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Un-polarizing news in social media platform

Master’s thesis of mathematical information technology

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Jyväskylä, April 20, 2019

Le Pham Minh Duc (Lê Phạm Minh Đức)

Glossary

NLP Natural language processing

DCOM Distributed Component Object Model  
More explanation…

C++ Shouldn’t need any explanation…

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# INTRODUCTION

## Problem overview and research questions

Falsified information has strong effect on people mind, as if a person personally witnesses an event and is then provided with incorrect facts in term of testimonies or descriptions, he/she would not be able to always recall the true memory but a conflicts between the correct fact and the made up information (Loftus, 1979). This is called the misinformation effect and it has a terrible effect on people and the society as individual with faulty knowledge can have inappropriate action such as blaming the wrong causes, which leads to acting against the society and their true interest due to their misdirection (Braun & Loftus, 1998).

With the rise of the internet and social media, the misinformation effect is made worse as the “outrage culture [[1]](#footnote-1)” make people blindly sharing news or facts without actually checking if they are correct or not (Chen et al, 2015). This situation is amplified worse as falsify knowledge are much more likely to be spread faster, further and deeper (Vosoughi et al, 2018). As a result, we are entering a period where just trying to be informed and having correct knowledge about the world around us is difficult task to solve with the network of falsify information and propaganda attack us from all side.

Another problem coming with this era of information and social media network is the echo-chamber problem where people mostly consume news or information that amplify their believe, not the knowledge that combat their believe. Several studies confirm this behavior in many platforms, such as personal blog (Adamic & Glance, 2005), Facebook (Bakshy et al, 2015) or Twitter (Barberá et al, 2015) (Du & Gregory, 2016). Even without any social platform, one’s ideology could impairs his/her reasoning as Gampa et al (2016) show that people are bias to their believes and are easier to detect flawed arguments supporting the opposite belief than the faults from their ideology. This echo-chamber problem comes, both from the individual who chooses to consume only news that is comfortable for him to read as well as the so call “social algorithm” of the platform that decides the contents to provide to the user based on their previous interaction (Lazer, 2015).

While Barberá et al, (2015) shows that the echo-chamber problem does not always appear in every situation, such as there are case of national news that are shared by both sides or non-political news like big sporting events, such scenario does not always happen and there are times where news are shared and discussed mostly by just from one side, sometimes with blatant misinformation and complete disregards of information that does not justify their viewpoints. One of the more extreme case can be found in Facebook’s group or political sub-reddit where people only share news fits with the community’s ideology, and some can even act as far as censoring any information they don’t like in term of posts deleting and accounts banning. (maybe screenshot from Reddit/Facebook).

As a result, in this age of information, it is easy for misinformation and false news to be spread with an un-imaginable speed. The echo-chamber effect furthermore magnifies the problem by spreading the either false or one-sided news to the already misinformed as well as hinders the ability for normal people to see pass their point of view, either by politically targeted advertisements or by the “social algorithm” deciding what the user should see and should not see.

In this thesis, we attempted to combat the problem above by helping the user to break the echo-chamber by providing news from different point of views to our user whenever he/she reads a news article. For example, when our user reads about the opening of a new coal mines that helps creating a few hundreds of new jobs for the area and boosts the local economy, he should also be informed about the damage to the environment cause by the mines and the disappearance of the local wild-life.

The news suggestion solution can partly help removing the misinformation for the user as well. As Loftus pointed out in her research in 1979:

* When the tester witnesses an event, for example: a person wearing a blue bag, but is later then told that the bag is green; if the falsified information is told right immediately after the observation of the events, the tester is much less likely to believe the misinformation than if the wrong facts is told after a period of time where the information is already registered to the test memory.
* Her explanation for this behavior was that: if a person is given two pieces of conflicting information at the same time, the person will use logical deduction to figure the rights and wrongs, thus, retain the correct fact in his/her memory. However, if the contradicting information is provided at two separated time, these twos simply register as two different facts and only when the fact is requested (asked), the tester would try to deduct to find the correct fact.

Using her theory, if we can provide the user articles from different point of view to the content he is reading, if he reads any misleading facts or propaganda, with new influx of news from many perspectives, he can deduct for himself the rights and the wrongs.

On top of that, the solution must be easily accessible and easy to use, as the reason of many people using social media as their main source of news as it’s so convenience to have one place to go to and can see both your friend’s status as well as news. However, this is an issue we will not focus on as the accessibility of the solution is an engineering problem, and while complicated, should not be the focus of our thesis. In this work, we will focus only finding the article with different point of views to a news document. With that goal in mind, the main research question of our thesis is:

* **How to find articles with different (alternative) points of view to a given article?**

The term “different point of view” is quite vague as there does not exist a universal definition for determining if two articles are having different point of views. First, we attempt to create a definition for article’s different point of views. Then, with the rules settled, we can then try to find news documents with different perspective using our definition above. However, the solution can not check if the news is credible or if it is true (but we try to gather news from credible sources only), our solution simply provides the user different articles from many points of views about the relevant topic so that he/she can choose to interpret it the way he/she wants to.

With the first question answered, we will address one additional support question on:

* **How to make our solution easily accessible for the mass?**

If the service is too complicated to use, or requires too many unnecessary steps, the user will rarely use the service, if at all, which reduces the effectiveness of the system. The solution would be most effective if it can check and suggest alternative viewpoints to every article the user read, thus, if we want to make an impact to the world, we need to make our solution easily accessible. However, as stated above, we believe that this is an engineering problem rather than an academic/research problem, so we will not focus much on this matter, but we will briefly suggest some ideas to deliver the different points of view to the user in the most convenience for him/her, such as a fully automated system that provides some snippet of relevant information whenever our user reads a news document.

## Related works

There have been many researches on the misinformation effect and echo-chamber problems as well as suggested solutions or theories to stop the spread of the misinformation or break the echo-chamber. For example

* Budak et al (2011) in “Limiting the spread of misinformation in social networks” calculates the number of influencers or key-nodes needed to stop and/or revert the effect of a bad information campaign spreading. While this is purely a simulation and mathematical experiment, it shows how much power one could do to help maintaining the integrity of the truth.
* Dubois & Blank (2018) argues that people with a wide variety of media consumption are less likely to be affected by the echo-chamber. This research goes inline with our main research question of how to bring more diversity to one’s perspective.

We also find some non-academia tools that try to tackle the problem of stopping the spreading of misinformation and/or provide different point of view to the user, such as:

* Reddit’s auto tl;dr[[2]](#footnote-2) (too long, don’t read) bot: a user made bot that automatically summarize news documents by identify and display the top most important sentences of the articles and remove the rest. As people do not usually read the whole article but only the title, tool like this encourage people to read the article and has more context about the whole situation, thus, reducing the amount of misinformation might occur.
* Reddit’s alternate-source-bot[[3]](#footnote-3): when a news got posted to reddit, this bot will read the article’s title and search the title on Google for a list of documents with similar titles from different sources. This provides the user with different perspective on a problem as different content provider has their own view-point and agenda. This is similar to what we aim to achieve in this thesis, but simpler, as this bot only is only able to find similar news only, not news with different topic but sill related to the original content.

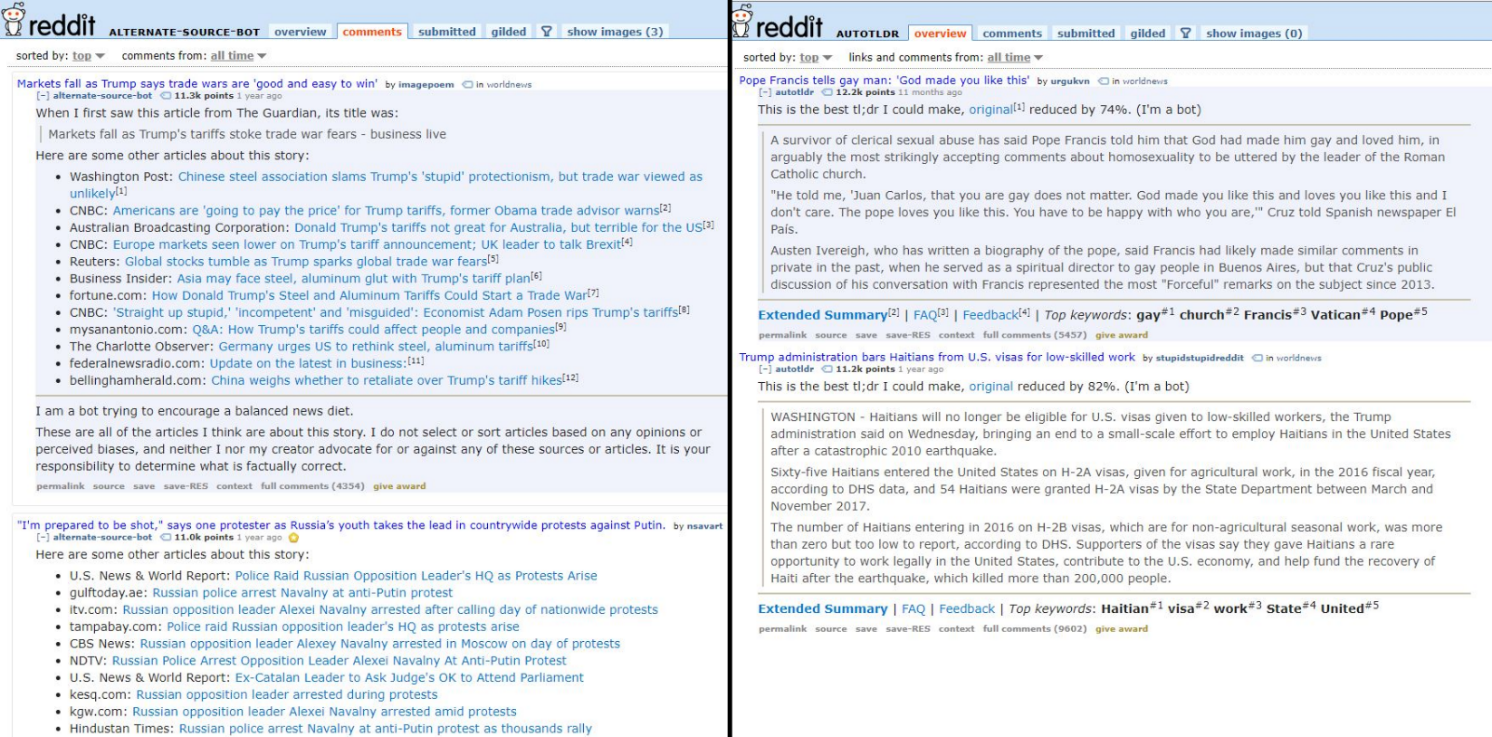
**

Figure 1. Left: alternate-source-bot | Right: auto tl;dr (too long, don’t read) bot.

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# HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

## Our hypothesis

Our main research questions and our hypotheses are based on this argument:

* People with a wide variety of media consumption are less likely to be affected by the echo-chamber (Dubois & Blank, 2018).
* Thus, when a person read an article, it would be interesting and beneficial for him/her to also see other articles with the same topic(s) but from a different point of view. As having multiple view angles on a subject make the reader more informed about a problem/topic, he/she will be less likely to be affected by propaganda as well as reducing the effect of echo-chamber of social media platform, which is the news source of many people nowadays.

This argument leads us to our main research question, which is:

* How to find articles with different (alternative) points of view to a given article?

However, the more interesting question would be:

* What does “different point of views” even means in our context, which are news and opinion?

As there are not any clear definition of what the term “different point of view” mean. To understand what it means in our context, and come up with a clear definition for it, consider this example:

* Topic: The US’s war in Iraq.
* First article main point: The US’s war in Iraq is good and justified because Saddam Hussein is a dictator and the people living under his reign are suffering.
* Other article main point: The US’s war in Iraq is bad because it furthermore destabilizes the region and the main intention of waging war was because of oil, not for humanitarian purpose.

From the example above, we came up with two different hypotheses that focuses on two main characteristics of the problem:

* Sentiment based hypothesis (more on chapter **3.3**): Two articles are considered to have different point of views if two conditions are met: They both cover similar topics, and if one article has a positive view on the situation and the other has a negative view regarding the same subject.
* Statement based hypothesis (more on chapter **3.4**): if two articles have contradictory or alternative facts or statements between them, they have different point of view and the reader should know about both.

However, even with these hypotheses, terms like “similar subject”, “positive/negative views”, or “alternative facts” are abstract terms and there is not any universally defined rule for finding these characteristics. Thus, we need to define our own rule for finding “Article similarity”, “Positive/negative views”, and “Alternative facts”. This leads us to our supporting hypotheses:

* Subject similarity hypothesis: Two articles are considered to have similar topic if they both contains a good number of similar named entities. A named entity is defined as: a person, location, organization or a numerical expression (Grishman & Sundheim, 1996). For example, given three articles: A, B and C. Article B will be considered “more similar” to A than C to A if the number of similar named entities between B and A is bigger than the number between C and A, and vice versa. (more on chapter **3.3.2**).
* Positive/Negative views hypothesis: An article is considered to have a positive or negative view on a subject can be determined by either the sentiment value of such article or the average sentiment of all the sentences in the article, in which the subject/topic appear in (more on chapter **3.3.1**).
* Related facts hypothesis: if two articles state contradicting or related fact, they are considered to have different point of view. A fact or a statement can be defined as a semantic triple extracted from the article. A semantic triple is a set of three parts that consists of [subject + predicate + object] (citation needed). Two semantic triples are considered to have contradicting or related information if they have two similar parts and one different part. For example, consider these two statements: [“He", "goes to", "school in the morning”] and [“In the evening, he", "leaves", "school”]. Both triples contain same entity in the [Subject] and [Object] (he and school), but different verb in the [Predicate] (to go vs to leave), so, these two statements are considered to have related information. (more on chapter 3.4).

Finally, in case we are not able to find articles with different point of view using these hypotheses above, we came up with a term called “relevant article”, which defines news document that we think that would be interesting for the user to know and read about.

* If we cannot find articles with different point of view to the comparing article or there does not exist contradicting information between the comparing article and our knowledge corpus, we suggest the most relevant articles to our user. “Article’s relevance” is calculated by both the similarity as well as the difference between the two articles (more on chapter **3.3.3**).

## Evaluation criteria

As we discussed in the previous chapter, term like “subject similarity” or “different point of views” are abstract terms, thus, there does not exist a concrete way to evaluate these characteristics. As a result, we could not find any statistic, equation or algorithm to evaluate the results of our algorithm as well. Hence, we could only judge the output by using our common sense and opinion’s survey.

To test the rigidity of our algorithm, we gathered a dataset of 78 articles, consist of three main themes:

* Muslim in Europe: 24 articles
* Muslim in Asia: 39 articles
* Asians in Europe: 15 articles

We then went through each of them and decided which set of articles are more similar/relevant to each other and which pair of articles that contain opinion from different point of view. Once we finished annotating the database, we do the evaluation by comparing our annotation to the results from the algorithm.

With articles spanning in three different main categories that are also related to each other, for each them, there will be some positive hits (related articles) as well as false negatives: news/documents that share similar set of entity and keyword but convey different fields and are not related at all (for example: sports and politics). With these “traps”, we want to test if our algorithm can truly return the relevant information and how close the suggestion is to our annotation.

Finally, since our algorithm can read through the whole article thoroughly, it might discover interesting information that we might have missed as we only skimmed quickly through our database. We decided that just skimming the article is a realistic behavior for the real user, since most people only read the title or consume through each news source quickly (Gabielkov et al, 2016).

## Natural language processing

Peer (Liddy, 2001): “Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a theoretically motivated range of computational techniques for analyzing and representing naturally occurring texts at one or more levels of linguistic analysis for the purpose of achieving human-like language processing for a range of tasks or applications”.

As our thesis require working with news document, which are usually written by human using natural language, and usually without any other statistics or properties to analyze, NLP provides a good foundation for us to proceed. Based on our hypotheses from the previous chapter, for this thesis, we will focus on three main sub-tasks covered by NLP:

* Named entity recognition (NER): Named entity recognition a task in Information Extraction consisting in identifying and classifying just some types of information elements, called Named Entities (Marrero et al, 2013). The role of NER is to identify either the similarity or the relevance between two articles. After identifying the article’s similarity based on their overlapping entities, we calculate their viewpoint’s difference and thus, provide a list of un-polarized articles to the user. NER is generally considered as a solved problem as the best system entering MUC-7 scored 93.39%, compare to human 97.6% (Marsh & Perzanowski, 1998).
* Sentiment analysis: sentiment analysis or opinion mining is defined as “A technique to detect favorable and unfavorable opinions toward specific subjects” (Nasukawa & Yi, 2003). We utilize Sentiment analysis to identify if the attitude of the article as well as the topics inside its are positive, neutral or negative. After determining the sentiment values, we can then calculate the difference in point of view between two articles (More on chapter 3.3).
* Open Information Extraction (OIE): first introduced by the University of Washinton Open Information Extraction is the task of generating machine readable information from the text, usually in the form of semantic triples (Banko et al, 2007). In this thesis, OIE is used to extract fact or statement from the article (more on chapter 3.4), and then, combine the semantic triples extracted from the article with the named entities found, to identify contradicting information, thus have different viewpoints.

Making a computer fully able to understand human language have always been an interesting topic, with researches and application for some individual task appeared as early as 1963 for sentiment analysis, (Stone & Hunt, 1963), content analysis with the “General inquirer” in 1963 (Stone et al, 1962) or the first fully-fledged natural language understanding software in 1968 with SHRDLU, (Terry Winograd, 1971), NLP continues to be a trendy topic for academia and industry to actively research and work on. With so many tools, services, applications and researches for NLP that is fully available today, from free open source platform to cloud service, … there are many options to consider. We will discuss these options and our choice in the next chapter: Technologies used for this work.

## Methodologies

This sub-chapter discusses the technologies used in the thesis work to create the prototype.

### Stanford CoreNLP

Developed by the researchers at Stanford University from 2006, released as a free and open source software in 2010, with updates still being developed and released nowadays (Manning et al, 2014), Stanford CoreNLP is a Java (or JVM based) annotation pipeline framework for most of the common Natural Language Processing (NLP) steps like Named Entity Recognition (NER) (Finkel et al, 2005), Sentiment Analysis (Socher et al, 2013) and Open Information Extraction (OIE) (Angeli et al, 2015). We used Stanford CoreNLP to process raw web-based article text into annotated data and properties, ready for our “un-polarizing” algorithm. Detailed information on the role and usage of Stanford CoreNLP in our work will be presented in later chapters (chapter 3.1 and chapter 3.2.2) where we go in depth with our solution.

We chose Stanford CoreNLP as the foundation technology for our thesis because of two main reasons:

* It has all the services we needed integrated into one big package that will work well together. There are many tools that provide the necessary services (especially NER and sentiment analysis) for us, but each of them has different requirement for the input data as well as different output format. Using separated tools instead of just one require us to put time and effort into making them work together instead of focus on the main research question, which is the “un-polarizing” algorithm. We could argue that using a specialized tool for each of the task might provide better quality output, but our testing results does not show any significant different in the results outputted by these tools compared to Stanford NLP anyway (more on chapter 3.2.3, chapter 3.2.4 chapter 3.3.1).
* It is free and open-source, with full access to source code that can be installed and run locally. Having every cog in our machine (or solution) fully available is important, as the private and close-source service are subjected to changes or shut down at any moment, which, is problematic. Having our algorithm run well and not depending on services we do not control is important not only us, now, but also for when other researchers want to try or test or improve our solution, now, for 10 years from now.

We understand that Stanford CoreNLP is not perfect and there are better (and worse) performing tools for every NLP task we utilize in this thesis. Notable mentions are Google’s Cloud natural language[[4]](#footnote-4) or IBM’s Watson natural language understanding[[5]](#footnote-5). On later chapter where we focus on each specialized NLP task, we will provide comparison of results using other tools, and what is the hypothetical result/difference we could have for using other tools rather than using Stanford CoreNLP.

### Node.js

Even though most of the works done in this report are prototype code to demonstrate and test our hypothesis, we want to continue working on our “Un-polarizing algorithm” after this thesis work is completed. We our final goal is to produce a product for people all around the world to use and thus, help creating a better society. With that in mind, we want to choose a programming language that is capable producing quality and stable code base for longevity, performant and highly scalable, but also flexible enough for changes in our prototype development.

Node.js[[6]](#footnote-6) comes to mind as the perfect candidate for our requirements as its multi-paradigm nature and its giant ecosystem of libraries (Tilkov & Vinoski, 2010) allows quickly creation, testing and modification of our prototype with little overhead cost. Several benchmarks also prove the superior performance of a Nodejs web system when compare to other popular technologies like PHP and Python (Lei et al, 2014), which shows the potential of node.js for longevity and development of industrial application.

### Version control system, Git and GitHub

A version control system (VCS) is “a tool that tracks different versions of software or other content” (Loeliger et al, 2012). Using VCS is considered as one of software development best practices, even just for a personal project (Spinellis, 2005). As we are creating a software prototype to evaluate our hypothesis and algorithm, it is best to follow these principles and to use a VCS for our project. These principles are later on, proved to be quite helpful as, throughout the course of our prototype development, we found ourselves utilizing many features of VCS such as source-code backup, code synchronization between different computers, progression roll-back and, finally, through the commit messages: a diary/documentation system.

“Git” is a free “Decentralized version control system” that has a clean internal design, performs quickly and efficiently, enforces accountability (Loeliger et al, 2012), and is the VCS we chose to use for this thesis. “Git” was created in 2005 by Linus to help developing the Linux kernel as other VCSs system at that time had limitations and flaws that would make them not a viable solution. These reasons make “Git” not only a good solution to applied to our works, but also make it one of the mostly used VCS nowadays in both public and private sectors.

GitHub was chosen as our hosting service for the project as it was one of the biggest Git supporting services (hence, the name) and is free. All our software prototype, coding history, instructions and documentations are kept on GitHub and are freely available to view, access and execute at any moment from any computer anywhere in the world. An “url” to the project are provided at the end of this report.

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# UN-POLARIZING ALGORITHM

## Overall solution architecture overview

To answer the main research question of: **“How to find articles with alternative (different) points of view to a given article?”**, we developed a prototype called the “Un-polarizing algorithm”, containing two main parts:

* Article annotation pipeline: to process the natural language text from the article to machine readable format and save them to a local database for comparing later.
* Article matching pipeline: compare a given article to all the annotated articles in our database and find the most appropriate articles with relevant information with different point of views.

Here is the overall architecture of the Article annotation pipeline.

Figure 1. Test figure

Annotation’s

database

Web

content

processor

Stanford

Core

NLP

Filtering and

processing

module

Article annotation pipeline

Article’s url

Pre-processed text

CoreNLP’s annotation

Un-polarized annotation

And here is the architecture of the Articles matching pipeline.

Figure 1. Test figure

Article

annotation

pipeline

Article matching

algorithm

Articles matching pipeline

Annotation’s database

Comparing url

Article’s annotation

Articles from different point of views

Un-polarized annotation

Boxes, dashed boxes and arrow represent different parts and purpose of our process:

* Dashed boxes: data entering/leaving our process. It could be an article’s url (a text), or annotation data from our annotators
* Solid boxes: a module or a process in our pipeline, that can manipulate and or transform the input data to an output that is more suitable for our use-case.

In our article annotation process, the first module is the “Web content processor” which receives an article’s url and returns the article’s content fully in text form, without other unnecessary information that comes with the article (more on 3.2.1). This pre-processed text is then parsed into the Stanford CoreNLP annotations with the required annotators (more on chapter 3.2.2) to generate the base annotation of the article. Finally, the “filtering and processing module” performs further transformation on these base annotations to have the data ready for the “article matching pipeline” (more on chapter 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.4). These final annotations will be saved into a database due to computer’s performance reason (more on chapter 3.2.2.

Continue to the “Articles matching pipeline”, to find articles with different point of view to a given news document, we first need to run that article’s url through our annotation pipeline to extract the necessary information for the scoring and comparing tasks. Afterwards, the “article matching algorithm” calculates a relevant score between the comparing article and every other annotation stored in our database; and rank the return articles based on this score (more on 3.3.4 and 3.4. something). Finally, the highest scored news documents are selected as the articles from different point of view or at least, most relevant articles.

Furthermore, we noticed that there are many hypotheses to be test in this work (6 to be exact), and some of them are even approaching the problem with different directions, trying to evaluate all hypotheses with just one single cohesive application is not feasible as it will create a too complex application. Hence, we developed two different prototypes, one to test with the Sentiment-based approach and the other to test with the Semantic-triple-based approach. Fortunately, these prototypes share some similarity, such as the overall data-flow or some processing modules like the “Web content processor” or the Database save/load mechanism so we can reuse some parts of the codebase. The main different between two prototypes are within how we focus on different features of the articles and how we process these features. For example: the different annotators we utilize during “Stanford CoreNLP” step, or the calculation we have in “filtering and processing module” and the “articles matching algorithm”.

## Web content processor and Stanford CoreNLP

### Web content processor

**TODO: FORMAT**

Our first step is to retrieve the news documents and parse the texts for annotating. However, articles on the internet are usually presented inside a web-page, with just not only the news itself, but with many related information for the web-page like html tag, images and captions, links to other news on their website and advertisement. As Stanford CoreNLP’s requirement for input is text paragraph only, we must pre-process the news content to remove the unnecessary information. We divided the data pre-processing task into two steps:



Figure 1. Left: Example news web page – Right: the web source code we received

* Strip away all other un-related content like advertisements, contact information, other stories from their network, etc. From the example above, we could see that the actual news content we want to see is presented in just half of the page (less if we also exclude the image). For this, we implemented a “web content parser” module which utilize a similar technique to reader mode on Firefox[[7]](#footnote-7) which can automatically strip away all the non-article part in the web content, using a NodeJS library called node-readability[[8]](#footnote-8). However, as this feature is intended for the user to read the news easier without all the bloated content, the html formatting tags, images and captions are still present, and this result will not work with the Stanford CoreNLP.
* Remove the HTML formatting tags and image captions. For this we wrote a small rule-based module to automatically remove the html tags, the image captions by removing any text appear inside a “< >” block, which is the standard for html tag. However, this approach will return a few faulty sentences for every article because each website will have a different layout and method to present their content, making our rule-based filtering ineffective.



Figure 1. Example with the html filtering. In this case, the word Media caption will not be filtered, but added to the next sentence. The result we have is an incorrect sentence: “Media captionPictures ….” parsed into the annotator

However, we found one other more effective way of ensuring that the sentences forwarded into the CoreNLP annotator are correct is to use a cloud service called SMMRY[[9]](#footnote-9): an article summarization tools, which can read through the article and return the sentences that it thinks contains the most important information of the article. SMMRY works by going through the whole documents, score each word based on their semantic roles and their appearance frequency in the text. It then returns the sentences that has the highest sum of all containing word’s scores.

This tool is quite effective for our case as it strip away all the unnecessary content like the html tags and sponsored contents, which provides the suitable data for the annotation pipeline. SMMRY also has a parameter to control how many percent of the news document should be reduce, so, when we set this value to 0 percent and get the full article in text form. For comparison, texts retrieve from SMMRY has a slightly higher content detection rate than node-readability and a much better <html> removal rate than our home-cooked solution.



Figure 1. SMMRY example

SMMRY, however, is not a perfect tool as there are two downsides for using:

* The sentences order in the paragraph is incorrect. As a document summarization tool, SMMRY’s main goal is to figure the most important sentences of the documents and recommend these to the user. As a result, the sentences retrieved by SMMRY are not in correct chronology order of the news article, but in the summarization order. This is, however, not a problem as Stanford CoreNLP works on a sentence basis only, and our features also do not rely on sentences index in the paragraph. We had tested the annotation on a sentence where it stands alone and when it is within a paragraph with other sentences and the results in both cases are the same, which means that CoreNLP does not considers the context in which the sentences appear in.
* This is a service from a private company, which, using it is against our arguments in chapter 2.4 for using open-source technologies only. However, as there is no good and easy to use open source alternative available, we decided to use this tool, but kept our “web content processor” module present in the code base, easily interchangeable with SMMRY for any future reference, in case SMMRY goes out of business.

### Stanford Core NLP Annotator

Glossary: API, Wrapper.

There are multiple ways to use the Stanford Core NLP as listed on their main website[[10]](#footnote-10), but it can be summed down to two main methods:

* Directly by the Java API: As Stanford Core NLP is created in Java (citation needed), we can import the whole CoreNLP as a Java library and call all the NLP function through their Java APIs.
* Indirectly through a wrapper: There are many wrappers for CoreNLP available for many common usages: command line wrapper, web-server wrapper, or many programming language wrapper libraries like C#, Python, Pearl, NodeJS …

As we are using NodeJS, here are the best two methods applicable to our usage:

* Using the webserver: this method creates a web service on a local host. This is quite useful as not only it provides all the annotating features, it also has a web interface for quick debugging and visualizing the results of the CoreNLP tool.
* Using the NodeJS wrapper: the NodeJS wrapper also has all the annotation features of the CoreNLP. However, it does not have the web interface for debugging.

We chose to use the Stanford CoreNLP as a webserver as it provides more feature but no significant there is no downside for our use case.

Continue from the previous step: pre-processing; after extracting the text document from the web article, we parse the text into the Stanford Core NLP local server to get the annotations from the article. Since Core NLP have support for many common NLP tasks, each with its own annotators (citation above), we can control which annotators to use, instead of all of them to save some processing power. Hence, for our needs, we only need three annotators: “sentiment”, “ner” and “openie” (for OIE). However, as there are dependencies for our required annotators to work, here is the list of all annotators we use and their usages:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| tokenize | Split the text into a list token. A token could be a word, or a special character (dot “.”, comma “.”, etc). “tokenize” is required for all annotators below. |
| ssplit | Split sequence of tokens into sentences. First, the tokenize split the whole document into many smaller tokens, then, it will be combined back to sentences in this step. “ssplit” is required for all annotators below. |
| pos | Part-of-Speech (POS) tagger. This annotator assigns POS to each word in the text, such as noun, verb, adjective, etc. “pos” is required for all annotators below except “parse” |
| lemma | Generates the word lemmas (base form in dictionary) for all token in the document. “lemma” is required for “ner” and “natlog” |
| parse | Create a dependency tree for the sentence. “parse” is required for “sentiment” and “natlog” |
| natlog | Natural logic annotator: create a natural logic dependency between tokens in the texts, required for “openie” |
| ner | Named entity recognizer: recognize named entities. |
| sentiment | Sentiment analysis: determine the sentiment value of each sentence. |
| openie | Open information extraction: generate semantic triples from the texts. |

With the Stanford CoreNLP running as a web server locally at port 9000 (or on the cloud), we request the annotations for a given in json format by calling a POST request with this uri and the text document in the request body:

* *http://localhost:9000/?properties%3D%7B%22annotators%22%3A%22tokenize%2Cssplit%2Clemma%2Cner%2Copenie%2Csentiment%2Cnatlog%2Cparse%2Cpos%22%2C%22outputFormat%22%3A%22json%22%7D*

After receiving the results from the NLP engine, we apply our customized filter for all the annotations to remove all unnecessary information and reformat the result to fit with our un-polarize algorithm (more on next chapters). The filtered and reformatted results (let’s call them core feature) will be saved into the local database for future comparison calculation of the un-polarizing algorithm.

The use of the local database to store core-results is necessary, because when we try to un-polarize an article, we annotated it, then compare its core feature to every other documents’ core-feature in our knowledge corpus. Since the processing time for each article is quite long, around 10 seconds each[[11]](#footnote-11), so, it is not feasible to do all the annotation on the fly without the database.

### Named entity recognition

**TODO: Add one or two pictures example of Stanford NER and Google/IBM NER difference**

The main usage of named entity recognizer (NER) is to find the similar articles from our knowledge corpus to any given news document. Afterwards, depends on our definition of “different point of view”, we then determine which one should be suggested to the user based on different calculations implemented in the two prototypes.

Fortunately, NER is generally considered as a solved problem since their benchmark reach a high score compare to human (citation needed). The fact that NER is a solved problem is a positive thing because if the unpolarized results turn out to be incorrect, or at least, not what we expected it to be, we know that the problems are within our hypothesis or implementation, not from of the technology.

By default, Stanford CoreNLP definition of “named entity” is broader than what we needed for identifying the topics of an article (citation needed, or even example). This makes the NER annotator returns many unnecessary information that we do not needed, such as dates, times, numbers, common words like “you/me/he/she …”, or proposition text like Mister, Miss … These words are too generalized and too broad, thus, do not provide any meaningful context for our algorithm and if left unchecked, will interfere with our similarity/relevant calculation. As a result, we implemented a system to filtered out these irrelevant entities. We also split the filtered results into two categories: abstract entities and discrete entities. The two groups contain:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Discrete entities | Abstract entities |
| PERSON | RELIGION |
| LOCATION | NATIONALITY |
| ORGANIZATION | TITLE (job title) |
| MISC | IDEOLOGY |
| CITY | CAUSE\_OF\_DEATH |
| STATE\_OR\_PROVINCE |  |
| COUNTRY |  |

These filtered NER values are then either used to calculate the similarity score between articles for the sentiment-based approach or as a reference base for the un-polarizing algorithm in the Semantic-triple-based approach.

Our overall impression with Stanford CoreNLP’s NER is positive as it does a good job of recognizing named entities from our given inputs. Big name providers like Google and IBM serve us roughly the same results as NER is a solved problem, but, at the same time, they also provide extra useful meta-data related to the named entities like categories as well as any possible relations between the detected named entities (add example). Within this thesis scope, we were not able to utilize this information if we would have it, but we have some idea/hypotheses on how we could make use of these extra information to furthermore improve our algorithm (more on chapter 5-future work).

## Sentiment based un-polarizing algorithm

### Sentiment analysis

Initially defined by (Nasukawa & Yi, 2003), the main task of “Sentiment analysis” is: “to identify how sentiments are expressed in texts and whether the expressions indicate positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable) opinions toward the subject”. Since then, there have been a numerous improvement on implementing this task, from manually defined the sentiment value for each word in the initial work of Nasukawa & Yi (2003), to a classification model based using open database (citation needed), to using semantic relation, machine learning and value tree (Stanford citation). Even the industry sector is also interested in this field as the tech giant are also providing their own solution like Google (citation), IBM (citation), Microsoft (citation) and more …

However, with so many resources putting into them, sentiment analysis still is considered as an un-solved problem as recent benchmark show of only 40% succession rate even for the best tools out there (Ribeiro et at, 2016). Still, we believed the sentiment-based hypothesis is worth trying because of three reasons:

* 40% is already a good number as its cover almost half of the case and most of the failed sentiment detections come from complex sentences or sarcasm, which might not appear on news documents.
* We are working with a lot of data, hundreds of articles for the test set, each article with dozens of sentences and many entities within them, so even 40% of them is already a good number.
* We want to test and play with the technology to see how well it perform in a different domain. Sentiment analysis are mostly used for analyzing customer reviews of a product, so, we want to test it application in a more complex problem.

Our initial assumption/hypothesis for different sentiment view was naïve and basic:

* An article is considered to have a positive or negative view on a subject can be determined by the sentiment value of such article.

This hypothesis has one flaw, however, as we were implementing this prototype, we learnt that: an article usually does not have a single subject, but rather, have multiple topics that it conveys. For example, with a news titled: “*The US’s war in Vietnam*”; there are many topics/categories that can be considered as the “*main topic*” that could be interested to different readers: *US news*, *War news*, *Vietnam news*, *Historical news* … as well as the topics that might exist the article’s content that should be considered in the calculation as well, such as *communism*, *capitalism*, *Soviet Union*, *Ho Chi Minh* and many more. Thus, with each news document contains many different subjects and topics, it is possible for the article to have an overall negative sentiment, but some subjects are viewed in a positive way.

With knowledge of these possible flaws, we implemented a filtering system that can analyze the sentiment of both the whole article as well as the opinion of each topics in it. Because the Stanford CoreNLP works on a single sentence basis (footnote: tested in chapter 3.2.1), each sentence has its own sentiment value, ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). With these single sentence values, we calculate the sentiment value of each topic/subject in the article using this equation:

In which:

* **V** is the overall sentiment value of the subject/topic.
* is the sentiment value of sentence *i*
* *n* is the total number of sentences which the entity appears in.

With the sentiment values calculated, we created an entry data object for every named entity in the article, which contain the appearance number of that entity, as well as the its sentiment value. All these entry objects, along with the annotated title and article overall sentiment value, are combined to created one article annotation data object to be saved to our local database.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| On the right, this is an example of a saved article annotation object. All annotations are stored as a JavaScript object, in a single .json file.  From this example, we can see that each annotation contains:   * Meta data about the articles: url, title * Annotated title, which contains sentiment value, length, and entities appearance. This information was planned to calculate the “correctness/misleading-ness” between the title and the content, but we could not implement it. * List of every named entity entries object, which shows the named entity, its appearance, and its sentiment value (calculated using the equation on the previous chapter).   With these data stored, we now have the “annotation pipeline” ready and can proceed to the “article matching pipeline” to find news from another point of view to a given document. | Figure n: Example of an annotated article stored in our database |

*References*

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### Sentiment based un-polarizing algorithm

The first step for our un-polarizing algorithm is to populate our knowledge corpus. For this prototype, we filled our database with annotation of news document specified in **Chapter 2.2** – Evaluation criteria.

There are two steps in the Sentiment-based un-polarizing algorithm:

* Articles matching step: with a given article, identify the similar news documents from our knowledge corpus.
* Different view point calculation: with the list of the similar articles, calculate the difference in attitude between the documents based on its sentiment values.

First, we calculate the similarity between two articles using the equation below:

In which:

* A is the similarity score
* is the number of unique similar entities in both articles. Unique means that each entity is only count once, even if they appear multiple times in the text documents.
* is the number of unique different entities, summed from both articles.

This equation is based on the “Similar subject hypothesis”, in which we define:

* Two articles are considered to have similar topic if they both contains a good number of similar named entities.

Based on this equation, the similarity score (A), can range from 0 to 1[[12]](#footnote-12), with 1 being absolute similar (achieved by comparing an article to itself), 0 is completely foreign (no similarity at all), and the higher similarity score means a pair of text documents are “more” similar than the pair with lower score.

After calculating the similarity score to the given article for every annotation we have in our database, all text documents with the similarity score above a threshold (0.3 in our prototype) are then taken to the “Different view point calculator”, where the divergence between articles are calculated based on the Sentiment value of each entity using the equation below:

In which:

* B is the viewpoint difference value
* : is the sentiment value of entity *i* in the first article (the article to compare).
* : is the sentiment value of entity *i* in the second article (the article in our database).
* : is the total number of similar entities in both articles.

Using this equation, we can calculate the “viewpoint difference” between two different articles. Because Stanford Core NLP classifies Sentiment into 5 different values, ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive), with 3 steps in the middle (2, 3, 4), the biggest possible delta value we can have from two sentiments are 4 (= 5 – 1). Thus, the possible value range for B is [0, 4] with 0 being absolute same sentiment (by comparing an article to itself) and 4 (the maximum value) being completely different point of view.

With the similarity and viewpoint difference values calculated, we can proceed to our final step: create a list of recommended articles for the user using the following equations:

In which:

* A is the similarity score, range from 0 (completely different) to 1 (absolute similar).
* B is the viewpoint difference value, range from 0 (same viewpoint) to 4 (opposite viewpoint).
* C is the un-polarized score to determine the articles to be suggested to the user.

Using the equation above, the un-polarized score: C will be in the range of [0, 1], with higher value correlate with being more recommendable to the user, and 1 being the top hypothetical value we want to suggest: similar article but with completely different point of view.

Finally, we select top 5 articles (if exist) with highest “Un-polarized score” to suggest it to the user, thus, complete our mission.

### Relevant articles identification

Based on our last hypothesis:

* If we cannot find articles with different point of view to the comparing article or there does not exist contradicting information between the comparing article and our knowledge corpus, we suggest the most relevant articles to our user. “Article’s relevance” is calculated by both the similarity as well as the difference between the two articles.

Unlike in the previous chapter where we want to find the most similar articles, the goal here is to determine the most relevant articles, in which, we defined relevance as articles sharing both similar and different contents (entities) consecutively. Two articles, if deemed relevant, should have half of their contents talking about similar topics, and the other half talk about different topics. Initially, we tried to calculate the relevance score between two articles using this equation:

In which:

* R is the relevance score between two articles.
* is the number of unique similar entities in both articles.
* is the number of unique different entities, summed from both articles.

We have the number as the equation constant instead of (0.5) because: when we compare two articles, the different entities will be counted from both sides, but the similar article will only count once, so, if two articles, each have half of their entities being the same, and the other half being different, the ratio of will be , thus, will be .

Our intention is with this equation was: when the two articles are perfectly relevant, R reaches the highest value, which is 1, and the less relevant the two articles are, the smaller the X value will be. Our equation works well on the happy case, when the two text documents are relevant, but it does not scale properly both side for the edge case. For example, when there are not any similar entities (), R will be 0.67, but when two articles are completely similar (), R will be 0.33. This is not good since the R value are supposed to scale with the relevance of the two articles, which means that it should have the same score when the comparison goes to both edge case (maximum similarity and maximum difference).

With the knowledge of this flaws in the initial equation, we came up with second version of the relevance equation:

if and when

With this new equation, we feel like we both retain our initial goal of having the relevance score reaching 1 when the two articles are perfectly relevant and fix the issue of the previous equation with the R score not scaling properly on the edge cases. When or , R will go to 0, and the score will scale up or down properly with changes in these values. Finally, there will not exist a “divided by zero” error case because both and can not be 0 at the same time, as we argued in the previous chapter.

Using the equation above, to generate the list of recommended articles to suggest to the users based on the relevance, we calculate the R score for every text document in our database to the comparing article and return the list of the top highest scoring articles to the user.

### Limitations of the Sentiment-based hypothesis

Our first problem with Sentiment analysis is the inconsistency over the board. Let’s try to do an example by examining a few sentences from an article about the “Saudi’s War on Yemen” (title: The tragedy of Saudi Arabia's war [[13]](#footnote-13)) and evaluating the sentiment analysis result using various services: Stanford CoreNLP, Google’s Cloud Natural Language[[14]](#footnote-14), IBM Watson’ Natural Language Understanding[[15]](#footnote-15):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contents | Stanford Core NLP | Google |
| Overall sentiment | 1 | 0 |
| The devastating war in Yemen has gotten more attention recently as outrage over the killing of a Saudi dissident in Istanbul has turned a spotlight on Saudi actions elsewhere. | 1 (Negative) | -0.9 |
| Eight million Yemenis already depend on emergency food aid to survive, he said, a figure that could soon rise to 14 million, or half Yemen's population. | 1 (Negative) | -0.1 |
| The embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington did not respond to questions about the country's policies in Yemen. | 1 (Negative) | -0.3 |
| The Saudis point out that they, along with the United Arab Emirates, are among the most generous donors to Yemen's humanitarian relief effort. | 1 (Negative) | 0.3 |
| In January, Saudi Arabia deposited $2 billion in Yemen's central bank to prop up its currency. | 1 (Negative) | 0.4 |
| Saudi Arabia's tight control over all air and sea movements into northern Yemen has effectively made the area a prison for those who live there. | 1 (Negative) | 0.4 |

* IBM Watson does not provide the sentiment of each sentence, but it does return the overall sentiment of the whole text: -0.45, negative.

With this example, we can easily see that the sentiment result varies between different services, with negative results from IBM and Stanford and neutral result from Google. We personally classify the sentiment value of the text above as negative, because the article talks about war and the suffering of many people, so it should be negative. Thus, with this example, the overall result of Google is not correct (since they mark it as Neutral), and the result of Stanford and IBM Watson are better. However, this result does not mean Google is worse or other solutions are better, as modern sentiment analysis is usually executed by using a machine learning model trained by human annotated data, so, the difference between different services might just because of the training data.

However, because training data is annotated by human, this inconsistency is the result of sentiment being an objective thing, as different person will have different opinion about what is negative and what is not. Unfortunately, this is a fact that we must accept as a flaw in our hypothesis.

Our second problem comes from Stanford CoreNLP. From the example above, we can see that all results given by CoreNLP are just (1, negative). While it can return more result than just 1, but from our experience with this thesis, the majority of the sentiment returned by CoreNLP are (1, negative), which is quite problematic for our equation, because the un-polarizing algorithm works by calculating the discrepancy between the calculated sentiment values from different articles. If all the results are 1, then there is no difference and thus, the algorithm cannot work as we would like.

This problem can be solved by using a different service. For example: Google’s results are in the range of [-1: 1], and results are presented as rational number so the value can be much more precise than just 5 possible values from CoreNLP. Also, with the example above, we can see that there are variety in the number, which will work well with our equation.

However, the Google’s results still leave rooms for improvement as, how it can think that “Millions of people have to relied on food aid” as less bad than “Saudi did not response to question” (-0.1 sentiment vs -0.3 sentiment).

IBM Watson can also provide us a good solution as well. While they do not provide the annotation for each sentence, they can give us the sentiment value of every entity directly, which is just what our equation needed. IBM Watson also provides an emotion scores, range from 0% to 100%, in 5 different categories of “joy”, “anger”, “disgust”, “sadness” and “fear”. We could theoretically utilize these values to furthermore improved our equation.

However, with these problems listed above like inconsistency, being an objective and un-reliable technology, and some other problems, such as being un-intentionally biased[[16]](#footnote-16); sentiment analysis is far from being a solved problem, with improvements to make and issues to fix. Thus, with the technology behind our hypothesis being so unreliable, if the results of our equation later turned out to be not what we expected it to be, we are not able to identify the problem being in the based technology, or with our hypothesis itself.

*Sentiment from text analysis are bias.*

*https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/semantics-derived-automatically-from-language-corpora-necessarily*

### Result evaluation

The sentiment-based hypothesis is described as:

* Two articles are considered to have different point of views if two conditions are met: They both cover similar topics, and if one article has a positive view on the situation and the other has a negative view regarding the same subject.

To evaluate the validity and correctness of our hypothesis and its supporting clauses, we use the list of 79 hand-picked articles with the criteria defined in chapter **2.2**. Below is the result of the prototype when we try to suggest articles to some news documents:

* Source (comparing) article: “Why the West won’t act on China’s Uighur crisis”[[17]](#footnote-17)
  + This article talks about: The cruelty of Chinese concentration camp with over a million Uighurs and how (and why) the US and the EU do not sanction China for that.
* Suggested article no1/4: “Asia in 2019: from elections in India and Indonesia to US-China tensions, Xinjiang and extreme weather”[[18]](#footnote-18)
  + This article is: A compilation of top 5 Asian stories in 2019, picked by SCMP (South China morning post).
  + Similarity Score: 0.11818181818181818 (13 similar / 97 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.5681041181041182
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.016784894398530766
* Suggested article no2/4: “‘Reeducating’ Xinjiang’s Muslims”[[19]](#footnote-19)
  + This article talks about: Detailed information about “Reeducating camp” for Muslims in Xinjiang. This article uses the same demonstrating picture as the source documents.
  + Similarity Score: 0.1111111111111111 (13 similar / 104 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.37752386502386504
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.010486774028440695
* Suggested article no3/4: “Chinese Islamophobia was made in the West”[[20]](#footnote-20)
  + This article talks about: How China defense their re-education camps by calling the Uighur as potential terrorists and the camps are just a way of making these people into normal people.
  + Similarity Score: 0.12903225806451613 (12 similar / 81 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.21458633958633958
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.006922139986656115
* Suggested article no4/4: “Three Hui mosques raided in China’s Yunnan province”[[21]](#footnote-21)
  + This article talks about Chinese government raids on mosques in Yunnan province. This is different to the source article as the source article talks about the Uighur Muslim in Xinjiang (northwest of China) and this talks about Han Muslim in Yunnan (southwest of China)
  + Similarity Score: 0.11956521739130435 (11 similar / 81 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.17464908828545192
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.0052204890520107915

Excluding the first suggested news, the other three documents, at a glance, seems to satisfy our research purpose. The recommended news talk about similar topics to the source article (China, Muslim, Uighur, …), but also has their different approach on their stories, such as: the reasons for the tension, or the detailed information on the camp itself, or the tensions in other regions of China as well.

Furthermore, the reason that the top news is there can be explained as well. As a compilation type of news, it is bound to have many similar entities with not just our source article, but any stories about Asia. Moreover, because of the overlapping entities, it can have huge different in sentiment score of same entity even if the contexts are not related. For example, Muslim in the source article relates to the “re-educating act” of the Chinese government, but in this article, it is about the main religion of Pakistan and Indonesia.

However, if we take a closer look at the similarity score in each of the result and look back to our similarity score filtering, we see that all suggested articles have a similarity score lower than the filtered score: [0.3]. This is an adjustment we must make so that the results could show up, because all articles in our database, while providing insightful details about the stories, are not “similar” enough to the comparing article to bypass our filter. To understand where this problem comes from, let first take a relook at the “Subject similarity hypothesis”

* Two articles are considered to have similar topic if they both contains a good number of similar named entities.

If we go through every article in our database of 79 documents and find the most similar pair, the top results are:

* Most similar pair in our database:
  + First article: Interracial harmony: Sarawak church wedding with Muslim bridesmaids, SE Asia News & Top Stories[[22]](#footnote-22)
  + Second article: Sarawak church wedding with Muslim bridesmaids, SE Asia News & Top Stories[[23]](#footnote-23)
  + Similarity Score: 0.6666666666666666 (14 similar / 7 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.023809523809523787
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.0039682539682539646
* Second most similar pair in our database
  + First article: 5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe[[24]](#footnote-24)
  + Second article: Muslim Population Growth in Europe[[25]](#footnote-25)
  + Similarity Score: 0.41025641025641024 (16 similar / 23 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.320565536437247
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.03287851655766636
* Third most similar pair in our database:
  + First article: Muslim population in some EU countries could triple, says report[[26]](#footnote-26)
  + Second article: Muslim Population Growth in Europe [[27]](#footnote-27)
  + Similarity Score: 0.37209302325581395 (16 similar / 27 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.21038925438596492
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.019571093431252552

All these pairs are quite similar content wise, as they both talk about the same story (a Christen wedding with Muslim bridesmaid, Muslim population in Europe), so this proves that our similarity calculation works. From the article title to the content inside these, we could easily see that these documents pairs are talking about the same topics. The reverse is also true, as when we try to find documents in our database that has very little correlation to the rest of our knowledge base, ie: article that even the most similar article is still barely related, if not at all. Below is the news that has the least correlation to the rest of our knowledge base:

* Article with the least correlation to our database: Who Is Remy Hii Playing in “Spider-Man: Far From Home?”[[28]](#footnote-28)
* Most similar article to the one above: The surprising reason why some Latin Americans has light skin[[29]](#footnote-29)
* Similarity Score: 0.033707865168539325 (3 similar / 86 different)
* Viewpoint difference & Unpolarize Score: 0

With the results from both spectrums above, we can conclude that the subject similarity hypothesis is correct and is working as intended, as it can detect similar articles within our knowledge base and will not return any unrelated results. So, we think the problem with the first example (the Chinese re-education camp) is because of the filtering number 0.3. If we go through our whole database again, and find the most similar documents for each other documents in the whole knowledge base, these are the statistic we found:

* The highest scored pair is 0.667
* The lowest scored pair is 0.033
* The average value is 0.165
* The mean value is 0.139

From these statistics, we can see that the filter value of 0.3 is too high, it should be less than the mean value, as this is the highest value for every document, so 0.1 or 0.075 would be a better value. However, from a logical point of view, calling two documents two documents similar when they only share 10 percent or even 7.5 percent of content does not feel right. Still, the statistics and the examples above demonstrate clearly that 0.3 as the filter value does not work, and even with 10% of similarity, our algorithm can still provide satisfactory outcomes.

Lowering the similarity filter too low will cause the solution to start to return un-needed outcomes as well. Using the same source article above: Why the West won’t act on China’s Uighur crisis, but with the similarity filter of 0.05, we start to see unrelated article, such as:

* Review: Submission, a dystopian view of Muslim Brotherhood's takeover of Europe[[30]](#footnote-30)
  + Review of a theater play in France, in a made-up scenario where the Muslim brotherhood overrun Europe.
  + Similarity Score: 0.05172413793103448 (6 similar / 110 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 1
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.01293103448275862
* Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues[[31]](#footnote-31)
  + Difference in attitudes and believes between Eastern and Western Europe. Nothing related to China at all.
  + Similarity Score: 0.05504587155963303 (6 similar / 103 different)
  + Viewpoint difference: 0.7296296296296297
  + Unpolarize Score: 0.010040774719673804

Apart from being irrelevant to the comparing article, these documents also rank high in the unpolarizing scale with a bigger viewpoint difference, as the relevant articles will have a closer sentiment value to the comparing one, than the unrelated one with different context.

Thus, having a good similarity filter is important and is a crucial for the success of our unpolarize algorithm. The correct value for the filter is not easily determinable and it can vary a lot, depends on the size of the database, or type and complexity of the documents itself. We do not think that a one-size-fit-all value exists, and this filter should be assigned dynamically depends on the state of the whole knowledge base, as well as the type and rarity of the documents we want to find suggestions to. With such goal in mind, in future work, we could try to add a machine learning model to learn from the system itself as well as user interaction to find the most suitable filter for every case.

The viewpoint difference and unpolarize system appears to be in a functioning state as well. Our Positive/Negative views hypothesis is written as:

* An article is considered to have a positive or negative view on a subject can be determined by either the sentiment value of such article or the average sentiment of all the sentences in the article, in which the subject/topic appear in.

Even with the flaws stated from the previous chapter, it still works because of reason x, y and z. It could be improved, of course, but I think it’s good enough for our cause.

## Semantic triple based un-polarizing algorithm

### Open Information Extraction

Since its first introduction in 2006 at the University of Washington in 2007 (Banko et al, 2007), Open Information Extraction (OIE) has been gaining many attentions from the academic world with many applications and researches (few citations). As a relatively young term compared to its umbrella field (NLP), OIE inherits a lot of techniques from other task, like (non-open) Information Extraction, where we try to retrieve information from a specific domain (citation needed), and Semantic Triple, where we store the data (citation about the RDF and stuffs here).

The role of OIE in our hypothesis is to extract Semantic triple, which might be later referred as a statement or fact or proposition from the documents. Semantic triplet is (WIKI) <*a set of three entities that codifies a statement about semantic data in the form of subject–predicate–object expressions*>. Semantic triple is nice because it’s machine readable and there are a lot research and tools for it, and we can furthermore add many things to this RDF information.

OIE from Stanford Core NLP works well out of the box. In the example below, we can see that when putting a paragraph into the annotator, and it will return a list of propositions constructed from the paragraph. These statements, however, are too many and too noisy as some propositions are irrelevant to our algorithm. For example, consider the triple: [“he”, “is”, “president”], there are not any meaningful information from this statement alone. Moreover, or some triples are just shortened version of other statement (ie: [“Toyota”, “introduce”, “a new car”] vs [“Toyota”, “introduce”, “a new car in July”]). This noisy data, while does not interfere much with our un-polarized algorithm as our algorithm can just ignore them, saving these un-filtered data to our database will unnecessary increase the size of our database, as well as decreasing the overall system performance and greatly hinder our ability to directly look at the data to find any meaningful insight or any possible issue.



Picture n: example of result from Core NLP

*TODO: Need example of this*

Thus, after receiving the Semantic triples from CoreNLP, we perform a three-step filter on the data before saving it to the database.

* First, triples with the relation part that is not a verb and not the verb “be” are removed. This make sure that all the non-meaningful statement (such as: example needed!) will be removed from our result.
  + The removal of all proposition with the verb “be”, while seems odds at first, but is our decision after examining many results from the OIE, where most, if not all of the propositions with the word “be” in it are non-contributing and are usually just auto generated from CoreNLP. For example, in the sentence: “President Trump visits the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, CoreNLP will generate a proposition of [“Trump”, “is”, “president”], which, is useless for us, and, because it’s auto created by CoreNLP, there are a lot of them and will inflate a good portion of the data if left unchecked.
* Second, we remove all the triplets that are just shortened version of others, this remove quite a bit of them (needs some number value, to see the effect) and does not cause any negatives to our un-polarize algorithm as the matching algorithm only search for entities within the triple, not working on the full semantic triple (more on the next chapter)
* Last, combined with the named entities retrieved from **3.2.3**, all the statement that doesn’t have an entity mentioned will also be removed, since the triplets without any meaningful entities mentioned will be useless in term of information for us anyway.

*TODO: Find example for each of these cases to see which result is removed and which is saved to see the impact, also, maybe some number on how much is removed for example.*

After these three-step filtering, the annotated data of the article is saved to our local database as a JavaScript object in json format, similar to the progress in part 3.3.1, only with different data.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| This is a snippet of the annotation data stored in our database. Each entry contains:   * Meta data about the article: url and title * Array of annotated information about the content of the article, split down to a sentence level.   Each data-sentence contains:   * Full text content of the sentence * Triples exists in the sentences and their information.   Each triplet in the sentence annotation contains:   * Subject, relation and object text. * Full text content of the triplet (combine subject, relation and object) * Containing entities. | Figure n: Example of an annotated article stored in our database (current version) |

We understand that context is important, as it is easy to take a statement out of the sentence and twist its meaning to a completely different intention of the original author (*for example:* k*nowledge is power but knowledge without action is useless => knowledge is useless*) (maybe citation), which is opposite of what we are trying to do with this thesis. While we can be sure that there does not exist malice from us or from CoreNLP to intentionally provide statement with twisted information, it is possible for some semantic triples to be caught without its true meaning, and thus, accidentally provide the wrong information to the user. Thus, we decided to store the full text content of the article and always return the detected fact alongside its source sentence to the user, so that they can see all the reason that leads to the decision to show them the results and can judge the results for themselves in the correct context.

### Triples-based un-polarizing algorithm

Contrary to the Sentiment-based hypothesis in chapter **3.3**, where we identify the disparity between articles using a high-level variable: the overall attitude of the text document or of its entities, the Triples-based hypothesis focuses on the low-level part of the articles: the facts or statements the document conveys. With this approach, we do not want to match articles that just happen to mention a similar topic or subject, we want to identify articles that discuss related facts somewhere along its contents. For example, if article X mentions the fact that [“*A*”, “*does something*”, “*to B*”] in its content and article Y mentions [“*A*”, “*does the same thing*”, “*to C*”] or [“*A*”, “*does different thing*”, “*to B*”] in its content, we conclude that their contents are related, thus the user should find it interesting to read from both articles. However, we do not want to suggest the same article or article with similar view point to the user, as it does nothing good but rather furthermore lock the user in his own echo-chamber. Thus, we don’t suggest strictly similar triples (ie: [“*A*”, “*befriends*”, “*to B*”], and [“*A*”, “*befriends*”, “*to B*”]), but just related triples.

Hence, we define two semantic triples as related if one of the following conditions are met:

* Two semantic triples are considered as related if and only if two of the three part in the triples contain similar information.
  + For [*Subject*] and [*Object*] part, containing similar information means having the same entity.
  + For [*Predicate*] part, similar information means containing the same word, or word with similar meaning.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Condition | Example |
| Similar [*Subject*] and [*Object*] | [“US”, “denounces”, “North Korea”] |
| [“US”, “bans”, “trade from North Korea”] |
| Inverse [*Subject*] and [*Object*] | [“Refugees”, “migrate”, “in large number to Europe”] |
| [“Europe”, “tighten up”, “its policy toward refugees”] |
| [*Subject*] and [*Predicate*] | [“China”, “invests”, “to Kenya”] |
| [“China”, “invests”, “to Vietnam”] |
| [*Predicate*] and [*Object*] | [“Putin”, “goes”, “to the submit in Helsinki”] |
| [“David Beckham”, “travels”, “to Helsinki for a vacation”] |

With the examples above, we can see that many related pairs detected by our algorithm do not have different or opposite meaning, they just have relevant meaning. Consider the case of “China to invest to Kenya and Vietnam”, or the “US’s denouncement of North Korea” and the “bans to all trade from that country”, these statements do not have conflicts or contradictions to each other. In fact, these facts even strengthen each other. In the case of US and North Korea, the denouncement leads to the trade-ban, or the trade-ban is the result of the tension between two countries.

These findings, while do not fulfil our initial goal of finding conflicts between articles, are still great for our cause, as having a broader view of a situation would certainly help the users to understand the news better. We believe that knowing the causes, process, or consequences of an action or a situation would certainly help the users to be more informed about the topic, thus, having more context to every information they go through.

However, we still want to find contradicting statements between articles, as conflicting facts have more “un-polarizing power” because contradictions clearly state that one of the two articles are either lying or it’s actual opposite point of view.

By mathematical logic, contradiction means [a logical incompatibility between two or more propositions]. Kind of expand more from this.

There are two possible cases for finding contradictions in statements:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Condition | Example |
| Similar [*Subject*] and [*Object*]  [*Predicate*] contains opposite verbs. | [“Russia”, “denies”, “any army appearance in Ukraine”] |
| [“Russia”, “allows”, “tanks near the border in Ukraine”] |
| Inverse [*Subject*] and [*Object*]  Similar [*Predicate*] | [“Israel”, “provoked”, “the Arabs first”] |
| [“The Arabs”, “provoked”, “Israel near its border”] |

The two conditions above, still do not guarantee a 100% chance of detecting contradicting facts, as there are many possible cases that fulfil our condition above but might not be contradicting statements. For example, consider these two statements:

* [“In 2001 USA”, “deployed”, “its troop to Afghanistan”]
* [“By 2011 USA”, “withdrew”, “its troop from Afghanistan”] (official ends the involvement in the middle east)

By our definition, the two statement above are contradicting as they share similarity in the [Subject] and [Object] part as well as a opposite predicate verb. However, we could argue that they are just information provided in a chronological order and are not conflicting. Thus, with just this condition, we can not be certain to always find the contradictions in news documents and act like a fact checker.

With our inability to find the contradictions between articles, we fail to deliver on our main task, which is to provide the users the news documents with different point of view. From the examples above, we can see that many related statements can be from the same source, with similar political preference and bias, just different publishing date in different article, so, articles from similar viewpoint.

While delivering articles with related facts is not one of our initial goal, the triples-based hypothesis is useless though, as the suggested articles are still relevant, and they can make our user more informed about the topic he/she is reading. A more knowledgeable person is always better than a clueless person and will be more capable to detect propaganda, lies or bias in any future.

### Our implementation of the triples-based un-polarizing algorithm

Similar to the sentiment-based hypothesis, for any given article’s url, we proceed the documents with our processing pipeline, through these modules: web content processor, Stanford CoreNLP annotator (with NER and OIE annotator) and NLP result filtering. After the filtering step, we compare the article’s final annotation to all other previous annotations in our local-database using the rule defined in the previous chapter.

However, implementing the triples-based un-polarizing algorithm turns out to be a more overwhelming task than we initially planned to, so we are only able to implement part of what we discussed in the last chapter: Identify related articles that share similar entities in [Subject] and [Object] or [Subject] and [Object] reversion. We could not implement [Predicate]’s verb matching or contradiction finding.

After identifying the related statements from the articles, we return the list of all articles with related statement for the user, sorted by descending number of related articles. Here is the example of the data we return from the algorithm:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The return result for the user is a list of relevant articles and their annotated data, each contains:   * Meta data: general information about the two articles, containing their urls, titles and the number of related statements, common entities count and common statement count. * Related statements: entities pair in the code. All information about the two triples: the entities, where they appear in both texts and the full content of the triples. * Entities data: all the rest information of the entities, which contains what the entity is as well as in what context it appears in, in both the source and target articles. | Figure n: Example of an annotated article stored in our database (current version) |

Since the main purpose of this approach is to provide the user more information so that they can make a better judgement for themselves, we feel that it is important that the we should also provide as much information as possible. So, for our un-polarizing result, we will give the user the list of the most relevance articles to the one he wants to check, as well as other information that we use to come up with the conclusion, so that he can see the full picture himself, knows the reason we come up with the result, and now, being informed, can fully evaluate/understand the news about the situation or subjects.

### Limitation of the current system.

There are many problems with this hypothesis, both from our implementation as well as Stanford CoreNLP OIE annotator. These limitations include:

* No verb processing in the Semantic Triple: Our current implementation only utilizes the [Subject] and the [Object] part of the semantic triples. The verb in [Predicate] is not considered in our calculation. This [Predicate] is important as it helps us to find more related triples as well as the contradictions.
* No negation checking: current Stanford Core NLP system doesn’t detect negation in their Open Information Extraction yet, so we might miss some semantic triples from the articles. Especially, when the verb processing is implemented, missing triple with negative verb could lead to missing some of the contradicting statements. The lack of negation checking is quite questionable since Stanford CoreNLP does have negation checking (Dependency parser annotator, example blow) but negation checking is not present in “openie” (Open Information Extraction) annotator. We could try to detect the negated verb using other annotators and but without the triples from CoreNLP, trying to construct a semantic triple from the other annotations is practically re-implement the whole OIE annotator, which is way past this thesis scope.

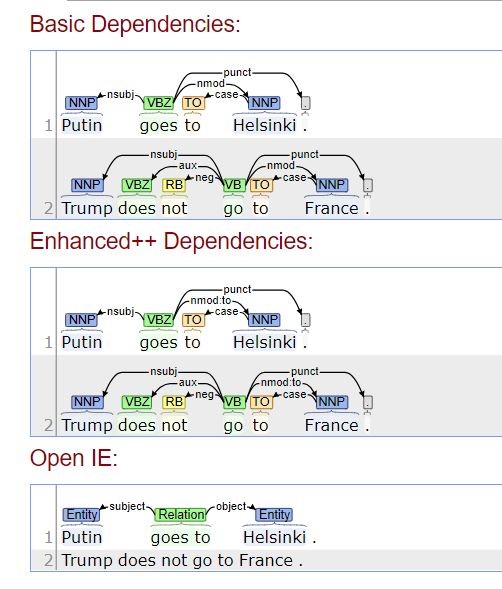


Figure n: Example of negation with CoreNLP

* Computational drawback: processing an article on my computer (i5-6700HQ) took around 10 second to process one article. It is not a big problem because 10 seconds is not too long but should be noted since it’s not instant and bigger text documents or bigger knowledge base will require even more computing time.
* Requirement of a big knowledge base: Unlike the sentiment-based solution where the knowledge base only needs a small number of articles to be somewhat functional, the triple-based solution require a much bigger amount of news documents in the database. Based on the results evaluation (more on the next chapter), we noticed that the chance of finding related facts between two text documents is much lower than the chance to find some common entities between the texts. We estimate that a single entity (ie immigrant) should have around 50 articles to be able to generate good ground truth of information. We can solve this problem by updating the database by automatically fetch news from source like Google news as well as reducing the number of articles needed for each entity by furthermore improving our related triples finding algorithm.

# CONCLUSTIONS

From the problems overview and the main research questions, we came up with two main hypotheses and four supporting hypotheses. To test the validity and correctness of these assumptions, we developed a prototype using the processes and algorithms described in the previous chapters. The evaluation of the prototype and hypotheses is based on our predefined list of 79 hand-picked articles with the criteria defined in chapter **2.2**. (Maybe remove this part?)

The Sentiment-based hypothesis is described as:

* Two articles are considered to have different point of views if two conditions are met: They both cover similar topics, and if one article has a positive view on the situation and the other has a negative view regarding the same subject.

Here is the result of the

…

(*Detailed information from our article base, how many is close to the point, how many useful information can we get from that*) –

//TODO: is this necessary?

In the code, we call the -<*similarityModule.findSimilarArticles*> - this is the function we called. The input is one single “url” and the output is the list of relevance articles with their annotated information displayed so that the user know why we suggest these.

(*Why it’s bad and why we don’t use it*) – The sentiment analysis hypothesis later on proves to be almost useless, as the sentiment value of the sentence/paragraph have very little correlation to the content in the articles. Which mean, even if the paragraph talks about the killing of Yemen people, it might still have a normal or positive sentiment (*TODO: find example*), because journalism is usually supposed to give provide information in the most neutral way, so it’s hard to find any correlation between them. Furthermore, it’s kind of easy to fool the system, using word like nice, good, or similar to that, to make it have a higher sentiment value.

(*How using ontologies, can help finding similar words/entities, similar to the ontologies relevance in Chinh’s thesis*) – The current system finds entities pair base totally on their word-to-word similarity. Using ontologies, we could find and link together entities that are relevant to each other (ie, Muslim and Christian, as both are religion), thus, making the system smarter and able to find more information.

(*With the triplet pairs implemented, we could find contradiction between the triplets. Using word-net to find verb that have similar meaning/or opposite meaning*) – For processing the relation verbs, using wordnet (<https://wordnet.princeton.edu/>) or similar tool, so we can find words that have similar meaning, close meaning or opposite of each other, thus, making the system able to find more connection/contradiction between different statements within different articles.

(*AI based un-polarized algorithm*) - It’s not that easy, you just can’t say AI and all the problem is solved. But traditionally, as NLP evolve, all the programming/method driven method for NLP has been changed for a better machine learning model for almost everything like sentiment, OIE and more tasks (tons of reference needed here). We could try to apply the same for our stuffs. However, we realize that as there are so many possible inputs data (which is all of the Stanford NLP annotation stuffs), and the outcome is so limited, same POV, different POV ???, training these data would be really hard. Training these models would be an interesting task as well. But we think AI is the future, and we should aim for it.

With the algorithm ready, we need to automatically get our data somehow. Fortunately, there are a lot of news APIs available, for example, Google News or many other things, just one simple APIs and it can give you all the thing you want. It’s also good for evaluation later, because these APIs allow you to search for query by word, date and time, which will be useful to compare the results between our stuffs and theirs.

Hope you enjoyed the text...

In the bibliography the recommendable style is Chicago. You can also use other styles: the main thing is that the styles of the bibliography and referring technique are **consistent** in the whole thesis.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Word | Year | Magnitude | Example |
| example | [1700,2000] | [1,10] | example |
| example | [1950,2000] | [1,106] | example |
| example | [1995,2000] | [10–6,106] | example 1, example 2 |

Table 1. Example of the table

4 Experiments Where the AI Outsmarted Its Creators:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdTBqBnqhaQ>

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Santanen, Jukka-Pekka. "Opinnäytteiden kirjoittaminen, lyhyt oppimäärä." 2000. http://users.jyu.fi/~santanen/info/kirjoittamisesta.html (accessed 5.10.2012).

Writer, John. "Name of the article." *Computer*, no. 2/2000 (2000): 31-32.

Appendices

1. Title of the first appendix
2. Title of the second appendix

1. Call-out culture (also known as outrage culture) is the social phenomenon of publicly denouncing perceived racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, national interest, and other forms of prejudice or bigotry. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://autotldr.io/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.reddit.com/user/alternate-source-bot/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://cloud.google.com/natural-language/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/watson-natural-language-understanding> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://nodejs.org/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/firefox-reader-view-clutter-free-web-pages [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.npmjs.com/package/node-readability> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://smmry.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://stanfordnlp.github.io/CoreNLP/download.html [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Tested on average of 100 article annotations, using author’s computer: Dell inspiron 7559 with i5-6300HQ and 8GB of RAM [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A can only be in the range of [0, 1] because and are integer and they cannot be 0 at the same time. The only case where and are both 0 is when there are not any existing entities in an article. We can prevent that by discard the text documents which do not contain any named entity. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/10/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-war-yemen.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <https://cloud.google.com/natural-language/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <https://www.ibm.com/watson/services/natural-language-understanding/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. http://blog.conceptnet.io/posts/2017/how-to-make-a-racist-ai-without-really-trying/ [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. -https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/01/article/why-the-west-wont-act-on-chinas-uighur-crisis/ [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. -https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2179716/asia-2019-watch-out-elections-india-and-indonesia-us-china [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. -https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/02/07/reeducating-xinjiangs-muslims/ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. -https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/chinese-islamophobia-west-190121131831245.html [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. -http://muslimnews.co.uk/newspaper/world-news/34570-2/ [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. -https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/interracial-harmony-sarawak-church-wedding-with-muslim-bridesmaids [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. -https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/sarawak-church-wedding-with-muslim-bridesmaids [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
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