

# *Sustainable Development of China's Integration into the World—A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis on White Papers of the Chinese Government*

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**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis; Corpus-based study; China's Integration into the World; White Papers of Chinese government; China's white papers

**Abstract:** Against the backdrop of globalization, China, as one of the most populous countries and the second-largest economy in the world, maintains close connections with the world. China's government white papers, serving as official reports of the Chinese government, play a crucial role in promoting China's sustainable development and integration into the global community. This article focuses on the analysis of white papers published by the Chinese State Council Information Office between 2018 and 2022. Corpus-based research methods and Fairclough's "Three-Dimensional Framework for Text and Discourse Analysis" are applied to examine the textual features, keywords, collocations of specific keywords, and concordances related to the sustainable development of China's integration into the world as presented in these white papers. The research findings indicate that China's white papers focuses on topics of cooperation. Moreover, the textual features of China's white papers reflect an official, authoritative, and objective image of China. The keywords, the collocations and randomly retrieved concordances reflect that China demonstrates a supportive and proactive attitude as well as a willingness for win-win cooperation towards the international community. These factors contribute to enhancing international understanding and recognition of China, promoting the development of partnership relations, and facilitating China's continuous integration into the world.

## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization, as one of the most populous countries and the second-largest economy in the world, China follows the goal of the United Nation's report—TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD: THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT—to "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" [1]. Chinese government White Papers, as official

reports of the Chinese government, play a crucial role in promoting the sustainable development of China's integration into the world.

The Chinese Government White Papers (hereinafter called the China's white papers), issued by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, are official reports that represent the position of the Chinese government and one of the authoritative documents of China. These White Papers provide data and analysis, introduces detailed accounts of progress, and shares specific steps and measures taken towards sustainable development. These government white papers enhance the world's understanding of China's policies and achievements, present a cooperative image of China, and share the China's experiences on sustainable developments. The publication of government White Papers has a positive significance for the sustainable development of China's integration into the world.

This article aims to conduct research on Chinese government white papers, exploring how they reflect China's image and contribute to the sustainable development of China's integration into the global community. By utilizing corpus-based research methods, the statistic results of textual features and keywords from white papers can be extracted to help examine the attitude and image of China. Through this research, we can gain a better understanding of the significance of white papers for the sustainable development of China's integration into the globe, as well as reveal the progress China has made in the integration.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) originated from Critical Linguistics (CL) and emerged in the late 1970s in the UK as an approach that focuses on the relationship between discourse, society, and ideology. There are many approaches or trends in CDA [2]. One prominent approach is the Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse. It consists of three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice. The text dimension involves the analysis of the form and meaning of the text. The discursive practice dimension examines the processes of text production, dissemination, and reception, as well as the social differences between different types of discourse. The social practice dimension situates discourse within the perspective of ideology and power and explores the interrelationship between them [3]. Based on these dimensions, Fairclough further proposed three stages of critical discourse analysis: i. Description of the text; ii. Interpretation of the text-discourse relationship; and iii. Explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context [4]. This analytical framework provides researchers with a systematic method for analysing various types of text.

As Corpus based-study emerged, scholars like Paul Baker et al. revealed the feasibility of combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with corpus-based research methods [5]. This combined research approach utilizes large-scale text collections, known as corpora, to represent specific discursive contexts or social phenomena. By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, corpus based CDA enables researchers to identify recurring language patterns, examine the frequency and distribution of specific words or phrases, and explore the relationship between language use and broader social contexts.

## 3. Literature Review

The corpus-based critical discourse analysis has been widely applied on studies for the image of China. Shao Bin and Hui Zhiming focused on the Western media coverage of the "Chinese Dream" in the past two years. They analysed and revealed the discourse construction surrounding the "Chinese Dream" by using corpus indexing analysis and collocation network analysis from a CDA perspective [6]. Zhang Ruihua and Shi Xinyuan conducted a study on the overall cognition and

attitude of Western media towards Traditional Chinese Medicine based on the extended unit of meaning [7]. LIU Dingjia revealed the construction of China's national image in the U.S. media and the diachronic changes during COVID-19 pandemic by using corpus-based Usage Fluctuation Analysis (UFA) method under the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) [8]. Guo Jirong and Wang Xinyuan adopted the method of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to analyze The New York Times and China Daily reports on Chinese ethnic issues from 2013 to 2021 [9]. Gu Chonglong applied corpus based CDA study to explore the government interpreters' mediation of China's discourse[10].

These studies have conducted meticulous research on the construction of China's image. However, the selected samples were mostly focused on news reports, lacking other types of texts. Therefore, this article aims to examine official documents released by China in order to reveal how China's white papers contribute to the construction of China's image and explore the role of this image in the sustainable development of China's integration into the world.

## **4. Materials and Tools**

### **4.1. Chinese Government White Paper Corpus**

The self-built Chinese Government White Paper Corpus (CGWPC) collected English version of government white papers, issued by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. All texts can be found under the "White Papers" column from the official website of the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. The corpus for this research encompassed a total of 45 English-version texts published between 2018 and 2022. It should be noted that the corpus comprised the titles, contents, and main bodies (including special columns) of the government white papers, while excluding any appendices or footnotes.

### **4.2. Crown & Clob Corpus**

The Crown & Clob Corpus (CCC) contains two corpora—the Crown Corpus and the CLOB Corpus —both of which belong to the Brown Family Corpus, are developed by Beijing Foreign Studies University. Each corpus consists of four writing styles: fiction, general writing, academic writing, and journalism. Each corpus contains approximately a million running words. Therefore, the combination of two corpora together offers a comprehensive collection of contemporary English texts and serve as a valuable resource of standard English texts, providing a statistical reference for analysing the data of translated white papers in the Chinese Government White Paper Corpus.

### **4.3. Tools**

Wordsmith 7.0 and AntConc 3.5.6 were applied in this essay for calculating the lexical or syntactic statistics of corpora. The tagging of part of speech (POS) of two self-built corpora were carried out by using the Lancaster University online Claws lexical tagging website: Free CLAWS web tagger. The C7 rule was applied to tag the white paper text in this essay. Since the Crown & CLOB Corpus has already had POS tagging version, no additional tagging was needed.

## **5. Data and Analysis**

Through the analysis of Chinese government white paper texts based on a corpus-based study, this article aims to explore the image of China that can assist the sustainable development of China's integration into the world. Firstly, the English texts of Chinese government white papers

from 2018 to 2022 were collected from the official government website. These texts were then served as a monolingual corpus after processing. Corpus tools were applied to calculate the statistics. For example, data like mean word length and lexical density are collected for summarizing the textual characteristics of the white paper texts. Then, keywords, collocations and concordances were extracted by corpus tools to help us gain a deeper understanding of the focal points, policy orientations, and expression styles of the China’s white papers. Lastly, we will complement our analysis by incorporating factors such as historical background and political environment to interpret and analyse the white paper texts. This will enable us to understand the intentions and actions of the Chinese government for integrating into the world.

## 5.1. Basic Data

By utilizing the Word List function of Wordsmith 7.0, certain basic corpus data can be analysed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic Data of China’s white papers.

|                                 | CGWPC  | CCC     |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Mean Word Length                | 5.50   | 4.76    |
| STTR                            | 40.59  | 45.91   |
| Mean sentence length (in words) | 25.26  | 18.77   |
| Sentences                       | 20714  | 108079  |
| Type                            | 17272  | 65719   |
| Token                           | 523286 | 2028624 |

Mean Word Length refers to the average length of all the words in a text and indicates the complexity and information density of a text. Similarly, Mean Sentence Length refers to the average length of all the sentences in a text and can reveal the sentence structure and complexity of a text. STTR (Standardized Type-Token Ratio) refers to the ratio of unique word types to the total number of words in a text to measure the vocabulary richness and diversity of a text. Based on the information provided in Table 1, we can derive some observations about the basic data of the two corpora. Firstly, in terms of mean word length, the CGWPC has a mean word length of 5.50, while the CCC has a mean word length of 4.76. Secondly, we can see that the CGWPC has an STTR of 40.59, whereas the CCC has an STTR of 45.91. Additionally, the mean sentence length of the CGWPC (25.26) is longer than the CCC (18.77).

## 5.2. Content Word Density

The lexical density was originally proposed by Ure [11] which means a proportion of content words to the total number of words in a text. With the help of Wordsmith 7.0, the statistics are shown in Table 2 as below.

Analysing the distribution of content words, it is evident that the CGWPC had a higher percentage of nouns (33.51%) compared to the CCC (27.09%). Conversely, the CCC had a higher proportion of verbs (17.89%) compared to the CGWPC (13.60%). Additionally, the CGWPC displayed a higher percentage of adjectives (12.39%) in contrast to the CCC group (8.00%). However, the CCC group showed a higher percentage of adverbs (5.30%) compared to the CGWPC group (2.19%).

Table 2 reveals that the CGWPC group exhibited a higher lexical density of 61.69%, as compared to the CCC group with a slightly lower lexical density of 58.28%. These data suggest that the CGWPC group had a higher concentration of content words, indicating a denser and potentially

more informative text.

Table 2: Lexical Density

|                     | CGWPC  | CCC     |
|---------------------|--------|---------|
| Noun                | 33.51% | 27.09%  |
| Verb                | 13.60% | 17.89%  |
| Adjective           | 12.39% | 8.00%   |
| Adverb              | 2.19%  | 5.30%   |
| Total content words | 322813 | 1182327 |
| Total words         | 523286 | 2028624 |
| Lexical density     | 61.69% | 58.28%  |

### 5.3. Modal Operators

Modal operators are a class of auxiliary verbs used to express a speaker's attitude, wishes, suggestions, etc. In *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday suggested that the modal words create a space in which both parties can express their views and can assess the correctness of what is being said. He also classified modal operators according to their high, medium, and low values, as shown in the following Table 3 [12].

Table 3: Classification of Modal Operators

| Value  | Modal Operators                          |
|--------|--|
| High   | must; ought to; need; has/have to; be to |
| Medium | will; would; shall; should               |
| Low    | may; might; can; could                   |

Using Wordsmith 7.0, the quantities of high, medium, and low value modal operators were retrieved from each corpus. The proportions of total modal operators were then calculated. The statistical results are presented in Table 4 as follows.

Table 4: Proportion of Different Values of Modal Operators

|        | CGWPC         | CCC            |
|--------|---------------|----------------|
| High   | 7.86% (205)   | 8.36% (2011)   |
| Medium | 71.07% (1855) | 46.69% (11235) |
| Low    | 21.07% (550)  | 44.95% (10817) |
| Total  | 2610          | 24063          |

Data from Table 4 show the distribution of these modal operators across three levels: High, Medium, and Low. In the case of CGWPC, proportion of high value modal operators are 7.86%, while medium value modal operators account for 71.07%, and low value for 21.07%. On the other hand, for the CCC, 8.36% of instances are marked as High, with 46.69% classified as Medium, and 44.95% falling into the Low category. The use of medium-value modal operators typically prioritizes objective descriptions rather than emphasizing the author's attitudes or feelings, which aligns with the official nature of white papers.

### 5.4. Passive Sentences

In English, passive sentences play an important role in written English. Lin Zhengjun and Wang Meng suggested that in order to achieve communicative purposes, speakers in a given context will choose the active voice to reflect subjectivity and may also choose the passive voice to reflect

objectivity [13]. Therefore, passive sentences are widely recognized for improving the specificity, accuracy and objectivity of expressions and thereby imbuing texts with a sense of rigor and naturalness.

With the help of the software AntConc 3.5.6, passive sentences can be counted by using the regular expression “\S+\_VB\w\*\s(\S+\_RX]\w+\s)\*\S+\_V\wN\s”. The data is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Passive Sentences

|                   | CGWPC  | CCC    |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Passive sentences | 3663   | 17980  |
| Sentences         | 20714  | 108079 |
| Proportion        | 17.68% | 16.64% |

As indicated from the data showed in the Table 5 above, the table provides insight into the counts and proportions of passive sentences and total sentences for each modal operator. For CGWPC, out of a total of 20714 sentences, there are 3,663 instances of passive sentences. This accounts for approximately 17.68% of all sentences analysed. Similarly, for the CCC, out of a total of 108,079 sentences, there are 17,980 instances of passive sentences, representing around 16.64% of the total count. Since passive sentences are considered as more neutral and objective than active sentences, their increased usage in white paper texts would highlight the objectivity of the language, which in line with the rigorous requirements of government white papers.

## 5.5. Keywords

The keyword function of the corpus tool AntConc 3.5.6 was applied to retrieve relevant keywords with the reference corpus of Crown & Clob Corpus. The resulting list of the top 10 keywords (content words) in China white papers from 2018 to 2022 are presented in the table 6 below:

Table 6: Keywords of China White Papers (2018-2022).

| No. | Key Words     | Keyness  | Frequency |
|-----|---------------|----------|-----------|
| 1   | China         | 20373.12 | 7238      |
| 2   | development   | 5780.42  | 2734      |
| 3   | Chinese       | 4627.25  | 1812      |
| 4   | cooperation   | 3985.97  | 1340      |
| 5   | people        | 3378.54  | 3287      |
| 6   | rights        | 3099.91  | 1471      |
| 7   | countries     | 3043.44  | 1613      |
| 8   | international | 2890.03  | 1547      |
| 9   | poverty       | 2571.45  | 1025      |
| 10  | national      | 2375.38  | 1563      |

The keywords extracted shows the topics that China concerned during the period of 2018 to 2022. The frequent mentions of “China” and “Chinese” “national” in the white papers clearly indicates its identification as an important country and the Chinese nation’s identity and attaches great importance to the overall development of the country.

Additionally, the high frequency of keywords such as “cooperation,” “countries,” and “international” demonstrates the Chinese government’s active engagement in international affairs and its commitment to cooperation. Through active participation in international organizations, advocating for open cooperation, and promoting trade liberalization, the Chinese government

strives to promote global cooperation and development.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the “rights” and “people” indicates the Chinese government’s concern for the rights and interests of the people. It demonstrates that while promoting openness and cooperation, the Chinese government also focuses on the well-being of the people and social justice.

### 5.6. Collocates of “Cooperation”

According to Sinclair, “collocation is the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text” [14]. We use Mutual Information (MI) as a measure of collocation strength, we selected the top ten collocations. Since the study was about China’s integration into the world, the Collocates function of AntConc 3.5.6 was applied to extract the collocations of the keyword: “cooperation”, the top ten collocations (with Min. Collate Frequency: 100) were listed as table 7 below:

Table 7: Collocations of “Cooperation”

| Collocates    | MI      | Freq |
|---------------|---------|------|
| south         | 7.86508 | 141  |
| exchanges     | 7.57037 | 164  |
| Africa        | 6.50105 | 102  |
| international | 6.24092 | 305  |
| countries     | 5.15680 | 150  |
| on            | 4.75427 | 285  |
| China         | 4.48323 | 422  |
| development   | 4.46133 | 157  |
| with          | 4.44281 | 241  |
| and           | 3.84099 | 1154 |

According to the collocations provided from table 7, China emphasizes international cooperation and exchanges, which is fully reflected in the China’s white paper. The pairing of “cooperation” with “exchanges,” “international,” and “countries” indicates China’s commitment to strengthening communication with other countries and actively engaging in cooperation, facilitating mutual understanding and win-win outcomes among different nations. These kinds of international cooperations contribute to the improvement of the global governance system and the stability of the international order, while providing China with more opportunities to participate in international affairs and exert its influence.

In addition, the “cooperation” often appears together with “development,” illustrating China’s emphasis on collaboration with other nations in the development field. China has always closely linked its own development with global development, proposing a series of initiatives and cooperation frameworks that have made positive contributions to promoting global sustainable development.

### 5.7. Concordances of “Cooperation”

Concordance refers to sentence fragments in a corpus that contain the keywords. There may be a large number of concordances containing keywords in a large corpus, and it is unnecessary and impractical to extract all of them for observation and description. Therefore, a random selection can be made to ensure representativeness [15]. As we are exploring the issue of China’s integration sustainability, we chose “cooperation,” for concordance to analyse China’s attitude and image

towards international cooperation. The result is showed as Table 8 bellow.

Table 8: Concordances for “Cooperation”

| Before   | Keyword     | After                                       |
|--|-------------|---|
| ...a program of action to promote China-Africa | cooperation | in agricultural modernization. By...        |
| ...of and approaches to                        | cooperation | . In tripartite cooperation, we...          |
| ...Road Digital Economy International          | cooperation | Initiative To expand cooperation...         |
| ...cooperation and strengthening international | cooperation | amid the pandemic. He...                    |
| ...as an exchange and                          | cooperation | platform among universities. China...       |
| .... Peace, development, and win-win           | cooperation | will prevail. The sun...                    |
| .... China upholds solidarity and              | cooperation | , opposes discriminatory approaches, and... |
| ...sustainable bilateral and multilateral      | cooperation | with other countries in...                  |
| .... Encouraging academic exchanges and        | cooperation | among think tanks. China...                 |
| ...all countries should strengthen             | cooperation | on early warning, risk...                   |
| ...action to promote China-Africa              | cooperation | in agricultural modernization. By...        |

Based on the concordances Table 8 provided, it can be seen that China actively promotes sustainable development through promoting cooperation and strengthening international cooperation. Through cooperations with African countries, multilateral cooperation, digital economy initiatives, academic exchanges and other means, China is working with other countries to achieve sustainable development, which shows that the sustainability of China’s integration into the world is constantly improving.

The presence of words like “international,” “multilateral,” and “exchange” in conjunction with “cooperation” indicates that China values multilateral cooperation and exchanges in promoting cooperation and strengthening international relations. These words demonstrate China’s emphasis on cooperation with other countries and the use of multilateral mechanisms and platforms to achieve such cooperation.

The term “win-win” embodies China’s emphasis on achieving common development and prosperity among all parties through equal and mutually beneficial cooperative relationships. This cooperative model not only focuses on its own interests but also considers the interests of other countries, aiming for the maximization of common interests.

Words like “strengthen,” “uphold,” “promote,” and “encouraging” indicate China’s positive, firm, and proactive attitude towards cooperation. China is willing to strengthen cooperative relationships, adhere to cooperative principles, promote cooperative development, and hopes that the achievements of cooperation can be widely recognized and shared.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Description of Texts

The textual features of China’s white papers reflect the formal, authoritative, and professional image of China. This image plays a positive role in China’s integration into the world. Firstly, China’s white papers have a high STTR value, indicating high vocabulary diversity. A higher proportion of content words implies that there is rich information conveyed in the text. At the same time, the mean word length and mean sentence length in China’s white papers are relatively longer, revealing the richness and depth of the text. Finally, the use of medium value modal operators and



passive voice sentences is relatively high, which emphasizes the objectivity and authority of the argument.

The top ten content keywords reflect the topics that China has been focusing on during this five-year period. China has placed great emphasis on its development agenda, seeking to improve the well-being and quality of life for its people and promoting international cooperation and partnerships with other countries.

The collocations of the “cooperation” in 45 white papers published between 2018 and 2022, it can be observed that China attaches great importance to international cooperation. The use of verbs such as “promote,” “strengthen,” and “uphold” in the concordances reflect China’s positive attitude towards international cooperation.

## 6.2. Discursive Practice

While generating China’s white papers, these texts will undergo strict drafting and review procedures, including in-depth analysis of issues, explanations of policies, as well as China’s stance and viewpoints. The texts of Chinese government white papers cover various topics, including but not limited to human rights protection, economic development, and environmental protection. These topics reflect the policies, positions, and actions of the Chinese government in various fields. The use of data, charts, and special columns in the white papers allow for a more in-depth introduction and explanation of certain arguments or topics. By using scientific data, white papers can support and validate government decisions and actions.

When the white papers are finished, they will be released by the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China through official press conferences, which ensures that white papers can be widely spread, attracting attention and sparking discussions both domestically and internationally. Through the dissemination, white papers can enhance their influence and encourage more people to understand and pay attention to the policies and development of China.

Through these efforts, the Chinese government is able to shape an authoritative and rational image, enhance international understanding and recognition of China, and promote the development of partnerships and the realization of common interests. Therefore, China’s white papers play an important role in the sustainable development of China’s integrations into the world.

## 6.3. Social Practice

In recent years, China has been committed to improving its cultural soft power, enhancing its international discourse power, and constructing a discourse system with its own characteristics. The official status is the main characteristic of these white papers. It plays an important role throughout the entire process. Due to the official and authoritative status of white papers, people are more inclined to accept their explanations and viewpoints. Through these contents in white papers, China can actively participate in shaping China’s image, promoting cooperative relationships with other countries, and enhancing its international discourse power. The elevated credibility and authority of the white papers render them as highly persuasive evidence for clarifying misperceptions and biases towards China. These white papers shape a formal, authoritative, and professional image for China, which has also played a positive role in China’s integration into the world, helps maintain a harmonious atmosphere for international cooperation and lays a foundation for communication with other countries and regions.

## 7. Conclusions

In conclusion, China’s white papers contribute to building a positive and proactive image and

play an important role in China's sustainable development and integration into the world. A positive national image can enhance a country's attractiveness, making it more welcomed and trusted by other countries.

From the perspective of textual features, Chinese white papers have the following characteristics: (1) Higher reading difficulty. The longer mean word length and mean sentence length indicates more complex vocabularies and sentence structures. (2) High lexical richness. This is reflected in a high STTR, indicating a high diversity of vocabulary. (3) High information density. The proportion of content words is relatively high, indicating that white papers provide rich information and facts. (4) Objective and neutral tone. The white papers tend to use medium value modal verbs and passive sentence structures in order to achieve a suitable and objective expression.

Through keywords analysis, the following conclusions can be obtained: Chinese white papers from 2018 to 2022 mainly focus on topics related to international cooperation, development, and people's livelihoods. The collocations of "cooperation" reveals China's emphasis on cooperative development. The concordances reflect a positive attitude towards supporting cooperation.

These white papers exert a positive influence on China's integration into the world by presenting an authoritative, and professional image of China. By analysing the collocations and concordances of the word "cooperation" in the 45 white papers, the result is also evident that China actively supports international cooperation, which reflects its image as a country that is eager to collaborate with others. The production and dissemination of white papers also help enhance China's influence, encouraging more people to understand and know China's policies and developments. Through these efforts, China is able to gain understanding and recognition from the international community, promoting the development of partnerships and the realization of common interests.

## 8. Limitations

The study's findings may not fully capture the long-term trends and developments in China's integration into the world. In addition, this study only searched one keyword for collocations and keyword concordances retrieval. The conclusions primarily focused on analysing the texts, without exploring other perspectives.

Therefore, for further study, it can be considered to extend the time span to gather a more comprehensive and representative sample of texts. Moreover, conducting further research with a broader range of keywords will enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Finally, future studies could explore more perspectives such as the impact and effectiveness of China's white papers on the sustainable development of China's integration into the world to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. It is also recommended that other official documents from the Chinese government be included in the analysis, such as policy documents, reports, and speeches, to provide a more holistic view of the sustainable development of China's integration into the world.

## Acknowledgements

This project is financially supported by The Education Department of Jiangxi Province, P.R.China. The grant number is YY21210.

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