in effect for shaping public opinion.

Keywords: *news, media, public, diplomacy, nsp.*

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1. Introduction

Since the implementation of the New Southbound Policy (NSP) or 新南向政策 in 2016, the Taiwanese government claims that the policy has achieved a positive impact. The claim is mainly based on statistics such as the increasing number of NSP partner countries' students in Taiwan, exchange programs, trade and investment, and the number of cooperation agreements signed. The government also claims that the Taiwanese public supports the policy, while receiving a positive perception. Those claims indicate that the NSP receives positive responses both abroad and at home. Domestic public support of the NSP may be influenced by the information they received about the policy. In this regard, what kind of information do they receive? More specifically, what does the Taiwanese media report on the NSP?

The New Southbound Policy has been one of the flagship foreign policies for President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) administration since 2016. It focuses on enhancing Taiwan's relations with South and Southeast Asian countries, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Although based on economic foreign policy, it also emphasizes on the people-to-people relations. NSP received support and critics from scholars. The proponents of the NSP mention that the policy increases Taiwan's visibility in the region (Yang, 2018), engages regionalism (Glaser et al., 2018), implements smart diplomacy (Rasool & Ruggiero, 2022), puts human values in foreign policy (Yang & Chiang, 2019) and bring a positive impact to the Taiwan-US relations (Chen, 2020). In contrast, the NSP is also showing problems with coordination and funding (Huang, 2018) and less public understanding of the partner countries, mainly from South and Southeast Asia (Chong, 2019). Above that contradiction, Taiwanese government claims that this policy received high support from domestic public. In 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) released the results of the public poll related to the NSP (MOFA ROC, 2017). In this report, MOFA claimed that NSP received overwhelming support from Taiwanese public. The report mentioned that 80 per cent of respondents who participated in the polling were in favor of the policy, and this result was 15.3 per cent higher than the previous year's polling. This polling also showed that about 70 per cent of respondents support easing visa rules for South and Southeast Asians. The question that arises then is how the Taiwanese public has a positive response to NSP? Does media play roles in reporting positive information of NSP to public?

This study attempts to explore NSP-related news that is distributed to

the public by the media during the implementation of the NSP. It compares two of Taiwan's main media firms—Liberty Times Network (LTN) and United Daily News (UDN) in reporting the policy from the first term of Tsai Ing-wen in May 2016 to October 2023. The discussion in this study begins with a brief description of the relationship between media and foreign policy, followed by an explanation of media politics in Taiwan. The third section deals with the research methods and results. This research finds the implications of NSP-related news for the public opinion, and for public diplomacy.

2. Public Diplomacy and Media

Diplomacy is about the business of foreign policy, but in a democratic country, it needs support from domestic politics. When diplomats negotiate foreign policy in the international arena, the national government explains the foreign policy to get support from the public at home. Both diplomacy and domestic political activity may happen simultaneously. Robert D. Putnam clearly captures this situation in his “two-level games” in diplomacy and foreign policy (Putnam, 1988). He argues that:

“The politics of many international negotiations can be conceived as a two-level game. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their ability to satisfy domestic pressures while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign.” (Putnam, 1988).

Putnam acknowledges that both domestic and international negotiations occur simultaneously and treats them equally, but he emphasizes the critical role of domestic politics in determining a win-set in negotiation. Domestic politics has the power and preferences to provide principles, frameworks, alternatives, and evaluations that determine negotiation strategies in international politics. According to Putnam, public opinion is among the critical factors in domestic politics besides the bureaucratic agencies, interest

groups, and social classes. The Communist Party in China encourages the public to support and participate in the public diplomacy agenda (Fallon & Smith, 2022). The Iranian government uses social media to influence negotiation at the domestic level (Bjola & Manor, 2018), while narration in domestic politics influences Iranian diplomacy with the United Kingdom (Kaussler, 2011). In Japan, negotiations in domestic politics by elites are critical in influencing international negotiation (Schoppa, 1993). Negotiations at the domestic level were also essential in determining the United States' decision to repudiate the Kyoto Protocol during Bush's administration (Lisowski, 2002). Putnam's idea and those studies indicate that shaping public opinion domestically is critical to providing support for foreign policy and diplomacy.

The role of domestic factors in diplomacy is not a new phenomenon. Domestic politics provide sources (Krenn, 2010), actors (Huijgh, 2019), legitimacy (Bellamy & Weale, 2015), and instruments (Pigman & Deos, 2008) for public diplomacy programs. Domestic politics may also create constraints (Bartilow, 2001; Wang, 2012), misunderstandings (Bartilow, 2001) and debates (Fjällhed, 2021). In a democratic country, public opinion is significant to influence foreign policy since the government values it as political support. Therefore, the government attempts to convince its public to support its diplomacy. The question then how does the government shape or influence public opinion? The public receives information related to diplomacy or foreign policy through media, both state and private media. Media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion through the news they share with the public, both in domestic and foreign countries.

Scholars have various perspectives on the relationship between mass media and diplomacy. Eytan Gilboa proposes three models of media-diplomacy relations (Gilboa, 2001). The first model is the role of media in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is about attracting and influencing the foreign public, mainly through cultural diplomacy, and involving both government agencies and non-government organizations (Melissen, 2005a, 2005b). In public diplomacy, the media plays a critical role in disseminating positive information to shape or influence public opinion in other countries. The second model is media diplomacy. It emphasizes the use of media by the government to influence the foreign public for short-range time frames and for specific purposes. In other words, media diplomacy is part of public diplomacy that specifically focuses on a specific issue with the media

as the main actor. Media diplomacy is different from public diplomacy since public diplomacy involves many actors—cultural activities, student exchange, exhibitions, cultural centers, and other activities—and for long-term objectives. Media-broker diplomacy is the third model which places the media as the main actor whereas journalists act as diplomats and mediators in international negotiations.

Moreover, there are three practice of public diplomacy that involves mass media. First is international broadcasting. International broadcasting is among public diplomacy components besides listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, and exchange (Cull, 2008). It has a long historical association with public diplomacy (Rawnsley, 2016) when a country attempts to influence another country's public by disseminating news through radio, television, and the Internet. The second is mediated public diplomacy. It is related to the foreign media as the target of public diplomacy (Entman, 2008). The US and British media become targets of both Israeli and Palestinian governments in promoting their interest (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). The third is about foreign media news coverage. Unlike two other practices, it places foreign media as an actor instead of a tool and targets diplomacy. The United States and Chinese media's positive reports on the 2012 London Olympics show an achievement of British public diplomacy (Zhou et al., 2013). In contrast, the relative lack concern of for public diplomacy resulted in a drastic decline in Israeli reputation when Western and global media criticized its views and policies in the September 2000 Palestinian-Israel war (PIW) (Gilboa, 2006). Western media framing of Taiwan in a geopolitical context—cross-strait and US-China relations—causes Taiwan's public diplomacy to encounter challenges when Western audiences see it as a hotspot that can potentially cause a crisis (Sullivan & Lee, 2018). Several studies above recognize the critical roles of media in diplomacy, especially in informing the public about foreign policy. However, the media also plays a critical role in explaining that policy to the public at home.

Media plays a critical role in intermediating foreign policy and public opinion. In democracies, media can shape public opinion both in terms of supporting or challenging foreign policy. Scholars argue that media constrains and instigates of policy while also acting as foreign policy elites' agents in manipulating public opinion (Robinson, 2017). Thomas Risse-Kappen argues the assumption that media play roles in shaping

public opinion and mediating their aspiration to decision-makers is fair (Risse-Kappen, 1991). In a democratic country like the United States, public opinion is normally latent in foreign policy, and therefore, the media plays a critical role in activating it as public interest (Powlick & Katz, 1998). Matthew A. Baum and Phillip B. K. Potter capture the links between government, media, and public opinion by arguing that media constantly frames the competing information both from the government and the public but it can act as an independent actor in framing a leader's rhetorics that shapes public opinion of foreign policy (Baum & Potter, 2008). In other words, although media is located between the public and leaders, the way it frames the information has an independent causal effect in shaping public perception. In this regard, they highlight the critical roles of the foreign policy marketplace that developed by three equal actors—decision makers, media, and the public—with information as the commodity. However, they also acknowledge that the partisan and media fragmentation could include biased information when shaping public opinion. Moreover, fragmented media also constrains the democratic public from breaking the asymmetric information and criticizing the leader while resulting in sudden unstable public opinion (Baum & Potter, 2019). In this regard, Taiwan is a perfect case to examine the role of media in informing foreign policy or diplomacy to the public in a bipartisan media environment.

3. Media and Politics in Taiwan

Taiwan's media environment, while private and free, is fractured between two major poles which form the primary cleavage within its political environment, namely pan-Green and pan-Blue. Those monikers for the Green-Blue spectrum relate to the party colors of Taiwan's two largest, but questionably hegemonic political parties, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Kuomintang (KMT) respectively. Liberty Times Network (LTN) is more frequently aligned with the DPP, and China Times (CT) and United Daily News (UDN) are aligned with the KMT (Chiao & boundaries are well defined, or can be strictly defined as regarding Taiwan's relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) might be an oversimplification (Clark & Tan, 2012; Liu, 2012), but the blue-green spectrum is tied to competing conceptions of Taiwan either as the modern manifestation of the Republic of China (ROC) as the KMT sees, or as a distinct sovereignty with a political destiny separate from mainland China according to the DPP.

This difference in national conception is directly related to the subsequent political polarization of the NSP in Taiwan, not only as a result of the policy's backers in the 2016 administration, but the complex nature of the NSP. The Southbound Policy began in the 1990s under former President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) of the KMT, who later left the party to form a competing pan-green political party. Opposition-party DPP President Tsai Ing-wen proposed the New Southbound Policy in 2016, and in both cases, the purpose has been expressed as implicitly attempting to reduce Taiwan's economic dependence on the PRC, changing Taiwan's relationship to the behemoth state (Bing, 2017; Chen, 2020). The DPP generally views the PRC and the Chinese national identity as a threat, while the KMT generally favors better relations with the PRC, and "Chinese identifiers [meaning those who self-identify as Chinese] are more likely to identify with the pan-blue camp but not other smaller parties" (Liu, 2012).

For many within the DPP, Taiwan's high and persistent interconnectedness with China represents a vulnerability that could be exploited (Black, 2019). That dependency also has the potential to deepen and cement political and cultural relationships with the PRC that hurt DPP attempts to degrade Chinese identity. All this makes the NSP an ideal format to replace those relationships with new ones made with Taiwan's neighboring states, who as the South China Sea disputes expand also view the PRC increasingly warily (Lu, 2020). Further, the Austronesian links between many of the peoples in the target states of the NSP and Taiwan's aboriginal population also highlight Taiwan as a multiethnic and multicultural state. Thus further serves to challenge the notion of the ROC as a Chinese nation state, especially as ethnic ties between the PRC and Taiwan have been highlighted by both the PRC government and the former Nationalist junta in Taiwan in such propaganda slogans as "blood is thicker than water."

The KMT unsurprisingly takes the opposite view. Its affinity for the ROC identity and its form of nationalism suggests that increasing Taiwan's ties to countries that have active sovereignty disputes with the PRC, at the expense of those same ties with China only serve to distance Taiwanese people from Chinese nationalism. For these reasons, the party has alternated from expressing that the NSP was unnecessary, to a failure, and could even represent a threat.

Notwithstanding this, it is expected that while bias certainly exists, a degree of moderation of both media firms who compete for market share

may be experienced, meaning that partisan differences over the policy might not be as overt. For some researchers in Taiwan, the differences in coverage can relate to the strategy for framing quotes (Y. Chen, 2010) nuanced descriptions rather than overt statement (Chiao & Huang, 2016). This can be expressed in the use of words with embedded meanings or connotations aimed at certain groups. It may also be a function of the coverage of UDN and LTN being highly expository, and less editorial in style. In either case, it suggests that the bias may not be as explicit in the coverage of the NSP.

4. Research Method

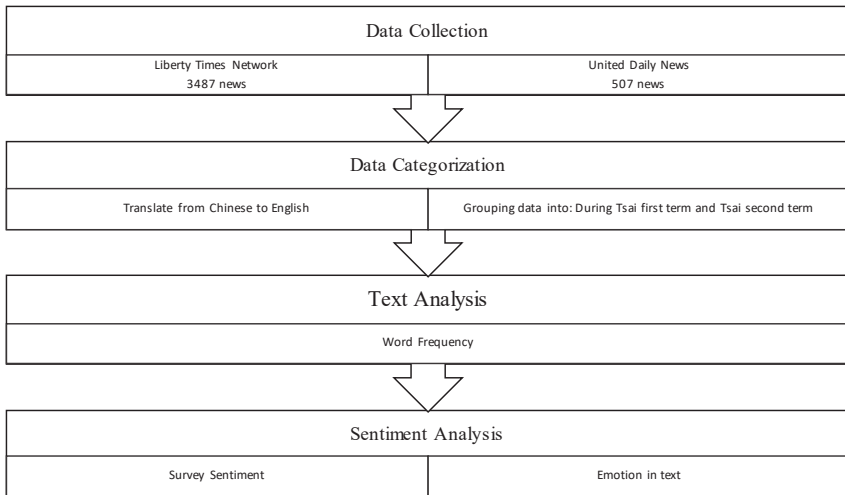
This study analyses the top two Taiwanese media in reporting New Southbound Policy: Liberty Times Network (LTN) and United Daily News (UDN). In Taiwan, UDN and LTN are ranked first and second, respectively, by SCImago Media Ranking.¹ Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 reported that LTN and UDN rank seventh and eighth in the TV, Radio, and Print categories (Newman et al., 2023).² However, in terms of print, both of them are the top two in Taiwan. UDN was founded in 1951 and its political standpoint is closer to the Kuomintang (KMT) and pan-blue coalition. In contrast, LTN's political orientation is close to the pan-green coalition and pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). LTN has reported "average daily readership of 2.55 million in 2014, followed by... the United Daily News with 993,000" (Lynch and Yau, 2022).

This study collected NSP-related news from UDN and LTN websites by 新南向政策 (New Southbound Policy) as a keyword. 20 May 2016, the was chosen as the starting date for this data collection because it was the date when Tsai Ing-wen's inauguration was inaugurated as president was chosen as the start date. From 20 May 2016, to 6 November 2023, there were 3487 NSP-related news articles in LTN, while 507 news articles were collected from UDN within the period from 20 May 2016 to 19 November 2023. Mandarin language content was scraped using python from the site using their native search function with the only parameter being the same date range. Each article was checked to ensure that it included a mention of the New Southbound Policy.

The data analysed in this study was processed in four steps. The first step was to divide the data into two groups: the news during Tsai's first term (20 May 2016 to 19 May 2020), and news during Tsai's second term (from 20 May 2020 to November 2023 when this study was conducted). The

second step is translating all the news from Mandarin Chinese to English with Google Translate tools. The third step was analyzing the data by R Studio. In this step, all news data is put into the R corpus, then cleaned and stemmed before analysis. The third step includes word frequency and word association analysis.³ The fourth step was sentiment analysis by measuring sentiment scores and emotion classification.⁴ For this step, this study uses the NRC Emotion Lexicon which can detect and measure the text into eight basic emotions: anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust. Figure 1 describes all steps of in research method in this study.

Figure 1. Data Collection and Analysis

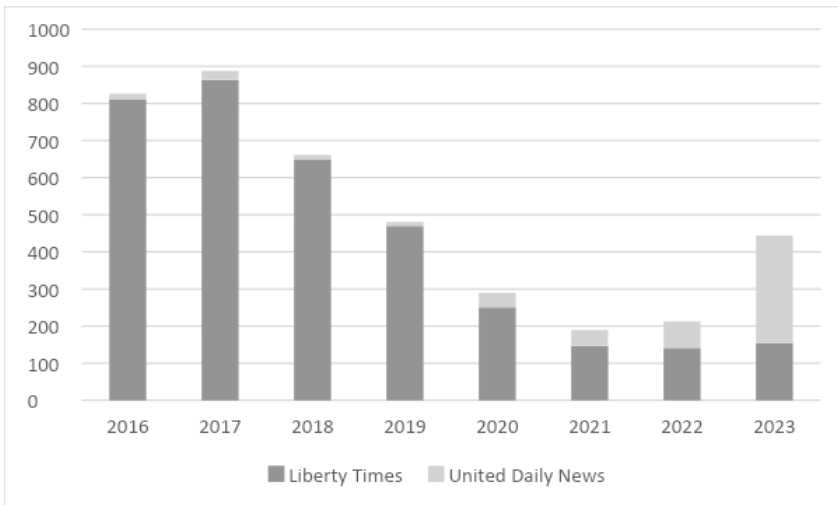


5. Results

LTN and UDN both frequently reported on the NSP, but their overall corpus sizes are vastly different in number. LTN reports significantly more NSP-related news than UDN. Figure 2 compares the number of NSP-related news in LTN and NSP from 20 May 2016 to November 2023. The more prolific coverage on LTN indicates that since this media is close to DPP and Tsai Ing-wen, it is more supportive of NSP. Therefore, it reported information and statements about the NSP to the public. In contrast, as the media that is close to the opposition party, the KMT, and UDN shared more limited news of NSP. Moreover, there is a contrasting trend where LTN's report on NSP

underwent relative decreases from year to year, UDN showed an increasing trend. In 2023 (January to October), the number of NSP-related news in UDN surpassed LTN with 289 compared to 155.

Figure 2. Number of NSP-related News in LTN and UDN



Note: It started from 20 May 2016 to 31 October 2023.

Word Frequency

NSP as a “new” policy is the main topic on the LTN and UDN reports during the first term of Tsai in office. Figure 3 and 4 show that the words “Taiwan” and “new” are the top two most frequent words in two medias. However, LTN and UDN have different emphasis on specific issues regarding the NSP. UDN seems focused on the relations with a specific partner country. They both covered news regarding the policy and people to people relations, with such as in LTN also highlighting Taiwan’s relations with governments in Southbound partner countries, policy promotion and industry, stating, “the New Southbound Policy has driven significant growth in bilateral trade... Encouraged by policies, Taiwan’s investment in new southbound countries has increased significantly to jointly build a more resilient supply chain...The new southbound countries have become the first choice for investment by Taiwanese businessmen in their international layout... the new southbound policy emphasizes talent cultivation and attracts outstanding students to

study in Taiwan through cultivation and cooperation” (<https://talk.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/4487065>).

Figure 3. Most Frequent Words on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai’s First Term)

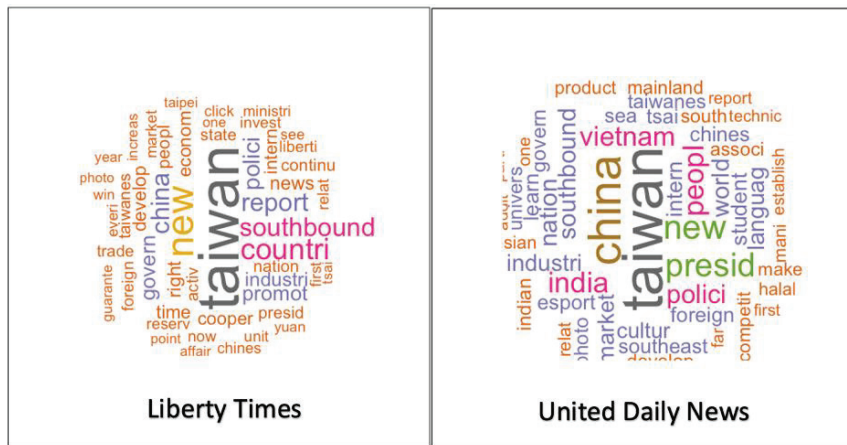
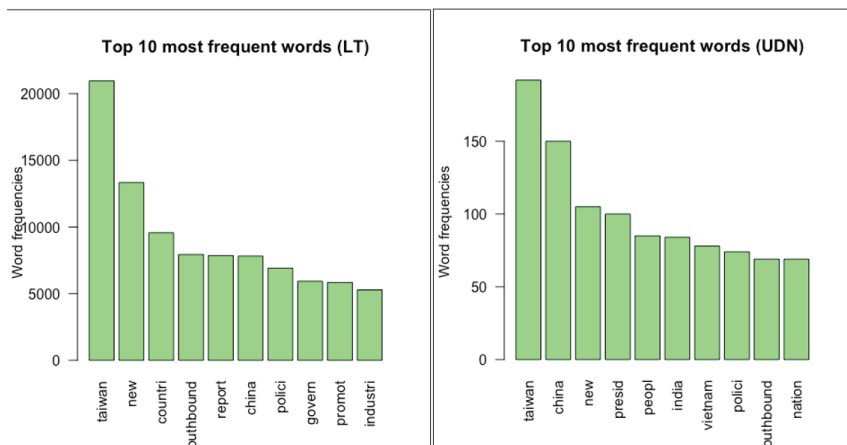


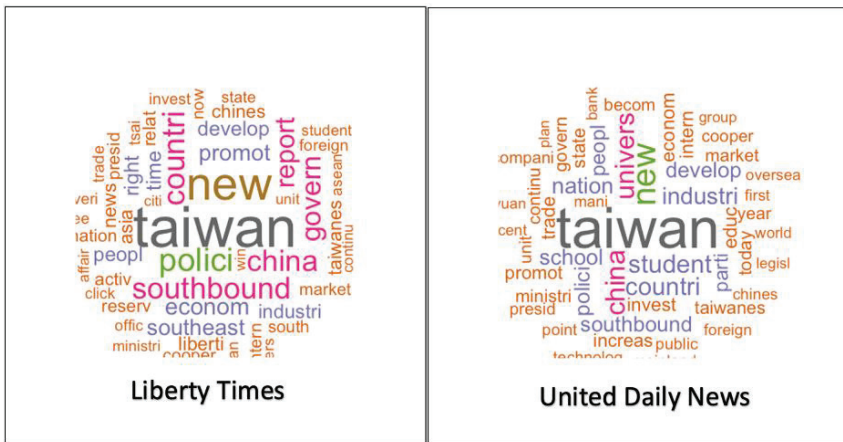
Figure 4. 10 Most Frequent Words on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai’s First Term)



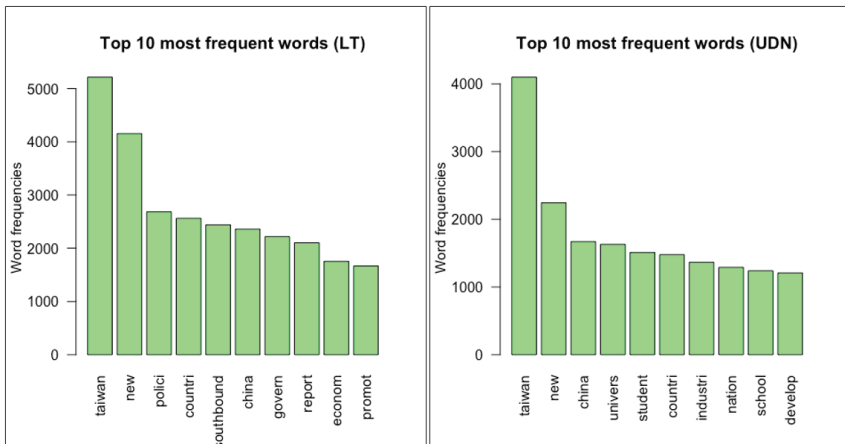
In the second term of Tsai in office, LTN seems focused on reporting the economic cooperation. This was especially true in highlighting trade increases, with statements like, “investment income

from the new southbound countries has now exceeded the data from China, which shows that the new southbound policy is in the right direction and its implementation is effective” (<https://ec.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/4474656>). The words “university”, “student” and “school” frequency in UDN’s coverage indicate that this media focuses to share information related to educational cooperation under the NSP, including perceived negative aspects. The capacity for even this topic to be negatively presented is highlighted in their coverage of a scandal in which NSP university students were accused of working illegally, stating that, “public opinion has also begun to pay attention to the New Southbound Policy and the accompanying issues of students, workers and illegal intermediaries” (<https://opinion.udn.com/opinion/story/12879/3696655>). Furthermore, UDN also covers some other issues like industry and development, stating, “Fortunately, since President Tsai took office in 2016, Taiwan has promoted the New Southbound Policy and worked hard two years in advance.” Regarding relations between Southeast Asia and India, “the results of two years have allowed us to survive the difficulties in the next three years safely. Now Taiwan is healthier and safer, and the New Southbound Policy plays an important role” (<https://udn.com/news/story/6656/7358115>). Figure 5 and 6 show the most frequent words on NSP-related news in LTN and UDN during the second Tsai administration.

Figure 5. Most Frequent Words on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai’s Second Term)



**Figure 6. Top 10 Most Frequent Words on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN
 (Tsai’s Second Term)**



The results on word frequency analysis on NSP-related news in LTN and NSP show three crucial points. *First*, LTN is relatively more consistent in reporting on the NSP when compared to UDN. There are slight differences between the results on LTN during the first and second term of Tsai Ing-wen in office. There were almost no differences in the most frequently used words in the two groups of documents except for “industry” in the first term, and “economy” in the second term. This results also indicates that LTN emphasizes on Taiwan’s economic relations under the NSP. *Second*, UDN reports on NSP is more dynamic when it seems focuses on Taiwan’s relations with specific NSP partner country in the first term of Tsai in office, then shift to topic of education in the second term. Furthermore, during the first term of Tsai, UDN also focused discussion on topics related with the “president” and “people,” while in the second term, it covered information on “industry” and “development.” *Third*, although the Taiwanese government officially mentions that the NSP does not aim to compete with the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), China still seems critical in nearly all the reporting on this policy.

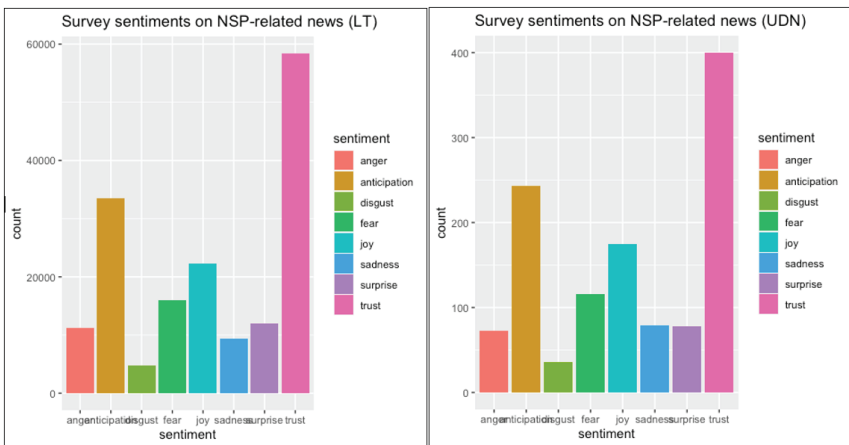
The word “China” always occurs in different positions in the two documents. In LTN’s news, the words “China” occurred as the sixth position both in the first and second term of Tsai in office. While in UDN’s news, this word occurred in the second and third position during the first and second term of Tsai in office, respectively. This position also confirms the

media partisanship aspect where LTN, which is close to DPP and the pan-green coalition, places China on relatively lower attention compared to UDN, which is close to KMT and the pan-blue coalition that placed China among top attention in its report of NSP. This also highlights a critical framing difference between the two sources. While pan-green media appears to advocate for the increasing ties formed under the NSP with Taiwan’s Southern neighbors, pan-blue media point to the costs, especially in terms of fraying ties with the PRC in the midst of a resilient dependence on Chinese markets. For UDN, there is the explicit suggestion that China drives the NSP, while for LTN, it is sometimes left unspoken. While not overtly negative in its expression, NSP proponents focus on the beneficial elements, while opponents focus on the unfulfilled promises and potential costs, particularly the opportunity costs of souring relations with the PRC.

Sentiment Analysis

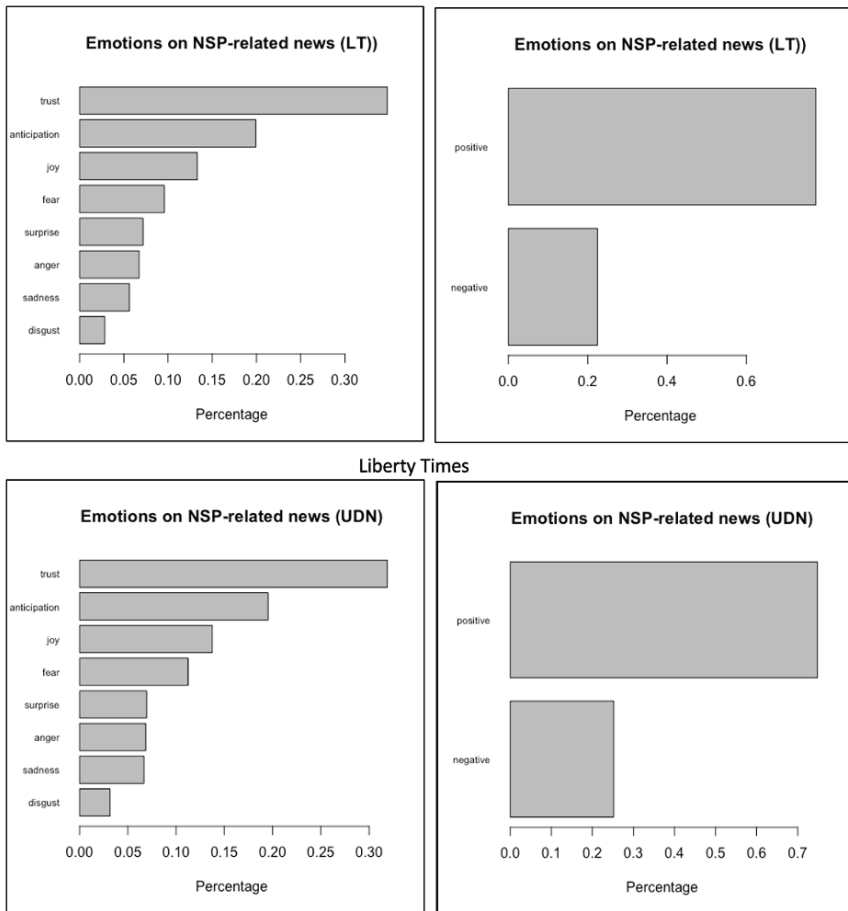
Although LTN and UDN show different focus and attention on specific issues under NSP, they seem share the similar sentiment and emotions in their reports. During the first term of Tsai in office, LTN and UDN share positive sentiment and emotion in their NSP-related news. Figure 7 shows that the sentiment of trust is the highest among other indicators both in

Figure 7. Sentiment Score on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai’s First Term)



LTN and UDN. In contrast, the sentiment of fear is the lowest among other indicators. In LTN news, more positive sentiment occurred when sentiment of joy is higher than sentiment of fear, anger, disgust, and sadness. Similar results also occurred in UDN news except for sentiment of sadness and surprise reached the same count. Furthermore, Figure 8 shows that positive emotion has higher percentage than negative emotion in two media reports on NSP.

Figure 8. Emotions in Text on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai's First Term)



The similar results also occurred for the NSP-related news during the second term of Tsai. Figure 9 shows that sentiment of trust is the highest, while sentiment of disgust is the lowest among other sentiments both in LTN and UDN. A slight difference is the UDN's sentiment of surprise and sadness, which was equal in the first term, and then the surprise was higher than sadness in the second term. Another, the gap between sentiment of fear and joy in UDN is narrower than in the first term of Tsai. Figure 8 also shows the higher positive emotion than negative emotion in both media.

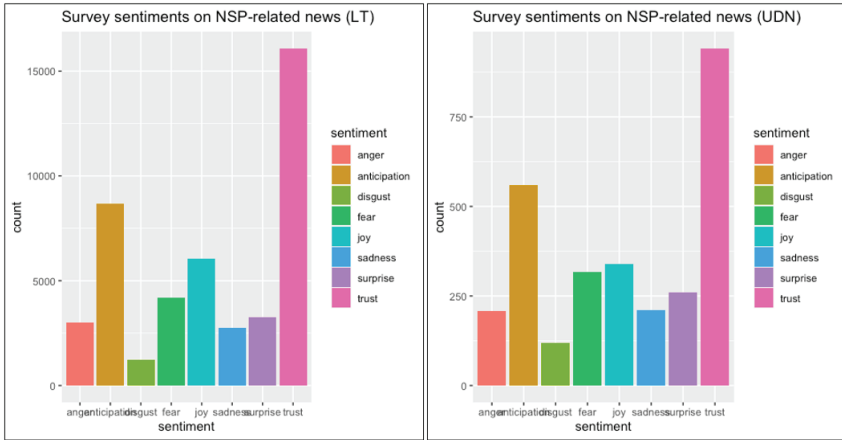
UDN coverage expressed the full spectra of political viewpoints on the New Southbound Policy, from both supported is the incumbent DPP administration and KMT critics. Some expressions also included journalistic additions, but these were often tepid. Negative quotes without rebuttal were frequent in UDN coverage. These included strong examples, such as KMT legislator Tseng Ming-Chung (曾銘宗), who stated: “[Under] the new southbound country policy, the proportion of trade with China has decreased, so although the amount has increased, it is still highly dependent on the mainland. The new southbound policy has spent more than 50 billion but has not been successful... The Tsai administration’s New Southbound Policy can be said to be a complete failure!” The same article also included clear expressions party stances emphasizing the primacy of China, such as, “the Kuomintang is not opposed to the New Southbound Policy, but it should make good use of its relationship with China and become a connecting point between China and ASEAN instead of becoming a “breaking point.” (<https://udn.com/news/story/7331/7538903>). Other direct criticisms of administration policy included reporting KMT New Taipei Mayor and current presidential candidate, Hou Yu-ih (侯友宜) criticizing the failure of the DPP's New Southbound Policy. He stipulated that, “it did not even sign FTAs with major trading countries, and the regional economic and trade CPTPP, RCEP has not taken any action, which makes the people suffer. Agricultural and fishery products cannot be sold, and the tourism industry has been hit hard.” (<https://udn.com/news/story/123307/7571308>). One final example of negative coverage worth note is the direct quotation of criticism from PRC state media, with UDN syndicating that “the ‘People's Daily Overseas Edition’ today published... In the year since the DPP came to power, it has been slapped in the face by reality more than once... Taiwan's economic dependence on the mainland has not declined but has increased. The New Southbound Policy is even more ‘loud but not rainy’. More than half a

year has passed and no substantial progress has been seen yet.” (<https://theme.udn.com/theme/story/10107/2539251>). Such unchallenged quotes clearly demonstrate the potential instrumentalization of selective reporting of speech.

UDN positive coverage was also often in the form of quotations and commentary, such as regarding the insulation from COVID, or promoting its economic aspects, such as reporting Tsai taking credit that “under the government's active promotion of the New Southbound Policy, Taiwan's trade volume and exports to New Southbound countries hit a record high last year.” (<https://udn.com/news/story/6656/7464609>). One distinct expression of the extent of UDN's neutrality was in their repetition of a quote stating that, “The ‘New Southbound Policy’ is not necessary, otherwise ‘the phoenix will fly out, and a bunch of chickens will come in’ a quote from Daniel Han (Han Kuo-yu, 韓國瑜). This was interpreted by UDN as a racist quip directed at high-value migrants fleeing at the prospect of an increasing number of Southeast Asian migrants, with UDN suggesting that political opposition to the NSP on the basis of race was approaching parallels with fascism (<https://opinion.udn.com/opinion/story/6685/4173782>).

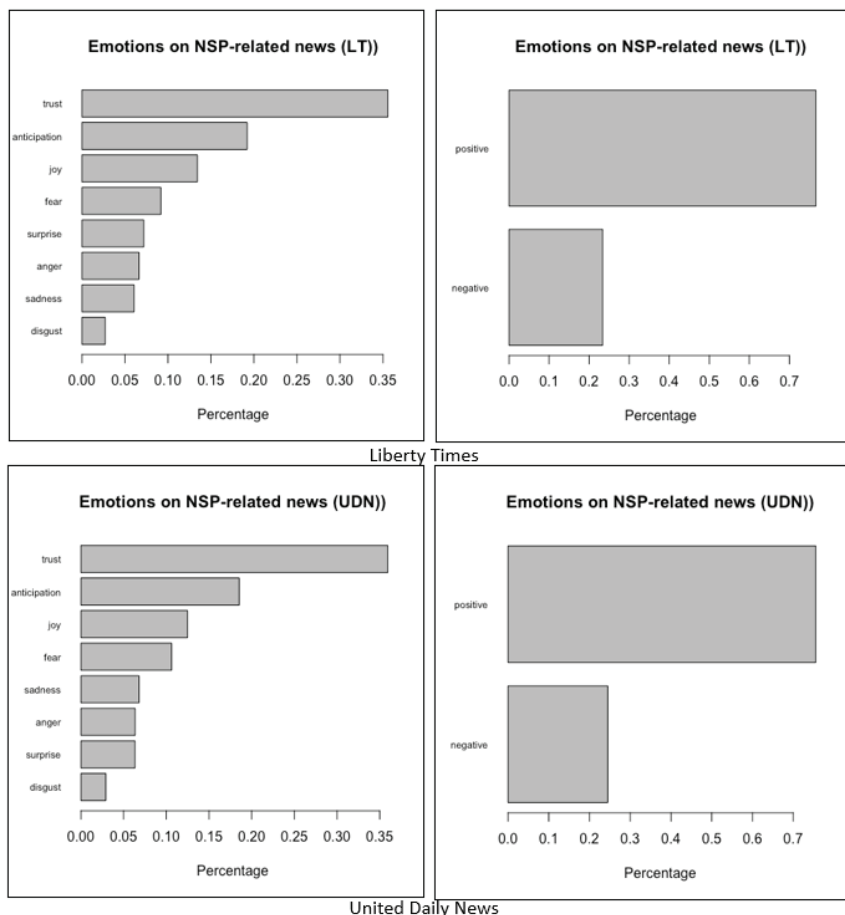
LTN coverage, while expressing many of the same critical statements from the KMT often did so as the prelude a DPP rebuttal of those claims. In rarer circumstances, that criticism was expressed unfiltered, as for former KMT Chair, Eric Chu (朱立倫) commented, “In the past five years, Taiwan's economic and trade dependence on mainland China has only increased. The ‘New Southbound Policy’ is simply deceptive internal propaganda.” (<https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3451816>). Often though, LTN coverage direct responded to criticism, as for the example New Taipei Mayor Hou Yu-ih's lambasting of the policy, followed by LTN providing a detailed outline of its achievements, “the New Southbound Policy has driven significant growth in bilateral trade... Encouraged by policies, Taiwan's investment in new southbound countries has increased significantly to jointly build a more resilient supply chain... The new southbound countries have become the first choice for investment by Taiwanese businessmen in their international layout... the New Southbound policy emphasizes talent cultivation and attracts outstanding students to study in Taiwan through cultivation and cooperation.” (<https://talk.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/4487065>).

Figure 9. Sentiment Score on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai’s Second Term)



The results of sentiment analysis indicate three insights. *First*, sentiment and emotion in LTN’s news on NSP is relatively constant. The text had no significant change in sentiment score and emotion between the Tsai administration’s first and second terms. This situation shows that LTN is consistent and stable in reporting NSP both in sentiment and topics of the news. *Second*, no significant change on sentiment and emotion in UDN news of NSP. There is only slightly change on wider gap between sadness and surprise, and narrower gap between sentiment of fear and joy, both in the second term of Tsai. Meanwhile, in emotion, there is no difference in results between the sentiment and emotion of news during the first and second terms of Tsai. *Third*, the similar results in higher positive sentiment and emotion in LTN and UDN may show no significant attitude differences in their overall reporting NSP’s news. This situation may indicate that although they have different political orientations and affiliations, they have a similar position in reporting NSP, or the differences are more cryptic than overt.

Figure 10. Emotions in Text on NSP-related News in LTN and UDN (Tsai's Second Term)



6. NSP-related News at Home, Public Opinion and Media Partisanship

In Putnam's two-level games model, public opinion is one of the elements at the domestic level games (Putnam, 1988), and scholars acknowledge the critical roles of media in developing public opinion. Studying the text and sentiment in NSP-related news in Taiwanese media brings two main discussions on the relations between the public opinion, media and foreign policy. *First*, the positive sentiment on the NSP-related news in LTN and

UDN might help to shape a public's positive perception to the policy. It may be correlated with the results of the polling that MOFA reported in 2017 that show high public support for the NSP—no doubt for the LTN since it is close to the ruling party, DPP, which advocates the policy. Furthermore, the consistency of LTN to report positive image of the policy with abundant related news during first period of Tsai Ing-wen probably became the significant factor in developing public's positive perception on the NSP. NSP is the “flagship” policy of Tsai Ing-wen and DPP, particularly in her first term in office. Beside being mentioned this policy in her presidential inauguration in 2016, she also often explains and emphasizes this policy in many forums including in the interview with media. Although there are fewer NSP-news in UDN compared to LTN, this media also shows a positive sentiment toward this policy. However, this situation does not mean that UDN is less critical on the policy. Nevertheless, it confirms Robinson's (2017) and Risse-Kappen's (1991) views on the relations between media and foreign policy. In the context of LTN, it is clear that this media helps shape public opinion to support foreign policy (NSP). When LTN and UDN report NSP in a positive sentiment, they may also play critical roles in activating public interest on foreign policy. Although NSP is the flagship foreign policy under Tsai administration, it is not Taiwan's ultimate international relations issue — the cross-strait relations. However, at least the media can share information about NSP, particularly for LTN, as it helps the government shape public opinion on the policy.

Second, the partisanship and media fragmentation did not appear to occur in NSP-related news. Both LTN and UDN share relatively similar positive sentiments on their news about this policy. Interestingly, this situation is in contrast with their different political affiliations. It is assumed that LTN should hold stronger positive sentiment towards the NSP, while UDN more critical, with stronger negative sentiment. However, the sentiment analysis results in higher positive sentiment in both media sources, indicating little difference in sentiment between them on this policy. This situation partially confirms Baum and Potter's (2019) arguments on the fragmented media that constrain the public to break asymmetric information while muting critics to the leaders and resulting in sudden unstable public opinion. In the case of Taiwan's NSP, the “flooding” information on NSP from LTN may represent asymmetric information when the public receives much information. On the other hand, UDN still provides critical information

on NSP. Moreover, partisanship in the media does not lead to mass protests to reject the NSP.

Moreover, another topic that consistently appears in both media is China. Although LTN and UDN place the China factor differently, they recognize them as critical. China is one of the most frequently used words of NSP news in LTN and UDN. This situation indicates that China remains a critical factor even in Taiwan's NSP, which is not directly connected to China. The Taiwanese government claims that NSP has nothing to do with BRI; on the other hand, NSP is compared to BRI in terms of its focus on people-to-people relations rather than infrastructure.

This highlights the essential differences in the coverage, in that rather than explicit differences being expressed, different word usage and selective coverage implied different meanings to different audiences. Different focus areas, too, whether education, labor, industry, trade, or even the contentious relationship with the PRC, mean that different consequences can be exposed, and cognitively reinforce positive or negative aspects to different audiences. The same quote expressed in different contexts and explanations was another frequent tool to disguise explicit bias. Uncritically covering one politician's comments versus reprinting those comments with another politician's rebuttal or even an editorial challenge, can mean that similar coverage can be absorbed very differently. Thus, while editorial differences existed, they were often opaque and less pronounced than could be expected from party affiliated media in such a polarized sovereignty.

Finally, the case of NSP-related news in Taiwanese media provides insights into how media play a critical role in shaping public opinion for foreign policy and diplomacy. Media can help the government to generate public support for foreign policy. On the other hand, the media can activate the public's attention on foreign policy that is usually latent. Moreover, the media can be an independent actor mediating between the government and the public in discussing foreign policy. In this regard, the Taiwan case shows three critical points. First, domestic publics are no less important than foreign public in public diplomacy since they support foreign policy. Second, the media is critical in activating public attention on foreign policy while shaping public opinion. Third, media fragmentation or partisanship may negatively impact public opinion development to support foreign policy; however, it also depends on the foreign policy issue.

7. Conclusion

The public is the main element of public diplomacy; it can be both target and actor. Public, both foreign and domestic, play a critical role in public diplomacy; however, most studies on public diplomacy focus more on the former than the latter. In a democratic country, the government and elites consider domestic public support for a foreign policy they propose or conduct. Therefore, they have to convince their public at home to gain support. However, since the domestic public is usually unaware of foreign policy issues, particularly non-top priority issues, the government needs the media's help to shape public opinion. The relations between diplomacy or foreign policy and media are primarily discussed in terms of the roles of media in spreading information abroad. In comparison, the media is also often discussed in the context of shaping public opinion for domestic policy. However, the media also plays a critical role in activating domestic public attention on foreign policy issues while shaping public opinion to support foreign policy and diplomacy.

This study discusses the critical roles of media in Taiwan in reporting foreign policy — New Southbound Policy. In a democratic country, the media can provide information about foreign policy and what the government wants and encourage public criticism of it. However, in the case of NSP, that idea is relatively muted when two media sources with opposite political standpoints report the policy with similar positive sentiments and emotions. Whatever this situation, LTN and UDN play a critical role in informing the Taiwanese public of foreign policy.

This study shows a potential research agenda in exploring NSP domestically in Taiwan, especially on the roles of the media. However, this study has limitations since the data is translated into English from the original language, Mandarin Chinese. The translation may not be perfectly captured and may not precisely represent the actual emotion or idea that the NSP-related news is conveying, such as in the use of metaphors. Further study shows that analyzing the original Chinese version of news and more partner countries will provide a more comprehensive picture of the roles of media in socializing foreign policy at home. Another limitation is that this study could not explain perfectly the correlation between the media coverage on the NSP, the high support, and the lack of major protest to the policy. Therefore, further empirical surveys with statistical analysis could provide more convincing explanations regarding that relationship.

Notes

1. SCImago assesses and compares the digital evolution, position, and leadership of news organizations based on their web reputation. For details information visit <https://www.scimagomedia.com/rankings.php?country=Taiwan>.
2. Among top 10 in the TV, Radio, and Print are TVBS News, Eastern Broadcasting News, Sanlih E-Television News, Formosa TV News, China TV News (CTV), Liberty Times, Taiwan Television News, United Daily News, Chinese Television System (CTS) News, and ERA News (from rank 1 to 10).
3. For text mining, this study run tm (text mining), SnowballC, wordcloud and RColorBrewer package in R Studio. The word frequency calculates the most frequent word occurred in the text, while the word association measures the correlation among specific words to give insight for their relations in a specific context.
4. For sentiment analysis, this study ran syuzet with nrc sentiment function and ggplot2 package in R Studio.

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