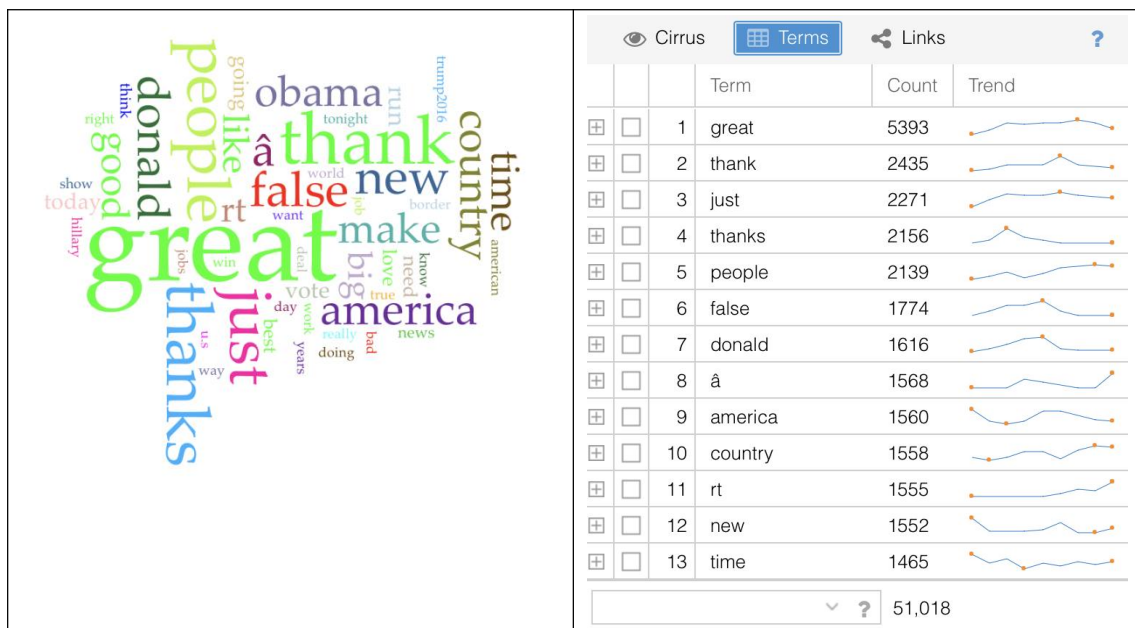


Digital Humanities: Tools and Methods
Final Individual Project
Xi Yang (S5269121)

Compared with previous sophisticated statesmen, President Trump has been making it difficult for politicians to deal with him with his elusive style since taking office. Compared to him, his predecessor, Barack Obama, seemed to be much more grounded and stable. Either Trump a “madman” lambasted by the media or a wise man following his unique principles? How is Obama different from him? To get an answer to this question, I have chosen all of Trump’s tweets from 2011 to 2019 (<https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=3f7f40f69740e6941031d1162c4178db>) and all of Obama’s tweets from five years straight starting in 2011 (<https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=1209c3fa3b17cf61d6c0c03ba923460c>) in an effort to detect the changes in their respective language and to briefly discuss the key distinctions in the two politicians’ propaganda strategies by comparing them.

We are all aware of how much attention Trump has received on Twitter. His Twitter following currently stands at close to 88 million. His political strategies and ideals have been heavily and quickly promoted on Twitter while he has been in office. In Trump’s tweets, there are two categories of high-frequency words. One is a phrase that is frequently used today, more like a slogan of his, like “*Make America Great Again*” or other catchphrases like “*America First*”. The second category of high-frequency terms are timing- and event-driven, with a distinct emphasis on events. The subject of Trump’s wording preferences on tweets shifts in line with his altering policy interests. The recurrence of these words largely reflects “*the Art of the Deal*” suggested in Trump’s autobiography: presenting amazing goals, making a lot of speech and noise, playing tricks repeatedly, and getting ideal results (Trump, 2016). Trump mentions “great” (5393), “thank&thanks” (4591), and “people” (2139) numerous times(Figure 1a).

Figure1a: Tweets from Trump



He then received more votes because he demonstrated greater regard for the concerns of regular people through tweets, which gave constituents the impression that they could “participate in politics”. On the other hand, Obama, even now, writes extremely formal and sophisticated tweets (Figure 1b) that appear to have been polished by a team of experts. Obama comes off as less “man-of-the-people” in this regard.

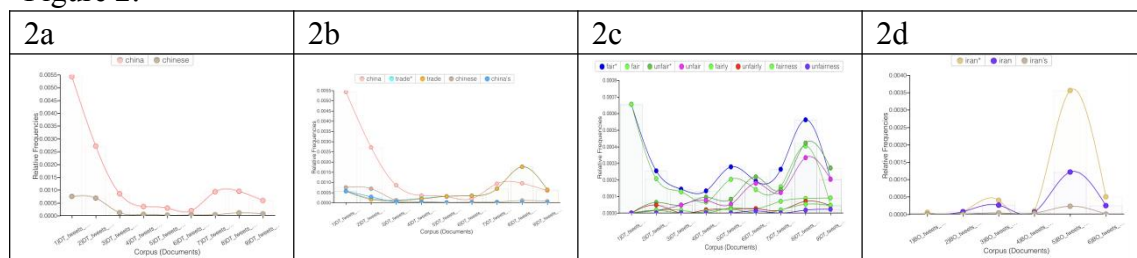
Figure 1b: Tweets from Obama



“I think of it almost as a controlled neurosis, which is a quality I’ve noticed in many highly successful entrepreneurs(Trump, 2016).” Trump’s tweets also effectively convey his spirituality. As is clear from Figure 2a, both “china” and “chinese” were used more frequently in 2018; Figure 2b demonstrates a strong association with the word “trade”. Simple logic underlies this: in 2018, Sino-US Trade War began. His “controlled neurosis” was evident in the way that he frequently mentioned this policy on social media platforms despite the fact that it was meant to be a state secret.

Additionally, we can see in Figure 2c that both the number of words associated with “fair” and “unfair” grew in 2018. He warned that the United States was being harmed by China and NATO, which was a fair justification for his demand that “China should cut its trade deficit by \$200 billion” and “NATO members must double their military spending for the United States” in the Sino-US Trade War. The American people must unite to fight for this just cause since it is so unfair. Trump frequently uses terms that are so obviously subjective. His claims seem to be independent of both justice and the actual occurrence. In contrast, even when the Nuclear Program of Iran in 2015 sparked a significant public outcry, Barack Obama refrained from using emotive language in his tweets. Obama’s tweets were more like news announcements, as Figure 2d demonstrates, though the fact that the use of the word “Iran” rose sharply in 2015, which means that US government took it seriously and paid attention to this. Also, like situations in Trump’s, the term was used far less frequently by Obama after the nuclear crisis was resolved.

Figure 2:



Many politicians recognize the value of advocating for their positions, but Trump’s spin is very different. He holds that “It’s never as good as doing it yourself (Trump, 2016).” He has two categories of high-frequency words, as I mentioned above. One of which has a pronounced concentration of event-driven high-frequency words that occur at the appropriate moment. In addition to the trade war between the US and China already indicated, Trump’s stance on North Korea was also quite indicative. Trump continued to publicly criticize Kim Jong Un at the start of 2018. But then suddenly changed his attitude into implying that he wants to reach a “deal” with North Korea since February(Figure 3&4&5). He has caught politicians off guard with these ridiculous propaganda methods.

Figure 3: Tweets surrounding Trump with “kim” and “korea”

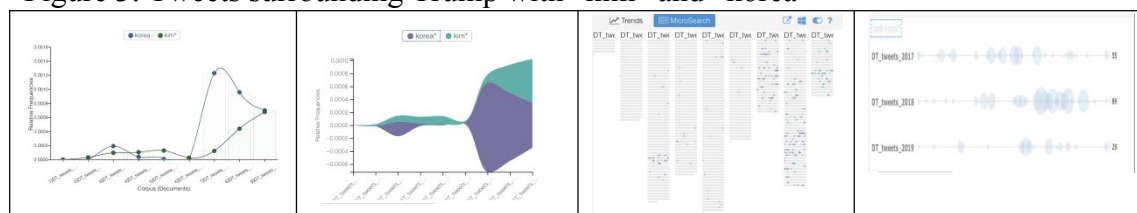


Figure 4: Some context of Tweets associated with “north korea”

	Document	Left	Term ↑	Right
⊞	DT_twe...	guy! Obama is now warning	north ...	on the Yongbyon nuclear reactor
⊞	DT_twe...	to help us with the	north ...	problem-don't let this happen
⊞	DT_twe...	against the repeated threats from	north ...	-- and others. The only American
⊞	DT_twe...	frightening and sad? China controls	north So now besides cyber hacking
⊞	DT_twe...	amazing guy. .@foxandfriends interview re:	north ...	firing @dennisrodman job report @MELA...
⊞	DT_twe...	false,320766123152920578 China is pus...	north ...	! When is South Korea going

Figure 5: Changes in Trump's tweets on North Korea

date	context
2018/1/3	North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the "Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times." Will someone from his <u>depleted and food starved regime</u> please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger&more powerful one than his, and my Button works!
2018/5/10	<u>The highly anticipated meeting</u> between Kim Jong Un and myself will take place in Singapore on June 12th. We will both try to make it a very special moment for World Peace!
2018/5/24	I have decided to <u>terminate the planned Summit</u> in Singapore on June 12th. While many things can happen and a great opportunity lies ahead potentially, I believe that this is a tremendous setback for North Korea and indeed a setback for the world...
2018/5/29	We have put a great team together for our talks with North Korea. Meetings are currently taking place concerning Summit, and more. Kim Young Chol, the Vice Chairman of North Korea, heading now to New York. <u>Solid response to my letter, thank you!</u>

In brief, the changes in the frequency of words that Trump's tweets showed was a useful tool for judging his shift in policy focus, with his tweets acting as a teaser for policy. As for Obama, his tweets are more like an announcement, which is more formal. However, both of their preference of wording showed that their tweets were event-driven. A platform was needed to act like press conference, then twitter has been chosen. The difference is that the preference of word-using of Trump choice also changed as his mood and emotion changed. I've quickly highlighted the high-frequency words used by both presidents in their tweets in Figure 6&7. Obama's words are in fact more thoughtful and noteworthy, as is clear from a quick glance, Trump, on the other hand, speaks more like a youthful man who goes with the flow. But which strategy will actually lead to greater political success for both of them? We must give that question some serious thought.

Figure 6: times of high-frequency words used by Trump

word	times
great	5393
America	2868
Obama	2182
fake news	419
tax	723

Figure 7: times of high-frequency words used by Obama

word	times
watch	2074
today	1689
people	1156
live	1082
America	956

Reference

Trump, D. and Schwartz, T. (2016) Trump: The art of the deal. London: Random House Business.