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## Translation as Political Reframing: Political Objectives in Chinese Translations

Shih-Ting Lin



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**About the Author:** Shih-Ting Lin is a Mandarin language teacher at the Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR.

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Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence  
NH-91, Tehsil Dadri, Gautam Budh Nagar District  
Uttar Pradesh - 201314  
INDIA  
Ph: +91 120 7170100  
E-Mail: [chs.shss@snu.edu.in](mailto:chs.shss@snu.edu.in)  
Website: <https://snu.edu.in/centres/centre-of-excellence-for-himalayan-studies/>

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### Abstract

An essay on the absence of Indians from higher management positions of Chinese companies in India, published in an Indian foreign policy magazine in March was translated and published the following month by the *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun*, an online media platform in the People's Republic of China. While broadly in agreement with the original essay's meaning, the translation made deliberate semantic adjustments, in different forms, to misrepresent analysis and arguments. Deconstructing this mistranslation line by line, this *Issue Brief* argues that it represents a conscious effort to serve three political objectives of the Communist Party of China (CPC) - to portray India as weak and China as strong; to moderate terminology deemed sensitive for the Party; and to showcase the importance of loyalty to the Party.

**Keywords:** India-China relations; Communist Party of China; economy; narrative-building; translation

An article by Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies (CHS) researcher, Anand P. Krishnan, titled, "*Not Amenable to Control: Chinese Corporates in India*", published in March 2026 in the Indian foreign policy magazine *India's World* (Krishnan 2026), was translated by an online platform *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun* (南亚研究通讯, South Asia Study Newsletter, 2026) in the People's Republic of China (PRC) in April. This version was circulated widely on Chinese social media platforms but the tone of the Chinese translation differs considerably from that of the original text. While the translation remains broadly faithful to the overall meaning of the original, the Chinese translator made a number of subtle - but significant - adjustments in the process of translation, including deliberately adding or omitting certain content, or choosing expressions with a stronger tone. A more accurate Chinese translation by the CHS can be found [here](#).

The additions and omissions in the translation by the PRC platform suggests not a misunderstanding of the original text, but a conscious effort to adjust its tone to serve the political objectives of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This also suggests that information circulating on the Chinese internet must first undergo a certain degree of self-censorship and conform to the narrative framework preferred by the CPC.

By cross-checking the translation by *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun* against the English original and the Chinese translation produced by the Centre, this article analyzes how Chinese translators and commentators adjust meaning and tone when translating research by foreign scholars. This article argues that these translational interventions serve three main political objectives - constructing a narrative that shows India as weak and China as strong; rephrasing sensitive terminology, including direct references to the CPC; and emphasizing loyalty to the Party. These three objectives are categorized as A, B, and C respectively in the Appendix at the end of this article.

## ‘Weak India, Strong China’

Through tonal intensification, the *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun* translator continuously constructs a narrative in which the Indian government appears incompetent, policy implementation is constrained, and India is unable to free itself from Chinese influence.

The first method is to translate relatively neutral descriptions in the original into stronger negative judgments. For example, in the original sentence “But implementation revealed a harder truth,” the Chinese translation renders it as “implementation exposed a more brutal reality.” Both “exposed” (暴露出, *baolu chu*) and “a more brutal reality” (十分残酷, *shifen canku*) carry a stronger tone than the original, presenting the problems in India’s policy implementation as more serious and more negative. (1)

Another example of mistranslation is of “Why are Indians Missing from Boardrooms?” which simply asks why Indians are absent from boardrooms. Yet the Chinese translation renders it with the phrase “are destined to be excluded” (无缘, *wuyuan*), using a more fatalistic expression that suggests Indians are not merely absent from boardrooms, but are somehow not good enough and thus fated to remain excluded from them. This adds passive connotations that are absent from the original. (11)

The second method is to add qualifiers that do not appear in the original. For instance, in the phrase “constrains New Delhi’s ability to regulate and control Chinese firms,” the translator renders “constrains” as “greatly constrains” (极大制约, *jida zhiyue*) and “ability” as “actual ability” (实际能力, *shiji nengli*), adding the words “greatly” and “actual,” neither of which is present in the original. (2)

The third method is to alter the Chinese sentence structure in a way that distorts the relationship among concepts in the original. For example, in the question “Can New Delhi meaningfully assert economic sovereignty while remaining deeply enmeshed in Chinese capital, supply chains, and expertise?”, “Chinese capital” and “supply chains” are parallel elements. The original neutrally states that Indian industry is constrained by these factors. However, the Chinese translation renders this as “supply chains dominated by Chinese capital” (由中资主导的供应链, *you zhongzi zhudao de gongyinglian*), giving readers the impression that the supply chains of India’s domestic industries are already comprehensively dominated by Chinese capital. (3)

Finally, the translator also adjusts the narrative order of the original in order to change the point of emphasis. The original sentence, “That the hands of both industry and government were tied when it came to economic dependence was underlined by Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar’s remarks in February 2023 that, as a smaller economy, India was in no position to take on China,” first states that both Indian industry and the government were constrained by economic dependence on China, and then cites Jaishankar’s remarks as supporting evidence. The Chinese translation, however, places Jaishankar’s remarks at the beginning of the sentence and adds forceful expressions such as “As far back as” (早在, *zaozai*) and “clearly pointed out” (明确指, *mingque zhichu*), making the statement appear to be a more authoritative political

judgment. While this restructuring may seem not to fundamentally alter the original meaning, it changes the rhythm of argumentation and shifts the tonal emphasis of the original. (15)

In the same passage, the Chinese translator renders “the hands of both industry and government were tied” as “the hands were tied, leaving them at a loss and unable to act effectively” (束手无策, 难以施展拳脚, *shushouwu ce, nanyi shizhan quanjiao*). This clearly intensifies the tone of the original. The phrase “hands were tied” mainly indicates that action was limited or constrained; it does not necessarily imply complete helplessness. However, the Chinese expressions used in the translation make the Indian government and industrial sector appear passive, powerless, and even without any viable options, thereby amplifying the original’s negative description of India’s situation. (15)

### Moderating Sensitive Terminology

The translator avoids sensitive terminology and dilutes or redirects the original text’s criticism of, and references to, the CPC by rewriting the author’s more critical expressions in language that is more vague, more neutral, or closer to official Chinese discourse.

For example, in the phrase “The transgressions by Chinese People’s Liberation Army troops in eastern Ladakh in the summer of 2020 that led to the loss of lives at Galwan Valley,” the author clearly states that the transgressions by Chinese PLA troops in eastern Ladakh caused casualties in the Galwan Valley. However, the Chinese translation rewrites this as the more neutral “China-India border conflict” (中印边境冲突, *Zhong-Yin bianjing chongtu*). This translation obscures the responsible actor, transforming an incident originally described as being triggered by Chinese military transgressions into a border conflict in which both China and India appear equally responsible. (4)

Another example is the sentence “Known as Press Note 3, the change was effected to curb opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies by Chinese investors.” The original explains that Press Note 3 was intended to curb opportunistic takeovers or acquisitions of Indian companies by Chinese investors. However, the translator adds the phrase “the Indian side claimed” (印方宣称, *Yinfang xuancheng*), which does not appear in the original. This turns the author’s objective description of the policy background into a unilateral claim by India. Such a treatment weakens the accusatory force of the original description of “opportunistic acquisitions” by Chinese investors and makes the narrative unfavorable to China appear less certain and less credible. (8)

Finally, because China is a Party-state and the Party occupies a central position in the operation of the state, the original text frequently makes direct references to the Party. However, in the Chinese translation, instances where the original explicitly mentions the Party or the Party-state are often replaced by state-related concepts. For example, “Chinese Party-state” is rendered as “national governance system” (国家治理体系, *guojia zhili tixi*) (12); “Party-state” becomes “national strategy” (国家战略, *guojia zhanlue*) (14); and in the sentence “the CPC’s attempts to establish chokepoints for Indian manufacturing,” “CPC” is replaced by the vague phrase “the Chinese side” (中国方面, *Zhongguo fangmian*). (16)

More specifically, in the sentence “While the influence of Confucian cultural values such as hierarchy—including adherence to government directives—loyalty, and collectivism is not unique to Chinese companies, the sustained and dominant role of the CPC over Chinese enterprises stands out,” the original reference to “the sustained and dominant role of the CPC over Chinese enterprises” is vaguely translated as “under the influence of a particular political system” (在特定政治制度的影响下, *zai teding zhengzhi zhidu de yingxiang xia*). This treatment turns the original’s direct criticism of the CPC’s dominance over enterprises into a general description of an unspecified institutional background, thereby weakening and misrepresenting its role as a significant actor in the Chinese economy. (13)

### **Emphasizing Loyalty to the Party**

It is worth noting that in the third paragraph of the translation, although the content involves criticism of Chinese companies – for example, their influence by traditional Confucian culture and their tendency to maintain ethnocentrism – these expressions, which are usually regarded as relatively negative in a Western value context, are not omitted by the translator. This suggests that such discourse may not necessarily be viewed as negative criticism within the Chinese discursive system. Instead, it may be reinterpreted as a legitimate or even positive quality. For example, nationalism, loyalty to the Party, and collectivism can all be incorporated into a politically correct narrative framework in China.

At the same time, in the sentence “Staffing, promotion, and leadership appointments, especially in overseas roles, are thus influenced by political reliability as well as trust and loyalty to the company headquarters and the Chinese Party-state,” the translator emphasizes the phrase “taking political reliability and loyalty to headquarters and the Party-state system as core considerations.” Turning the relatively neutral “influenced” in the original into “core considerations” (核心考量, *hexin kaoliang*), elevates political factors such as loyalty to the Party from one among several influences into the central explanation for Chinese companies’ overseas personnel arrangements. (7)

### **Conclusion**

The central issue with the *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun* translation is not merely whether it is faithful to the original, but that the translator uses translation to rearrange the political meaning of the original text. These subtle additions, omissions, and tonal shifts ultimately point not simply to differences in semantic understanding, but to a clear political objective.

Specifically, the translation continuously promotes an image of the Indian government as incompetent, constrained in policy implementation, and unable to free itself from economic dependence on China, thereby presenting India as the passive and weaker party in China-India economic relations. At the same time, the translator deliberately weakens the original text’s direct criticism of the CPC, China’s Party-state system, and its control over enterprises by rewriting or softening relevant expressions, thereby reducing their political sensitivity. At the same time, where the original refers to corporate loyalty to the Party and coordination with the Party-state system, the translator tends to affirm and further strengthen the tone of such expressions.

Therefore, the political objective of *Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun* translation is to reframe the arguments of foreign scholars and transform them into a narrative that is favorable to China. In the Chinese internet sphere, this helps create the impression that even Indian scholars and India's foreign minister acknowledge that India is helpless in the face of its own economic dependence on China.

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX

### Comparison of the Original Text and Translations

S. No.	Original text in English	Translation by <i>Nanya Yanjiu Tongxun</i>	Translation by CHS	Type of Mistranslation
1.	But implementation revealed a harder truth	但政策执行过程中却暴露出了十分残酷的现实	然而，政策执行过程中却揭示了一个更严峻的现实	A.
2.	constrains New Delhi's ability to regulate and control Chinese firms	极大制约了印度政府监管、管控中资企业的实际能力	限制了新德里监管与掌控中国企业的力量	A.
3.	Can New Delhi meaningfully assert economic sovereignty while remaining deeply enmeshed in Chinese capital, supply chains, and expertise?	在印度国内产业深度嵌入由中资主导的供应链、专业技术体系的情况下，印度如何能真正有效维护本国经济主权？	当印度仍深度嵌入中国资本、供应链与专业技术时，新德里是否仍能实质主张其经济主权？	A.

4.	The transgressions by Chinese People's Liberation Army troops in eastern Ladakh in the summer of 2020 that led to the loss of lives at Galwan Valley	2020年夏，中印在加勒万河谷爆发造成人员伤亡的边境冲突	2020年夏季，中国人民解放军部队在拉达克东部的越界行动引发了加勒万河谷的冲突并造成多人伤亡	B.
5.	have constrained New Delhi's effectiveness in imposing its will	极大制约了印度政府推行其意志的实际效果。	使新德里难以有效推行其意志。	A.
6.	However, the pivotal point of distinction remains the role of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Chinese companies remain connected and closely align their strategic objectives with the CPC,	这一现象固然与中企全球化扩张起步较晚、对国际人力资源实践的吸收相对滞后有关，但其根本原因在于党与企业的紧密联系，企业战略目标与国家大政方针高度协同。	这或可解释为中国跨国企业在全中国扩张方面相对起步较晚，因此在采纳全球人力资源实践方面较为缓慢。然而，关键的区别在于中国共产党所扮演的角色。中国企业始终与党中央保持紧密联系，并使其战略目标与党的要求高度一致。	B.
7.	Staffing, promotion, and leadership appointments, especially in overseas roles, are thus influenced by political reliability as well as trust and loyalty to the company headquarters and the Chinese Party-state.	中企海外岗位的选派、晋升与任用，往往将政治可靠性、对总部及党政体制的忠诚度作为核心考量。	因此，人员配置、晋升以及领导层的任命（特别是在海外岗位中），也受到政治可靠性、信任，以及对公司总部与中国党国体制的忠诚度的影响。	C.
8.	Known as Press Note 3, the change was effected to curb opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies by Chinese investors, in the backdrop of the People's	这项被称为“3号通告”（Press Note 3）的政策调整，出台背景是中国人民银行增持印度HDFC银行股份，印方	这项政策被称为《第3号新闻稿》（Press Note 3），该项修订旨在遏制中国投资者对印度公司的机会性收	B.

	Bank of China buying a stake in the HDFC Bank.	宣称此举旨在“遏制中国投资者对印企的投机性收购与兼并”。	购，起因是当时中国人民银行增持了印度住房开发金融银行（HDFC Bank）的股份。	
9.	Post-Galwan, the shrill rhetoric of boycotting Chinese products, while short-lived,	进入后加勒万冲突时代，一度高涨的抵制中国产品舆论虽迅速消退，	加勒万事件之后，儘管一度高漲的抵制中國產品的激烈言辭持續時間不長，	A.
10.	However, the government's inability to control Chinese corporates	然而，印度政府既无力约束中资企业，	然而，印度政府既无法有效管控中国企业，	A.
11.	Why are Indians Missing from Boardrooms?	为何印度人无缘进入企业董事会？	為何印度人缺席董事會？	A.
12.	This tight centralised control and uniformity across the board by company headquarters is a natural outgrowth of their ties to the Chinese Party-state,	企业总部实施的强集中与全域统一化管理，是企业与国家治理体系深度联结的必然结果，	公司总部实施的这种高度集中化的严格控制及全面统一的做法，是其与中国党国体制联系的自然产物。	B.
13.	While the influence of Confucian cultural values such as hierarchy—including adherence to government directives—loyalty, and collectivism is not unique to Chinese companies, the sustained and dominant role of the CPC over Chinese enterprises stands out.	尽管等级秩序、忠诚与集体主义等价值取向并非中企所独有，但在特定政治制度的影响下，这些要素表现得更为突出。	尽管儒家文化价值观的影响，如等级制度（包括遵循政府指示）、忠诚和集体主义，并非中国企业独有，但中国共产党对中国企业持续且具主导性的作用却尤为突出。	B.
14.	Chinese expatriates in senior management positions need to be	身居海外高管职位的中方外派人员，本质上承	担任高级管理职位的中国籍外派人员，应	B, C

	seen as strategic enforcers and integrators rather than as technical experts, constantly at work to align the actions of foreign subsidiaries with both company and Party-state objectives.	担着战略执行及体系整合职能，而非单纯的技术专家，其核心职责在于持续推动海外子公司的经营活动同企业目标、国家战略保持高度协同。	被视为战略执行者与整合者，而非技术专家。他们的职责是持续致力于使海外子公司的行动与公司及党国体制目标保持一致。	
15.	That the hands of both industry and government were tied when it came to economic dependence was underlined by Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar's remarks in February 2023 that, as a smaller economy, India was in no position to take on China.	印度外长苏杰生 ( S. Jaishankar ) 早在 2023 年 2 月便曾明确指出：作为经济体量相对较小的国家，印度无力与中国正面对抗。这一论述也侧面印证了无论印度政府还是工商界，在应对对华经济依赖上均感束手无策，难以施展拳脚。	印度外交部长苏杰生 2023 年 2 月的讲话，印证了印度在经济依赖问题上，无论是产业界还是政府都受到掣肘。他指出，作为一个规模较小的经济体，印度并不具备与中国正面对抗的条件。	A.
16.	It is this awareness of India's emulation of the Chinese developmental experience, and concerns about the potential economic rise of its geopolitical rival, that lie behind the CPC's attempts to establish chokepoints for Indian manufacturing.	正是察觉到印度在模仿中国的发展经验，并对这一地缘政治对手的经济崛起心存警惕，中国方面才试图在印度制造业的关键环节设置障碍。	正是由于意识到印度在效仿中国的发展路径，并担忧其地缘政治对手潜在的经济崛起，中国共产党才试图为印度制造业制造瓶颈。	B.

The reference translation follows the same order as the original text. The colour highlights indicate the locations where differences in translation are significant.