



A Study on the Spread and Reception of the English Translations of “A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” in ASEAN Countries

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DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.13.4.228](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.13.4.228)



Article info

Article Received: 17/10/2025
Article Accepted: 21/11/2025
Published online: 29/11/2025

Abstract

As an important thought for global governance, the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind” has attracted widespread international attention. ASEAN is a key cooperative region for China, so the spread and reception of this concept hold significant research value. Therefore, combining Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus-based research methods, this study takes English reports related to “a community with a shared future for mankind” from ten ASEAN countries, which cover the period from March 1, 2013 to December 31, 2024, in the Factiva news corpus as the research object, exploring the reporting frequencies, diachronic changes, and application of different translation versions of the concept. The results of this study can provide academic references and practical insights for optimizing the cross-cultural communication and deepening bilateral relations between China and ASEAN.

Keywords: Corpus-based Study, Spread and Reception, English Translations, a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, ASEAN Countries

1. Introduction

Since the concept of “人类命运共同体” was proposed as an important thought for global governance, it has attracted widespread attention from the international community. This concept emphasizes that all countries should work together to address common challenges and pursue common development. It

not only frequently appears in diplomatic occasions and policy documents of various countries, but also sparks intense discussions on global social media platforms. However, it is found that since its first proposal, there has been no unified English translation of this term, resulting in multiple versions in the speeches of state leaders, important documents of international organizations, as well as

mainstream media at home and abroad. Therefore, conducting research on the perception and reception of its different translation versions is of great practical significance.

ASEAN countries have close geographical, economic and cultural ties with China, and serve as a key region and important cooperative partner for the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. Over the years, China and ASEAN have carried out extensive and in-depth cooperation in multiple fields. Therefore, focusing on the ASEAN region and systematically investigating the perception of different English translations of the term "a community with a shared future for mankind" not only helps understand the acceptance of Chinese concepts in neighboring areas, but also provides reference for promoting the building of regional consensus and deepening bilateral strategic cooperation. Based on the dual perspectives of cross-cultural communication and regional studies, this research aims to explore the reception and perception paths and practical significance of "人类命运共同体" in ASEAN countries, thereby providing academic support and practical enlightenment for the high-quality development of China-ASEAN relations.

2. Theoretical Basis

In 1979, Fowler and others proposed the concept of critical linguistics in *Language and Control*, marking the formal emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It has a development history of more than 40 years to date. CDA aims to reveal the dialectical relationship between language, power, and ideology by analyzing surface linguistic forms (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). It exposes the influence of ideology on language, the counteraction of language on ideology, and how both originate from and serve social structures and power relations.

However, Widdowson (2000) pointed out that analysts tend to have ideological biases

when interpreting texts, which may lead them to impose their subjective ideologies on the interpretation. Meanwhile, they also exhibit certain tendencies in text selection. The corpus-based research method can support research findings through extensive data analysis, ensuring the objectivity and empirical nature of the study and making up for the deficiencies of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Therefore, this paper combines Critical Discourse Analysis with corpus-based research, and flexibly applies qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyze the communication effects of diplomatic discourse.

3. Research Design

3.1 Corpus Selection

The corpus used in this study is derived from the Factiva news corpus. It is found that the main English translations of "人类命运共同体" include "community with a shared future", "community of shared future", "community of common destiny", "community of a shared future", "community of shared destiny", "community with shared future", etc. The core differences lie in the choice between "common" and "shared", as well as between "future" and "destiny". Therefore, "common destiny", "common future", "shared destiny", and "shared future" are taken as search terms. Chinese media stationed abroad are excluded from the corpus sources, and a total of 7,653 media reports from ten ASEAN countries are extracted, covering the time period from March 1, 2013 to December 31, 2025. Specifically, there are 324 reports from Brunei, 755 from Cambodia, 934 from Indonesia, 409 from Laos, 726 from Malaysia, 251 from Myanmar, 734 from the Philippines, 1,301 from Singapore, 583 from Thailand, and 1,752 from Vietnam. The study analyzes the synchronic and diachronic frequencies of the discourse in English reports from different countries.

3.2 Research Process

This study adopts “common destiny”, “common future”, “shared destiny” and “shared future” as search terms. It conducts extraction and statistics on English media reports from the ten ASEAN countries over the 12-year period from Marc 1, 2013 to December 31, 2024. Besides, it compiles the diachronic reporting frequencies of these four translation versions respectively and summarizes their changing trends as well as the underlying causes. Meanwhile, for the key years with significant fluctuations in the number of reports, the study conducts an in-depth review of the important international events and socio-political backgrounds during the release of the

reports, so as to reveal the in-depth connection between the ups and downs of the report volume and various events.

This study aims to address two specific research questions:

- What are the changes of English translations for “人类命运共同体” among medias of different ASEAN countries?
- What are the ideological factors that give rise to these changes?

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overall Frequency Characteristics of Translation Versions

Table 1: Statistics on Reporting Frequencies of “人类命运共同体” in English Media of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia

Year	Translation	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia
2024	Common/Shared Destiny	1	29	23	5	9
	Common/Shared Future	26	133	143	78	146
2023	Common/Shared Destiny	0	45	11	11	4
	Common/Shared Future	10	149	171	60	100
2022	Common/Shared Destiny	0	27	4	4	12
	Common/Shared Future	11	101	202	49	31
2021	Common/Shared Destiny	1	13	8	8	15
	Common/Shared Future	21	56	67	50	29
2020	Common/Shared Destiny	1	9	11	6	7
	Common/Shared Future	9	19	31	16	15
2019	Common/Shared Destiny	0	11	5	5	13
	Common/Shared Future	9	17	18	30	22

2018	Common/Shared Destiny	6	15	11	5	42
	Common/Shared Future	22	19	47	22	35
2017	Common/Shared Destiny	12	25	14	9	15
	Common/Shared Future	46	8	58	23	62
2016	Common/Shared Destiny	1	18	6	19	12
	Common/Shared Future	3	15	10	6	23
2015	Common/Shared Destiny	4	10	25	3	50
	Common/Shared Future	0	1	11	0	28
2014	Common/Shared Destiny	1	13	19	0	15
	Common/Shared Future	1	3	7	0	12
2013	Common/Shared Destiny	16	16	17	0	11
	Common/Shared Future	7	3	15	0	18
Total	–	208	755	934	409	726

Table 2: Statistics on Reporting Frequencies of “人类命运共同体” in English Media of Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

Year	Translation	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
2024	Common/Shared Destiny	4	10	9	5	12
	Common/Shared Future	35	96	166	117	659
2023	Common/Shared Destiny	3	6	8	6	55
	Common/Shared Future	25	62	146	74	261
2022	Common/Shared Destiny	2	13	11	8	12
	Common/Shared Future	21	57	81	86	45
2021	Common/Shared Destiny	7	5	26	30	9
	Common/Shared Future	25	51	109	26	29
2020	Common/Shared Destiny	7	11	19	5	1
	Common/Shared Future	33	29	66	21	24
2019	Common/Shared Destiny	1	7	16	8	5
	Common/Shared Future	6	38	99	19	27

2018	Common/Shared Destiny	14	36	68	19	17
	Common/Shared Future	7	43	117	14	73
2017	Common/Shared Destiny	8	32	20	11	24
	Common/Shared Future	7	66	99	46	385
2016	Common/Shared Destiny	3	29	15	7	22
	Common/Shared Future	4	30	66	13	39
2015	Common/Shared Destiny	12	15	32	12	13
	Common/Shared Future	0	31	54	5	4
2014	Common/Shared Destiny	9	11	12	15	11
	Common/Shared Future	13	23	29	12	5
2013	Common/Shared Destiny	5	16	14	24	9
	Common/Shared Future	0	17	19	12	11
Total	–	251	734	1301	583	1752

The research findings indicate that all ten ASEAN countries have covered the concept of “人类命运共同体”, yet there are significant differences in the extent of coverage among various countries. The top five countries in terms of reporting volume are Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, and the Philippines, with their total number of reports accounting for 72% of the overall corpus. Among them, Vietnam has the largest number of news reports on the concept, totaling 1,752 articles, which accounts for 23% of the total. Singaporean media have published 1,301 relevant reports, making up 17% of the total. Indonesia has 934 related reports, Cambodia has 755, and the Philippines has 734.

As can be seen from the ranking of reporting volumes, countries geographically adjacent to China and with close economic and trade exchanges generally show higher attention to this concept. As an important driver of regional cooperation in Asia, China's development strategy has always attached great importance to neighboring regions and taken root in Asia. ASEAN countries are either

connected to China, and their geographical proximity enables mutual influence in multiple aspects, thus leading to greater attention to the global governance concept proposed by China.

Vietnam, the country with the highest number of reports, maintains close ties with China in economic and trade cooperation. In recent years, China and Vietnam have made remarkable progress in the alignment with the Belt and Road Initiative. When covering bilateral cooperation, Vietnamese media frequently cite the expression “a community with a shared future for mankind”. As a regional media and diplomatic hub, Singapore's attention to “a community with a shared future for mankind” reflects its strong engagement in global governance issues. The multilateral cooperation and regional stability advocated by this concept are highly consistent with the values pursued by Singapore. Indonesia's intensive reporting is attributed to the continuous upgrading of bilateral relations from strategic partnership to a community with a shared future. From reaching a consensus on building a China-Indonesia community with a shared future to establishing a comprehensive

strategic dialogue mechanism, these cooperative efforts are vivid practices of “a community with a shared future for mankind”. They have prompted Indonesian media to continuously follow up and report, so as to reflect the deepening process of bilateral relations.

4.2 The Diachronic Changes and Application of English Translations

This study retrieved English media outlets from ten ASEAN countries over a 12-year period, compiled online news reports related to the “人类命运共同体”, sorted out the data, and generated the following line chart (Figure 1). This chart intuitively reflects the diachronic change trend of the number of reports on different English translation of “人类命运共同体” in English media of the ten ASEAN countries.

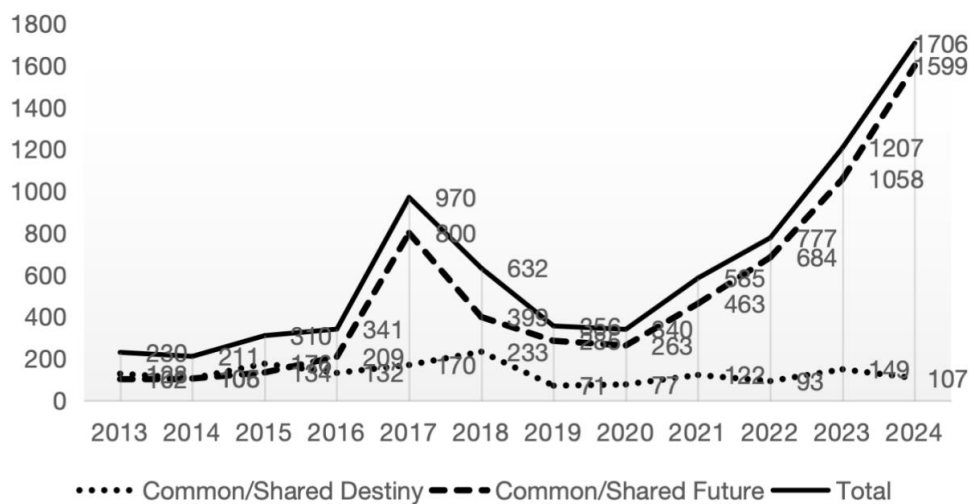


Figure 1: Longitudinal Study on the Reporting Frequency

4.2.1 The Diachronic Changes of English Translations

Overall, from 2013 to 2016, the media of the ten ASEAN countries showed low attention to the concept and discourse of “人类命运共同体”, with the average annual number of reports across the ten countries not exceeding 280. In 2017, the number increased significantly, doubling compared with the previous year, followed by a downward trend with a decrease in the number of reports, which picked up again in 2020.

In 2013, President Xi Jinping publicly proposed the concept of “人类命运共同体” in his speech at the Moscow State Institute of

International Relations, marking its first appearance on the world stage. He later mentioned this concept again during his visit to Tanzania. These two important events aroused widespread attention and discussions about “人类命运共同体” in the international community. As important participants in international affairs, the ten ASEAN countries took note of the emergence of this concept and reported on it through media outlets. However, since the specific connotations and significance of “人类命运共同体” might require a certain period of time to be understood and accepted, the number of reports on this term by the ten ASEAN countries remained relatively low in the initial stage.

Since 2017, “人类命运共同体” has gained further attention both domestically and internationally, appearing repeatedly on international occasions, and the number of reports by media from the ten ASEAN countries has subsequently increased significantly. On January 18, 2017, President Xi Jinping attended the High-Level Meeting on “Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” in Geneva, Switzerland, and delivered a keynote speech titled “Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”. In February of the same year, the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind was incorporated into a UN resolution for the first time. In October of that year, the report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed “promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind”, which was also written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China. Subsequently, in 2018, state leaders put forward the initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind at major domestic and international events such as the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference and the Beijing Xiangshan Forum. With the government's efforts to promote and deepen the connotation of this concept, media from the ten ASEAN countries significantly increased their reports on “人类命运共同体” in these two years.

Since 2020, the number of reports has surged sharply. The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted global interdependence and the necessity of jointly addressing global crises, while the concept of “人类命运共同体” precisely emphasizes the mutual dependence and coexistence of all humanity in facing crises together. During the pandemic, President Xi Jinping mentioned “人类命运共同体” in multiple speeches, which further strengthened the influence of this term. Consequently, media outlets in the ten ASEAN countries significantly increased their attention to and reports on this concept. In the following

years, the number of reports related to the concept has maintained a growing trend, demonstrating the high level of attention paid to “人类命运共同体” by media in the ten ASEAN countries.

4.2.2 Application of Different English Translation

As can be seen from Figure 1, the short dashed line represents the annual changes in the English translations of the Chinese term “命运” (destiny) as “common destiny” or “shared destiny”, while the long dashed line denotes the annual usage of its translations as “common future” or “shared future”. The results show that 2016 is the intersection point of the two lines, thus serving as a watershed for the two main English translation of “命运”. Before 2016, media in ASEAN countries mainly used “common/shared destiny” to translate the Chinese term “命运”, whereas starting from 2017, “common/shared future” became the dominant translation in their reports.

The underlying reason lies in the revision of the official English translation by the Chinese government in 2017. When “人类命运共同体” was first proposed in the Report to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the translated name adopted was “a community of common destiny”. However, “common destiny” fails to fully convey the connotative meaning of the concept. In the English context, the term “destiny” carries religious implications and a slightly negative tone, making it inappropriate for expressing the concept's vision for the future. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines “destiny” as events that will happen in the future, especially those that cannot be changed or controlled. In contrast, “命运” in “人类命运共同体” refers to the common development and future direction of humanity, emphasizing the close connection and interdependence of human beings' future. Thus, the translation should

highlight the meaning of “future”. Therefore, starting from 2017, translations featuring “shared future” have been used in speeches by state leaders and government documents. The concept has been elaborated on multiple occasions at various international forums, gaining widespread attention and recognition globally.

5. Conclusion

This study, grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus study, examines the spread and reception of different translations of “人类命运共同体” within English-language media of ASEAN countries. The findings reveal varying attention to this concept across the region, with media coverage being most concentrated in five countries: Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, and the Philippines. Furthermore, a diachronic analysis indicates that ASEAN media reporting on the concept evolved through distinct phases, which is from initial awareness to gradual deepening, and eventually to a marked surge in coverage. A significant increase was particularly observed after 2017, underscoring the concept's enduring influence in international communication.

Regarding different translation versions, the study uncovers a notable shift from terms of “common/shared destiny” towards “common/shared future.” This transition not only reflects the Chinese government's proactive adjustments in its external discourse system but also highlights the crucial role of translation strategies in cross-cultural communication. By replacing the word of “destiny” with the more open and constructive term “future,” the conceptual essence of “人类命运共同体” is conveyed more accurately, thereby enhancing its acceptance within the ASEAN region.

This research provides empirical evidence for understanding the mechanisms behind the spread of Chinese concepts in

neighboring countries. In future, enhancing the local adaptability of the discourse will be key to seeking consensus amid differences and deepening cooperation through exchange.

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