

THESIS

THE INTERPLAY OF POLITICS, IDEOLOGY, AND CULTURE IN NEWS FRAMING OF  
PRESIDENT XI'S FIRST STATE VISIT

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INTERPLAY OF POLITICS, IDEOLOGY, AND CULTURE IN NEWS FRAMING OF PRESIDENT XI'S FIRST STATE VISIT

In the context of globalization, the media plays a significant role in constructing perceptions of another culture. When constantly expanding understanding of different societies, misperceptions of another culture may also emerge. This is especially true for the current Sino – U.S. relations, as mistrust has been found from both countries in the recent poll. At the time of discouragement and pessimism, Xi Jinping, China's president and the chairman of China's Central Military, arrived in Washington on September 22nd, 2015 and started his first official state visit in the U.S. This study examined media coverage of President Xi's first state visit in order to explore the power dynamics of ideology, politics, and culture between China and the U.S. Conducting comparative media research between U.S. and China breaks through the traditional UK and U.S. basis of communication study, which allowed communication scholars to be aware of non-western journalistic practices and be more sensitive to the global context.

A quantitative content analysis with a qualitative assessment of overall frames were used to identify the way *The New York Times* and the *People's Daily* framed President Xi's first state visit. Results showed that both *The New York Times* and the *People's Daily* chose to highlight and interpret certain aspects of the trip, which led to different general assessments for the visit. There were five frames identified in their coverage, namely the anti-China frame, provocateur frame, recognition frame, great-leader frame and description frame. In addition, the distribution of quoted sources and issue salience were also found to be different in reports of *The New York Times* and

the *People's Daily*. Possible ideological, cultural and political forces were elaborated upon in order to explain the coverage differences between the two newspapers.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	2
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Framing.....	5
What is framing?.....	5
Factors influencing frame-building.....	8
How the U.S. and China have framed each other.....	20
Chinese media – content analysis.....	23
Journalistic socialization.....	26
Related theories.....	28
Comparing Chinese and American journalism practices.....	31
Research Questions.....	38
CHPATER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	40
Content analysis.....	40
<i>The People’s Daily and The New York Times</i> .....	41
Sampling.....	43
Coding Scheme.....	43

Coding and Inter-Coder Reliability.....	44
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	46
Anti-China Frame.....	47
Provocateur Frame.....	53
Recognition Frame.....	55
Great-leader Frame.....	57
Description Frame.....	59
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	68
Discussion.....	68
General assessment and frames.....	69
Issue salience and sources.....	76
Conclusion.....	80
Limitations.....	83
Future Studies.....	84
REFERENCES.....	85
APPENDIX A: Major events for Sino-U.S. relations.....	99
APPENDIX B: President Xi’s state visit itinerary.....	103
APPENDIX C: Coding Sheet.....	105

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1- Perceived Influences between China and U.S.....35

TABLE 2- Institutional Trust and Performance.....37

TABLE 3- Prominent News Frames in President Xi’s First State Visit News Coverage.....47

TABLE 4- The General Assessment of President Xi’s First State Visit News Coverage  
Distribution.....60

TABLE 5- Issue Saliency in President Xi’s First State Visit in U.S. Coverage of the *People’s  
Daily* and *The New York Times*.....62

TABLE 6- Sources Frequencies in President Xi’s First State Visit in U.S. Coverage of the  
*People’s Daily* and *The New York Times*.....65



## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1-Distribution of professionalism milieus.....	34
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2015, the President of China and chairman of China's Central Military, Xi Jinping, arrived in the United States. Whilst he had previously visited the U.S. six times, this was his first official state visit as the general secretary of the Communist Party and the President of China. The past three decades have witnessed frequent exchanges of high-level visits between U.S. and Chinese officials, and growing cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, culture and education, which has achieved positive results. A timeline of major events occurring between Sino-American relations since the 1970s can be found in Appendix A. The trip surely became another major milestone in the collaboration between the two nations (Xinhua News Agency, 2015). China is the largest developing country and the United States the largest developed economy. The relationship between the two countries is not only implied in the bilateral context, it also greatly impacts the international community. George Soros (2015) claimed it would be beneficial for both countries – and, indeed, the whole world – if China and the U.S. were to work together rather than entering confrontation and conflict. Therefore, building a partnership between the two countries was the main purpose of the visit. On the 25<sup>th</sup> September, President Xi had a three-hour talk with President Obama in the White House. On the following day, *The New York Times* published an article titled “Obama and Xi Jinping of China Agree to Steps on Cyber Theft”, delineating that “the two nations remain deeply at odds on key issues...The exchange underscored the degree to which Mr. Xi has in many ways confounded Mr. Obama's hopes and expectations...In another point of friction, Mr. Obama said he had deep concerns over human rights in China, describing what sounded like a lecture he had given to Mr. Xi about the issue” (Davis & Sanger, 2015). Two days later, the *People's Daily* (Yao, 2015) described the same event, but from a quite different

perspective: “A total of 49 achievements were made during Xi and his US counterpart Barack Obama's summit on Friday in the White House ...covering a wide range of issues regarding investment, people-to-people exchanges, climate change and coordination and cooperation in multilateral affairs”. It can clearly be seen that the same meeting received almost conflicted versions of coverage and this was not an exception. In almost all aspects of President Xi’s trip, Chinese and American journalists provided distinct interpretations in their reports. This media phenomenon provided the inspiration behind this research, which aims to investigate how media professionals can frame the same story differently, as well as analyzing what the driving force is behind this.

## **Purpose**

This state visit is considered a type of “media event” (Dayan & Katz, 1992), which is an event phased at an international stage for the global media to make their own cultural interpretations. This was a critical event that demands examination of media discourse. Additionally, the presidential summit is not only a face-to-face meeting between political leaders, but also “a form of symbolic communication that conveys a sense of great authority, power, and legitimacy of leaders in the diplomatic arena” (Chang, 2003, p.119). In the context of globalization, the image of a national leader in the media is an influential component for intercultural communication. Xing Lu (2011) describes the role of a nation’s political actors as a “cultural broker”, who promotes positive interaction and reduces or eliminates unnecessary conflict in an intercultural context through their rhetorical deliberations and actions.

Extensive literature has already proven that the media plays a significant role in constructing perceptions of other cultures (Bennett, 1997; Feldman, 2007; Lewis & Reese, 2009). During the

process of constant expansion in our understanding of different societies, misperceptions of other cultures have also emerged. This is especially true for current Sino–U.S. relations. Based on recent poll results (Friedhoff & Smeltz, 2015), Americans attach high value to bilateral relations overall: “88 percent define the U.S.-Sino relations as important and more than 50 percent saying that U.S.-China relations are very important” (p.1). It is worthwhile to note that Americans tend to indicate their mistrust toward China: “Just 34 percent think China will deal responsibly with problems facing the world, and 56 percent state China plays a negative role in resolving the key problems” (p.2). Similar results were also found from the Chinese public’s perspective that only 45 percent of respondents trust that the United States would handle international issues responsibly. The mistrust exhibited from both sides can be highly detrimental. Schell (2015) once commented that in 2015, the level of discouragement and pessimism between China and U.S. reached its highest point since the 1989 Tiananmen protests. This highlights the importance of investigating how media practitioners from each country attach certain meanings to President Xi’s first state visit during this special time. The mistrust exhibited from both sides can be highly detrimental. Schell (2015) once commented that in 2015, the level of discouragement and pessimism between China and U.S. reached its highest point since the 1989 Tiananmen protests. This highlights the importance of investigating how media practitioners from each country attach certain meanings to President Xi’s first state visit during this special time. Hänggli (2011) once expressed his concern that media scholars have not paid enough attention to factors that could potentially influence media frames. By mainly concentrating on how framing effects public opinion (Hänggli, 2011), the question of how a specific frame originates has been largely ignored. Because this has been widely neglected, the current study intends to emphasize frame-building and the key factors that cause an impact in the process.

Informed by Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) theory of five forces shaping journalistic practices (social system, social institution, organization, routines and individuals), this paper will use coverage of President Xi's visit as a case to explore how media in China and the U.S. framed the same media event differently as well as exploring the relevant cultural, political and ideological factors contributing to it. There are two reasons this paper places emphasis on societal forces of news framing. Firstly, these factors have been largely ignored or taken for granted by journalists, as social forces are too complex to comprehend and have become naturalized and hegemonic in day-to-day journalistic works. In addition, Shoemaker (1991) indicates the importance of examining societal forces in journalistic practices, suggesting influences such as the dominant ideology within a society could exert more of an effect on media frames than individual and institutional factors. This study categorizes factors building media frames into three macro groups: culture, politics (elite and interest group) and ideology. Since China and the U.S. feature truly different social, economic and political structures, a cross-national comparative analysis would be helpful in exploring media coverage patterns of international affair issues as well as deepening the understanding of power dynamics between China and the U.S. Furthermore, conducting comparative media research between the U.S. and China breaks through the traditional UK and U.S. version of communication study, which allows scholars to be aware of non-Western journalistic practices and be more sensitive to the global context. Such comparative analysis is beneficial to examine media phenomena more comprehensively and systematically.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, theories, concepts and relevant previous studies are reviewed to explain the importance of studying news frames, and to identify the elements that may have influence on it and the different journalistic cultures that persist in U.S. and China. The review includes two sections: the first section of framing, with regards to framing theory, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, and how the U.S. media frames China and how the Chinese media frames the U.S. in the existing literature. The second section mainly addresses journalistic socialization in the newsroom and how different journalism cultures are identified in the U.S. and China.

### **Framing**

*What is framing?*

Framing is one of the most essential theoretical frameworks to analyze news content. The origin of the frame metaphor lies in anthropology and sociology. In anthropologist Bateson's (1972) words, "A frame is a spatial and temporal bonding of a set of interactive messages" (p. 191). Sociologist Goffman (1974) is considered as the intellectual father of framing theory and defined primary frameworks in that "When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary" (p.21). Goffman (1974) proposes that primary frameworks vary in degree of organization: some primary frameworks are "neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules" (p.21), whilst other primary frameworks may not have a clear and tangible shape but may only suggest a way of understanding and interpretation. These various shapes of primary frameworks (Goffman, 1974)

serve the purpose of allowing users to “locate, perceived, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (p.21). After Goffman published his study in 1974, communication scholars promptly embraced his concept of primary frameworks.

Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) were two of the earliest scholars to introduce framing to communication and media research. Under Tuchman’s (1978) understanding, frames are useful tools that journalists adapt in order to deal with constantly changing information. Tuchman claimed that news is a window of the world and is socially constructed, functioning as a social resource: “Through its frame, Americans learn of themselves and others, of their institutions, leaders, and life styles, and those of other nations and their peoples” (Tuchman, 1978, p.1). Two years later, Gitlin (1980) proposed a more commonly cited definition, which perceived frames as “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters” (p.6). He agreed with Tuchman that media frames are socially constructed tools that help people make sense of the world. In his words, “What makes the world beyond direct experience look natural is a media frame (p.6).” He also thought that it was impossible for journalists to avoid certain frames, since journalism needed those frames to organize and regulate their production. Gitlin (1980) suggests when scholars attempted to analyze media content they should ask, “What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another? What patterns are shared by the frames clamped over this event and the frames clamped over that one, by frames in different media in different places at different moments?” (p. 7)

Following those presented by Tuchman and Gitlin, there have been several definitions suggested to refine the concept of frames. Tankard (1991) claimed, “A frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (p.11). In 1993, Entman demonstrated that

framing was defined loosely in communication studies due to a lack of conclusive definition and the scattered conceptualization in the ideal of framing. This situation demanded that scholars gain a more precise and universal understanding of key terms in framing. Beyond that, Entman (1993) still confirmed the power of communication text, stating: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52). In terms of the approach for operationalizing frames, Entman (1993) believed that small units constituted news frames. According to Entman(1993), news frames can be analyzed and found through “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p.52).

From the perspective of news production, Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) conceptualized framing as “the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy” (p. 567). More recently, Reese, Gandy and Grant (2001) synthesized concepts that had been previously used and proposed their own working definition of frames, which is concerned with interests, communicators, verbal and visual symbolic resources and culture in the communication process to understand the world. In their words, “Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically and meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001, p.11). In this research, the term “frames” refers to the meanings journalists and editors tend to give an issue, which may come in the form of “media packages”, which are defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1989): “media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or *frame*,



for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (p.3). For them, the media frame is central to organizing ideas and plotting lines whilst providing meaning to an event. The researchers state: “The frame suggests what the controversy is about the essence of the issue” (p.11). By virtually emphasizing certain elements of an issue above others, the frame provides users with a way to understand a topic or event. They also identified five components in the package and serve as a device to accommodate information: (1) metaphors, (2) exemplars (i.e., historical examples from which lessons are drawn), (3) catch-phrases, (4) depiction, and (5) visual images (e.g., icons).

### *Factors influencing frame-building*

Framing has been introduced in communication studies in two ways (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Firstly, it can be understood as a dependent variable, which intends to explore how frameworks are socially constructed and how different frames compete for adoption through societal and media discourse. The second approach considers frames as an independent variable, which attempts to understand how a specific primary framework influences the audience’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The former type is mainly concerned with “framing building” and the latter one is essentially dealing with “frame setting” or “framing effects”. Fung and Scheufele (2014) clarify, “Framing building refers to the process of how news is being selected and produced... Framing-setting refers to the process of how the media transfers from media outlets to audience, i.e. the process of how the media frame influences individual interpretive schema for processing” (p.136). The emphasis of this study is only on frame building. In other words, the frames referred in this study allow us to explore how different elements impact the coverage of a certain issue or an event.

Prior research in framing building includes research that examined extraneous and internal elements having effect on the process of news production and selection. (Tuchman, 1978; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Sheaffer, 2001). Tuchman's (1978) study on news as a socially constructed reality has been one of the most cited studies measuring media frames as dependent variable. Tuchman's research provides some support for the assumption that a news story is the production of journalists' social and professional routines. That is to say, the structure of media institution and work routines of media professionals can impact the way in which stories are told and framed. The hierarchy of influences model, proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), explains how the following five media determinants influence news content from the micro to macro level: journalists, media routines, organization, pressure from interest groups, and ideology. In 2014, they completely revised the forces that mediate in the process of media message creation. Due to the unprecedented technical transformation and rapid globalization of the media world and broader society over the 21st century, the researchers adopted a more international perspective in order to explore how the particular construction, production and control of specific patterns of interpretation are embedded into media content. On the basis of original editions of *Mediating the Message*, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) identified five levels of influence and organized them from the macro social system down to the micro individual level, as follows: social system (formerly ideology); social institution (earlier categorized as an extra media level); organization; routines; and individuals. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) thought the social system to be the most comprehensive, complex and broad level of influence. It can be understood as an aggregation of subsystems, incorporating ideological, economic, political, cultural and mass communication institutions. The social system of a particular society, as a macro-level influence, sets the foundation upon which influences from other level reside. The attributes of the social system

determine the interrelationships among social institutions, the composite of media organizations, the particular pattern of routines applied, and the values individuals believe in.

However, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) did not regard the social system level as superior or dominant over other levels of analysis, because they considered that transmitting information to audiences about an event is a complicated process. Although the concept of the social system of influence is compelling, it is not powerful in a uniform manner in every case. The researchers suggested that media scholars should pay more attention to this level of analysis, stating that the “social system can be difficult to fully comprehend, especially to the extent that they have become naturalized and hegemonic. They may become taken for granted and the society difficult to imagine they to be absent or significantly changed; the researcher must take a step back with a critical distance, while being mindful of the larger web of global connections” (p.94).

The second-level of influences that could possibly affect media content comes from social institutions, which focus on how media organizations interact with other power centres in society. This can be understood as pressure and constraints from political elites, interest groups, advertisers and audience. Since journalists rely heavily on a variety of media sources to gather information, they can exert influence over media content and create news frames that conform to their own interests. The third level of influence refers to broader institutional imperatives within media organizations, which would normally require news content to remain in accordance with its ownership of the organization, policies, goals, action rules, bureaucratic structure and economic viability. Those crucial benchmarks of a media organization, in one way, demonstrate how an organization allocates its finite resources and how it attempts to achieve its organizational goal.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) define routines: “As individuals in groups, journalists have developed styles of thought from an endless pattern of norms in response to common situations...

those patterned repeated practice, forms and rules that media workers use to do their jobs” (p.203). They see most of these rules as unwritten and argue that they have an enormous impact on the symbolic creation process, because journalists use routines as guidance to accomplish their work. In their opinion, there are three main sources of routine: audiences, organizations and suppliers of content. These sources strongly influence how the media make decisions, how stories are framed, and how content is written.

The last level of influence comes from individuals: specifically, how individual characteristics (personal demographic features, backgrounds, roles and experience related to the professional context of the communicator, the work position of the communicator within an organization, etc.) affect the news creation process. Edelman (1993) believed that ideology and interests groups exert their influence in the selection of a particular news frame. Sheafer (2001) demonstrated in the political communication arena that there are two categories of values that may potentially influence how journalists frame a particular issue: political-cultural values and the media’s professional values. In terms of the first category, a particular issue is estimated based on its political-cultural values, the importance of issues, events and actors. Sheafer (2001) thought these values originated in the ideological system, which represents the symbolic centre and consensus of a nation. In Sheafer’s (2001) words, “The closer an issue, event, media frame, or political actor is deemed to be to this consensus, the more important it is considered, and the better chance it has receiving media attention” (p.712). With regards to the second category — media’s professional values and needs - Sheafer (2001) explains that this is comprised of the needs of media organizations (media routines) and the stress of advertisers.

Hänggli (2011) has demonstrated his concern that media scholars are not paying enough attention to factors that could potentially influence media frames. Most researchers have focused

on the production and selection of news in general (e.g., Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), rather than focusing on framing in particular. By primarily concentrating on the effects of framing on public opinion (Hänggli, 2011), the question of how a specific frame originates has been largely ignored. Because this topic has been widely neglected, the current study focuses on frame-building and the key factors that enforce impact during the process. As Shoemaker (1991) indicated, societal forces, such as a dominant ideology within a society, can exert more impact on media practice than individual factors (professionalism, ethnic background, etc.) and institutional characteristics. This study placed greater emphasis on societal factors. Factors influencing frame-building and the way journalists frame a given issue are categorized into three groups: culture, politics (elite and interest group) and ideology.

***Culture*** When Goffman (1974) introduced the concept of frame in sociology, he wrote about the implicit cultural root that the meaning of a frame might possess. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) emphasized that culture is an important subsystem within the greater social system and that it shares a symbiotic relationship with the media. The communication process is fundamental in the elaboration of culture, since the media integrate the pattern of symbolic meaning into content, thus influencing how people understand themselves and the world around them. Prior research informs us that the news world is highly framed, that news is not presented to readers in a raw manner, and that reported events are pre-organized (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992). Culture, as an important factor, is embedded in the framing process itself. In 1993, Entman posited that frames could be encountered in at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the media content, the receiver, and culture. Entman (1993) defined culture as a “stock of commonly invoked frames” (p.53). Culture, then, in an empirical sense, is a demonstrable set of

frames, which is frequently visible in the public discourse and represents the values of most people within one social group.

As cultural storytellers, journalists apply and amplify cultural phenomena (beliefs, values, norms shared, collective memory, etc.) in media content and convey them to audiences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). This argument re-confirms the role of culture, serving as a constituent element in framing, as suggested by Gamson and Modigliani (1989). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) described how the hegemony and media use specific packaging to characterize the nuclear power issue. They defined a frame package as “a cluster of logical organized devices that function as an identity kit for a frame” (p.3) and that its production process was influenced by three broad classes of determinants: culture resonance, sponsor activities and media practice. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) believed that by constructing the news message in a manner that causes many elements to refer to a frame, journalists are able to encase cultural phenomena in media content and facilitate certain interpretation within society. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) explained: “Certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes. Resonance increases the appeal of a package; they make it appear natural and familiar. Those who respond to the larger cultural theme will find it easier to respond to a package with the same sonorities” (p.5). Therefore, cultural resonance could be understood as the context dependency of frames.

In order to further develop Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) study, Entman (2004) utilized cultural congruence as an important variable in the cascading model. He proposed the use of a cascading activation model based on his findings of White House framing after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. In the study, Entman recognized that cultural resonance could be considered a criterion to measure the capacity of news, as well as a stimulant in promoting a

particular perception targeted towards audiences. He suggested that there was a positive predictive relationship between cultural resonance and the potential influence of news, noting that the more the words or images were used in media content, the more they were noticeable and salient in culture, and the more likely they were to create framing that provoked similar feelings and ideas in the majority of audiences. In addition to measuring the effect of news, cultural congruence serves as an essential variable in the cascading model. The cascading model (Entman, 2004) was created to explain “how thoroughly the thoughts and feelings that support a frame extend down from the White House through the rest of the system--and who thus wins the framing contest and gains the upper hand politically” (p. 419). Cultural congruence is a measurement of the complexity in how a news frame can descend through different stages of framing and evoke similar reactions at each level, based upon the assumption that there is no difference between the other three variables (motivations, power and strategy). The more congruent the frame with schemas that prevail in the political culture, the more likely it will succeed in stimulating the desired reception along the different steps.

More recently, Van Gorp (2007) attempted to emphasize the role of implicit culture in a frame by suggesting that culture is an integral part of framing. He demonstrated that there is an abundant “cultural stock of frames” available for communication. On one hand, these cultural resources facilitated the formation of particular media frames. On the other hand, however, the receivers must all possess commonly shared cultural experiences to process the communication attempted achieved by media practitioners. Therefore, understanding the cultural phenomena as a component of media frames is fundamental in framing analysis. In order to better compare culture between the U.S. and China, and to explore how different cultures exert impacts on news frames, Hofstede’s cultural dimension framework is applied in this study.

The cultural dimension theory of Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede is one of the most significant frameworks for cross-cultural communication in existence today. Hofstede developed his original model as a result of factor analysis, by examining the results of two separate global surveys carried out with IBM employees from 1968 to 1969 and 1971 to 1973. This theory quantified cultural values and used them to explain the observed dissimilarities in different cultures. Analysis of the original theory proposed the four further dimensions of cultural values: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, femininity versus masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. In 1992, an independent study in Hong Kong – conducted by Hofstede and Bond – identified a fifth dimension: long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. In 2010, a sixth dimension was also added to the model – indulgence versus restraint – which was based on Minkov's analysis of data from the World Values Survey. The cultural dimension this study focuses on is Power Distance. This dimension measures “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2010, p.45).

Members of high-power cultures perceive power to be a normalized and natural component of society. In contrast, in low-power cultures, individuals believe that power should be exerted only for the purpose of effecting legitimate interests. China sits in the higher score on this dimension, which means citizens largely believe that inequalities in power distribution are acceptable. The subordinate-superior relationship tends to be polarized, and there is no defence against power abuse by superiors. Generally speaking, individuals within such cultural environments are optimistic about people's capacity for leadership and initiative.

On the other hand, America scores low on this dimension, which can be linked to the American principle of “liberty and justice for all.” This is evidenced by an explicit emphasis on equal rights



in all aspects of American society and government. According to Hanusch (2009), cultural values have been conspicuous in relation to journalistic practice. He emphasized the culture differences that exist between Asian and Western countries, arguing that they strongly influence how societies practice journalism. Hanusch (2009) notes: “Asian values such as respect for authority (power distance) and an emphasis on benefit to the community rather than the individual (collectivism) were supposed to lead a new type of journalism, different from that of the West” (p.617).

***Politics (elites and interest group)*** The second determinant that influences the production and selection of news is politics, specifically the sponsorship from political elites and interest group. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) demonstrated that “Packages frequently have sponsors, interested in promoting their careers. Sponsorship is more than merely advocacy, involving such tangible activities as speech making, interviews with journalists, advertising, article and pamphlet writing, and the filling of legal briefs to promote a preferred package” (p.6). These sponsors of a specific package usually work to promote some collective agenda rather than their personal ones. Their study of nuclear power highlighted important sponsors including public officials (their efforts on developing awareness on energy awareness), social movement organizations (actively engaged in mobilizing potential constituents and demobilizing antagonists), environmental groups, consumer protection groups and professional groups.

Scheufele (1999) suggested that frame sponsors or elite groups represent one of a number of potential factors that have an important effect on frame building, because journalists usually count on press releases and government statements to cover a particular issue. Those materials normally come from interest groups, state bureaucracies and other political actors or corporations, which might attempt to strategically prompt the media to adopt frames in accordance with their interests.

Empirical evidence has verified that political and corporate actors consistently engage in frame building in mass media (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). The reason that these interest groups concern with media frames is their intention to direct public perception and interpretation of an issue. Therefore, exerting influence on how journalists cover a story becomes an option.

In fact, it is not only political elites and interest group that would like to make their presence known in the process of news production – journalists demand the same. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) stated that sources do not have an equal likelihood of being contacted by journalists. Those with more economic and political strength have more opportunities to influence news content than their counterparts with less power. Additionally, the availability of these organizations makes it much easier for journalists to use information than it would be through individuals alone. Since organizations usually have regular office hours and full-time staff to assist journalists in accessing certain information, individuals can usually only be reached for a short and unfixed amount of time, daily (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Moreover, journalists' preferences for official sources are not merely because of their easier accessibility, but also because media practitioners have the mentality that government officials and police are more likely to have important things to express (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). In terms of the intervention of an interest group, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) propose that interest groups often attempt to communicate their stance on one or more issues to the public via the media – either by providing “guide-lines” for covering specific topics (e.g. The 1968 “fair trial-free press” guidelines of the American Bar Association, which were adopted by 23 states by 1976 and influenced how the media cover crime and court stories) or by persuading the mass media on the first group's behalf when the interest group intends to lobby in response to certain legislation.

***Ideology*** Ideology is considered the third influence on frame-building. The definition of ideology (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014) adopted in this study is: “a symbolic mechanism that serves as a cohesive and integrating force in society” (p.212). The researchers concluded the fundamental ideological value in the United States is a “capitalist economic system, private ownership pursuit of profit by self-interested entrepreneurs, and free markets...The companion [political values center around liberal democracy, a system in which all people are presumed to have equal worth and a right to share in their own governance, making decisions based on rational self-interest” (p.213). They also believe these values have prevailed and are maintained throughout the U.S. media. In addition, the ideological influence Shoemaker and Reese (2014) referred to represents a social level or a total structure, rather than an individual’s belief system. They situated the ideological subsystem in the most macro level – the social system of their hierarchy of influences model.

Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) adopted ideology and framing theory to examine how U.S. and Chinese newspapers covered the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women and Non-Governmental Organizations Forum in Beijing in 1995. They identified three categories of ideology able to exert primary forces on news frames: dominant ideology, elite ideology, and journalistic ideology or occupational ideology. Dominant ideology can be conceptualized as beliefs and perceptions commonly shared by the most of people within a particular society (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 1998). They agreed with Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) idea that capitalism is the sustained dominant ideology in U.S., but they also suggested anticommunism as another accurate example of dominant ideology in America. In contrast, Chinese society is characterized by communism as the dominant ideology. Secondly, elite ideology is defined as “the particular ideology or policy orientation on the part of the government or the administration in

power at any given point in time” (p.134). Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) stated that elite ideology is in accordance with the dominant ideology in many cases. However, if policy makers’ interests deviate from the dominant ideology, the elite ideology seems to have more influence on framing in news than the dominant ideology, according to the two researchers. Thirdly, journalistic ideology or occupational ideology is essentially derived from media routines and occupational values. The researchers proposed several cases of U.S. journalistic ideology such as “emphasis on events, not issues; emphasis on the unusual and deviant; and focus on elite sources and actors” (p.134). In many cases, Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) thought the U.S. journalistic ideology to underlie the elite ideology in America “not only by being subject to manipulation by elites but also through keeping out access by, and trivialization of, other less powerful groups in society” (p.134). On the other hand, the journalistic ideology in China continuously and unconditionally supports the party’s dominant ideology, even though gradual alterations have occurred in the media system and changes to journalistic norms due to the introduction of the concept of “market” in the media sector. Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) described: “A strong issue orientation in reporting and an emphasis on ideological indoctrination of the masses continue to constitute primary examples of journalistic ideology in China” (p.135).

To conclude, three broad levels of influence – culture, politics and ideology - may all be expected to exert primary forces on the frame-building process and impact on how journalists and editors making decisions of frame certain perspectives in the coverage of president Xi’s first state visit.

### *How the U.S. and China have framed each other*

Studies about how the U.S. media framed China and how its Chinese counterparts framed the U.S. have received substantial attention from communication scholars. Several studies have analyzed the frame packages and narratives that specific media have adopted. One primary finding is that all media coverage has attempted to emphasize a specific perspective to serve underlying national interest. Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) concluded: “In general, newspaper coverage of China has reflected the dominant capitalistic ideology within the United States” (p.135). Kobland, Du, and Kwan (1992) investigated coverage of *The New York Times* regarding China’s 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy student movement and found that the media devoted some amount of space to emphasize problems and the collapse of the China Communist Party. The prevalent frame in U.S. coverage of China could be summarized as “anti-communism”, where China is considered as an ideological enemy.

In a comparative study conducted by Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998), the researchers investigated how the American press (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*) and Chinese press (*China Daily*) reported the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held at the NGO Forum in Beijing in 1995 and hypothesized that ideological differences would primarily influence news frames. The overall findings supported this hypothesis. Specifically, the majority of U.S. news coverage tended to focus on criticisms of China rather than critical issues the Conference had hoped to raise awareness of. According to the researchers, “the strong influence of anticommunists ideology (i.e., the China frame) on the U.S. news about the Conference, reinforced by journalist’s propensity to cover conflict, is clearly reflected in the quantitative prominence given to criticizing China in the news coverage. These criticisms

constituted 34 percent of the theme coded under other topics. Qualitative analysis of the critical discourse against China revealed a clear underlying emphasis on the familiar themes of oppression and deceitfulness that have long been associated with the coverage of China as a communist country” (p.145). In contrast, Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) found that the media coverage of *China Daily* primarily devoted its discussions to critical issues around which the Conference attempted to raise global consciousness. Amongst the 3,219 units of analysis coded, 1,484 (46 percent) clearly focused on the issues of concern within the Conference. Furthermore, U.S. coverage paid more attention to point that “the logistics of the platform had an overtone of conflict” (p.147), whereas its Chinese counterpart featured more news stories about the “cooperative efforts of delegates to reach agreements in the platform” (p.147). Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) stated that one of the most important forces involved in *China Daily’s* construction of a positive image of the Conference is the dominant communist ideology in the country and China’s elite ideology as the conference host.

In another study on the U.S.-China situation, Chang (2000) compared ABC television coverage of President Jiang Zemin’s 1997 visit to the United States with China Central Television’s (CCTV) account of President Clinton visiting China in 1998. For the summit in Washington, ABC’s overall storyline was to parallel past (e.g., violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement and Taiwan issue) with present events in the same context in order to create competing images during president Jiang’s visit. By doing so, Chinese leaders and the government were described as villains and abusers of human rights. In terms of rhetoric devices, ABC tended to be perspective and instructive: “China was problematic in its internal and external practices, behaved like a deviant case with therapeutic lessons to be learned, and had to follow the corrective path in order to join the community of nations. China was molded according to U.S. specifications

and satisfaction. Because Jiang came to visit, Washington served as the point of reference for Beijing to act” (Chang, 2000, p. 135). In comparison, CCTV sketched President Clinton’s visit to Beijing in a different light. In most CCTV reports, no historic events were mentioned from both sides. The main plot was focused on the present event and aimed to create consistent images rather than contradictions. CCTV adopted descriptive and demonstrative mannerisms as a rhetoric mechanism to frame the presidential event and positioned China as the center of global attention. In CCTV’s coverage, the Chinese government and leaders were portrayed as heroes and defenders of national interests and world peace. The representation of China was as a rising nation that deserved to be respected by the global community. However, the antagonistic coverage of China in the U.S. media would not invariably continue to be so. Actually, it evolved in line with the alteration of elite ideology. Chang (1988) demonstrates that when President Nixon visited China in the 1970s, *The New York Times* lessened the frequency with which it employed negative symbols (e.g., oppression and totalitarianism) to refer China and began to promote the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations. Lee (2002) adopted a constructionist approach of framing analysis to investigate ideological packages of *The New York Times*’ editorials and columns from 1990 to 2002, and he identified three main ideological packages during this time: containment (conservative), engagement (centrist), and global integration. The frame of containment emphasized the use of trade privileges to punish China for its poor human rights record. The engagement frame started to devote greater discussion to attaching modest and achievable human rights conditions to trade. The frame of global integration suggested bringing China into international organizations. Moreover, enhancing American trade and China’s human rights remained significant as part of the ideological package. More recently, Li (2014) examined U.S. and Chinese newspaper coverage of the summit between President Xi and President Obama in

2013. His findings showed that American newspapers tended to emphasize economic issues and other controversial topics, such as cyber security, military conflict and human rights. In addition, the U.S. media were more inclined to directly confront particular issues that may lead to collision and dissension in Sino-U.S. relations. However, Chinese newspapers were more likely to sketch a grandiose image of the bilateral relations and use euphemistic and indirect terms to ease the tension and solve potential problems between China and the U.S.

### *Chinese media – content analysis*

Besides knowing the differences that exist in media representations of “others” between the U.S. and China it is also important to inquire as to how the Chinese news media frame the Chinese government in their own coverage. Numerous studies have used content analysis to explore news frames of the Chinese government in different Chinese media, which could be seen as investigation into the largely shared and unquestionable belief Chinese journalists have about their ruling power. Although these studies relate to various topics, they indicate that the Chinese news media has constructed an enduring and consistent positive image of the Chinese government. In order to better understand media frames adopted by *People’s Daily*, this section reviewed media research employing content analysis and summarized some of the major research findings on Chinese media workers’ shared understanding of the Chinese government.

Since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established its authority in 1949, the communist ideology has prevailed and manifested in the operation of social systems in China over the last six decades. The influence of communist ideology in the media system is expected to provide a voice of support to CCP’s policies and decisions amongst the Chinese citizens (Zhao, 2000). Although the Chinese government had embraced the concept of “market” by the late 1970s, and had



implemented a series of media reform policies, the top priority for the news media is still to serve the interests of the CCP. Chan and Qiu (2002) described this as a “partially liberalized authoritarian media system”. Specifically, Chinese news agencies are not allowed to question the legitimacy and authority of the CCP: however, specific criticism related to a particular policies or government corruption may be seen frequently in media reports. Overall, coverage from Chinese news media is meant to advocate the leadership and performance of the CCP for the Chinese people, and many prior research studies have confirmed this. Luther and Zhou (2005) compared the coverage of the SARS epidemic in the U.S. and China. They found that Chinese newspapers were reluctant to describe the negative economic impact of the disease and blamed the Chinese government for the outbreak of SARS in China. Furthermore, Chinese newspapers were less likely to provide a conflict frame or associate conflicts with China. On the other hand, they gave extensive coverage to emphasize the positive actions that Chinese officials took to curtail any negative impacts of the disease. In another framing analysis, investigating coverage of HIV/AIDS, Tong (2006) compared the way in which *The New York Times* and *China Daily* framed the HIV/AIDS issue in China between 2001 and 2004. Her results showed that the dominant frame *China Daily* adopted was a public health issue, which was a frame focused highly on enforcing public education for prevention and self-protection from HIV/AIDS. In this frame, *China Daily* devoted a large chunk of coverage to the Chinese government’s commitment and efforts in dealing with the disease. Besides plainly portraying the positive role the Chinese government played in controlling the epidemic, *China Daily* also gave a lot of attention to the social care and charity issues that the Chinese government was involved in, in order to provide a favourable depiction. Another framing analysis of the AIDS issue in China was conducted by Wu (2006), who further explained how Chinese news media articulated the pro-government frame. In the study, Wu (2006) examined news coverage of

HIV/AIDS in China by the *Xinhua News Agency* in 2004 and compared with coverage from the *Associated Press* of the United States. Three dominant frames (i.e. the defense frame, the progress frame, and the ambivalence/ambiguity frame) have constituted the pro-government frame in *Xinhua's* report. In the defense frame, *Xinhua's* report underlined the increasingly open attitude of the Chinese government and the active engagement the government has engaged in for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Wu (2006) suggested there were two major reasons behind the constructed the positive portrayal of Chinese government in fighting HIV/AIDS in China. The majority of *Xinhua's* report stressed official statements, political leaders' speeches and established government agencies regarding the Chinese government and made every effort to address the issue. The subtler and more implicit way was to refer favourable comments from external sources on the leadership and performance of Chinese government to fight HIV/AIDS. The progress frame was built through vast coverage of the change that Chinese government and the whole society had been encountered in fighting the epidemic. With recognizing the existing problems in dealing with the issue, it focused on a better social environment for HIV/AIDS victims and a change in governmental attitude.

In terms of the ambivalence/ambiguity frame, *Xinhua's* report tended to be cautious about revealing the exact numbers regarding the extent of the disease. In particular, it preferred to construct the severity of HIV/AIDS theoretically rather than statistically. Of the two pro-government frames, *Xinhua's* report was able to frame the Chinese government as "committed to caring for its people, pragmatic and competent in its actions and open-minded to international cooperation" (Wu, 2006, p.268). In addition, the tendency of the Chinese media to put a positive spin on the CCP's leadership can also be detected from other public affairs coverage. Yang (2014) intended to untangle how the Chinese media framed NGO's social roles after the 2008 Wenchuan

earthquake. The results revealed that the party media recognized the social contribution made by the NGO after the natural disaster. At the same time, they tended to refer more to government sources and associated NGO's activities with the CCP's leaders. This type of self-legitimizing frame has also been found in coverage of Beijing's air pollution (Duan & Takahashi, 2016). Based on a review of newspaper coverage of Beijing's air pollution between the U.S. and China from 2008 to 2013, Duan and Takahashi (2016) suggested that the Chinese media was more likely to have a self-justification theme linking pollution with foggy weather or other non-air quality related substances. Specifically, *China Daily* expressed much less criticism and put a lot of effort into stressing government determination and commitment to tackle the issue compared to its U.S. counterpart. However, this does not mean there is no negative depiction of the Chinese government in the Chinese news media.

In a longitudinal content analysis of the *People's Daily* from 1977 to 2010, Zhao (2014) found that criticism of Chinese central government had been constantly rare but did exist. It is interesting that most of them were self-critiques made by high official CCP leaders rather than direct blame for the central government actions. There were more frequent occasions on which an article targeted at a regional branch or department of the government for failing to implement central decisions properly. Overall, therefore, it can be seen that the tendency to consistently advocate the CCP's authority and leadership is anticipated in Chinese media coverage of various political affairs.

### **Journalistic socialization**

As societies increasingly rely on media to act as a primary information source, the significance of journalism as a social institution has to be recognized. It is also important to explore the

socialization of journalists and the strong way in which this influences media content. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) consider journalistic socialization to be a process that occurs in the occupational setting, in which communicators are taught their business norms and supported in developing their professional identity. The researchers emphasize journalistic socialization as an on-going concern in media sociology, as it provides a cluster of shared values for journalists that will heavily shape how a story is written and how an event is viewed. Media sociologists have therefore conducted some scientific investigation to explore how various social forces shape media messages. Here, researchers argue that journalists, as social actors and the centre of the meaning creation process, are subject to several potential determinants: journalistic codes, organizational routines, economic imperatives and other constraints. Tunstall's (1971) study concluded that in order to be administrable, the vast majority of correspondents' work must follow their employing organizations' habitual methods or procedures, which causes standardized patterns of news reporting to emerge. In the late 1970s, with the revival of critical media study, Tuchman (1978) considered media as social organization continually expediting and imposing dominant ideology to the public, due to the routine relations between journalists' and their sources. Tuchman (2003) also noted that news was more "produced" than "found". The notion of news therefore required scholars to explore the social and organizational contexts of news reports. Recent studies on media production have not only examined institutional constraints that media practitioners have had to deal with on a day to day basis, but have also extended their attention to restraints beyond media organizations, which offers insight into journalism as an occupation containing normative frameworks and practice that is deeply influenced by historical, cultural economic and political contexts in a specific nation (Dickinson, 2007). Investigating newsroom culture provided an analytical approach to understanding how ordinary journalists collaborated with their colleagues

and news sources under changing occupational conditions and employment contexts. Journalistic socialization refers to the process wherein media practitioners enter the newsroom environment, have to learn how journalism is accomplished in the specific organization, and are required to make situational adjustments (Dickinson, 2007). Through the process of journalistic socialization, scholars are able to investigate routine mechanisms in the newsroom setting - factors that journalists highly valued in their work and their occupational commitment.

### *Related theories*

Studies focused on how journalists become socialized in their professionals and theoretical links between influences and media content have received longstanding attention in mass communication research. One of the most well-known efforts is Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) hierarchy of influences model, which attempts to explore how influences from multiple societal levels shape media content. As discussed earlier, there are five levels of influence presented by Shoemaker and Reese (2014): social system; social institution; organization; routines; and individuals. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) believed that the social system operates on the most macro level, as it provides the overarching context to understand communication structure, media organizations, and other powerful institutions in a society. It defines the ways in which media work is incorporated, the standardized pattern of journalistic norms and the values that are practiced. It can be understood as an aggregation of subsystems, including ideological, economic, political, cultural and mass communication institutions. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) proposed that media sociologists should pay more attentions to exploring the differences between the social structures in different societies. As a powerful influence of media content creation, the social system can sometimes be difficult, as to some extent that they have been taken for granted and naturalized in

day-to-day activities. The second-level of influences Shoemaker and Reese (2014) suggested comes from social institutions, which underlines the interrelationships between media organizations and other power centers in society. As media workers strongly depend on diverse media sources for a range of information, it is reasonable to consider how political elites, interest groups, advertisers and audiences exert their power over media news frames in an attempt to serve their own interests.

The third level of influence refers to more comprehensive institutional necessity within media organizations, which would normally require media content to remain in accordance with a group of crucial benchmarks, including ownership, policies, goals, action rules, bureaucratic structure and economic viability.

The fourth level of analysis comprises organizational routines and a standardized pattern of news production. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) proposed that whilst most journalistic rules are unwritten, they still have an enormous effect on the news creation process, as media workers utilize routines as guidance for carrying out their jobs.

The final level of influence comes from journalists themselves. Specifically, it refers to the way in which journalists' individual characteristics (personal demographic features, backgrounds, roles and experience related to the professional context of the communicator, the work position of the communicator within an organization, etc.) affect the news creation process.

The hierarchical model is not the only attempt to deconstruct the underlying process of news production. The five-level model theorized by McQuail (2010) shows how power and influence could be exercised on the mass communicator, with the levels being the individual role, organization, medium/industry/institution, societal level, and international level. McQuail (2010) considered that the influence a communicator has confronted is not hierarchical, which means that

even these influences are coming from five different levels, and none of them are more prime than the other in terms of strength and direction. McQuail (2010) also implied that the interactive and negotiable relationships between mass communicators and their environments allow media institution to operate with a certain degree of autonomy and sustain its 'boundaries' with other social forces. This model provides the perspective to discuss the individual news worker, whose work is considered subordinate to organizational needs. It also expands the discussion to wider media agents and society. More importantly, as McQuail (2010) said, "media organizations in their relations with the wider society are formally or informally regulated or influenced by normative expectations on either side. Such matters as the essential freedoms of publication and the ethical guidelines for many professional activities are laid down by the 'rules of the game' of the particular society" (p.280). This suggests that the factors that influence the relationship between media groups and other societal agents are not limited to legislation, market situation or political elite, but also could be some widely accepted social and cultural rules.

On the other hand, Donsbach (2004) took a different perspective to look at journalists' psychological decisions in news making, and proposed that there are two cognitive processes involved: the need for social validation of perceptions and the need to preserve someone's existing predispositions. The first one focuses more on the social nature of the human being. The majority of journalists' work includes summarizing a story – making decisions as to what is factual and what is needed to provide perspective. When journalists attempt to make evaluative news decisions, they also consistently face four specific problems (Donsbach, 2004): time pressure, pressure of competition, lack of objective criteria, and publicness. In order to better cope with such uncertainty, social psychologists have found that media professionals rely heavily on "shared reality" to evaluate the event. This shared reality is an experience that has been established as 'valid', 'correct'

and 'proper' to the extent that it is widely recognized and approved of by a group of people. Donsbach (2004) noted that for journalists, the specific group of people with whom they shared their beliefs, opinions and attitudes would be other journalists, since social interaction and media consonance are parts of the journalistic profession. Normally, there are several journalists reporting the same event, and they pay much attention to how other media cover the story. More importantly, the 'shared reality' not only influences how different journalists cover current stories, it also builds common expectations for similar events in the future (Donsbach, 2004). The 'shared reality' amongst journalists can also be understood as news ideologies, which are used to determine the newsworthiness of an event and mirror the role journalists play in a particular social system. The second psychological factor involved in news decisions, as proposed by Donsbach (2004), is a journalist's existing knowledge and attitude. The strength of predisposition can be detected based on the selective attention paid by journalists to certain events, selective perception of certain aspects and selective retention when storing messages.

### *Comparing Chinese and American journalism practices*

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) demonstrated that the transformation of social relations and intensified globalization process require media scholars to extend the U.S. and UK based version of media sociology. It is important for researchers to be more sensitive to the global context in order to investigate journalism culture in a more comprehensive manner. Recent communication research has adopted this approach and placed emphasis on cultural, political and economic factors to evaluate journalism practice in America as well as in China.

Based on an examination of the available empirical research, this section of the paper reviews how journalism practices differ in China and U.S. This section particularly intended to provide a



comparison of journalists' role perception, perceived influence and journalistic trust in public institutions. Most of the information provided below was sourced from *The Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS)*, which was a joint academic project that has studied comparative journalism across the globe since 2007 onwards. This project currently has researchers from 66 countries, including China and the U.S., engaged in exploring diverse journalistic issues that news organizations encounter today.

**Role perception** Journalists' role perception refers to the way in which media workers think about the diverse roles involved in journalism that allows the news media to function in society. By analyzing the survey results from 1,800 journalists in 18 countries, Hanitzsch (2011) conceptualized four global professional milieus for journalists: the populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent, and the opportunist facilitator. These are based on three general dimensions: interventionism (to what extent journalists pursue a particular objective or promote certain values), power distance (to what position journalists tend to situate with the ruling power in society), and market orientation (how journalists consider the audience – i.e. as citizens or consumers). The first professional milieu - populist disseminator – refers to the group of journalists who are “most likely to provide the audience with interesting information and concentrate mainly on news that attracts the widest possible audience” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 484). Journalists from this group share a strong tendency to be a detached and objective observer rather than an active participant in order to report a story. The second professional milieu of journalists is the ‘detached watchdog’ type. Media workers of this group identify as watchdogs of business elites and government officials, who adhere to a critical and skeptical attitude towards these powerful groups. However, these journalists are not interested in advocating social change or setting political

agenda. In terms of their audience orientation, Hanitzsch (2011) indicated that this group feels obligated to disseminate political information in a timely manner in order to help citizens make democratic decisions. Additionally, they tend to frame tedious political stories in a more interesting manner to promote sales. Hanitzsch (2011) suggested this professional milieu might best represent Western journalists. The third cluster (critical change agent) holds a similarly skeptical attitude to the detached watchdog type with regards to the elites. However, journalists in this milieu are most likely to advocate social change and influence public opinion. They show intense desire to persuade their audiences to engage in civil discussion and political activity. Another characteristic of this cluster is that they are the least audience-orientated group. In other words, they weakly support ideas such as “attracting a wide audience” and “providing interesting stories”. The opportunist facilitator group constitutes the last of the professional milieu, which possesses a “relatively strong opportunist view of journalism’s role in society, namely as constructive partners of the government in the process of economic development and political transformation” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486). That is to say, members of this cluster are most likely to demonstrate a supportive attitude towards government policies and present a positive image of political and business elites. This group does not primarily perceive themselves to be detached observers whilst reporting an event. Moreover, “they pay least regard to the political information function and mobilization potentials of journalism” (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 486). Figure 1, below, presents a clear outline of how the four professional milieus are distributed in the U.S. and China.

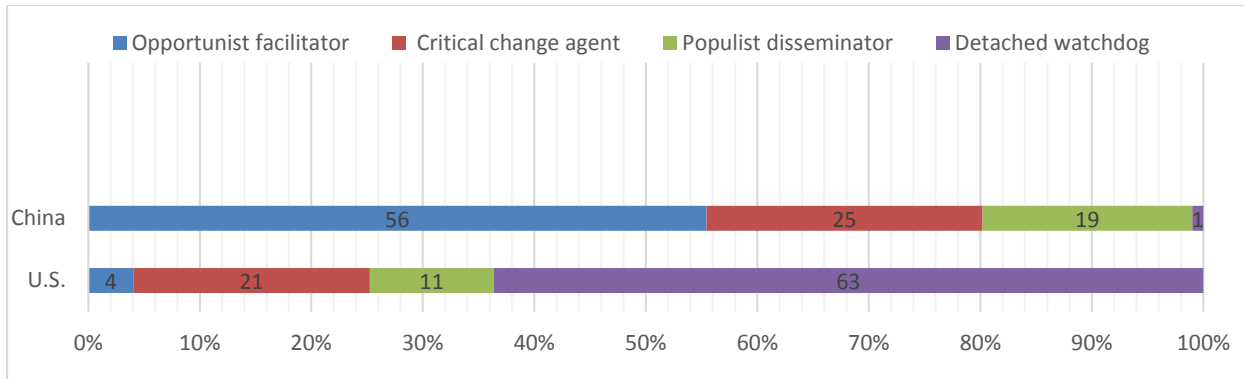


Figure 1. Distribution of professional milieus (Hanitzsch, 2011)

According to Hanitzsch (2011), the prevailing perceived role of American journalists is the detached watchdog type (63 percent), wherein the press is characterized by uninvolved participation and perceived journalism as Fourth Estate. The second large professional milieu in the U.S. is the critical change agent type (21 percent). Members of this cluster are devoted to motivating citizens to participate in civil activities and potential social change. The populist disseminator and opportunist facilitator types occupy 11 percent and 4 percent, respectively. In China, however, the opportunist facilitator dominates the journalistic field at 56 percent, wherein journalists perceive themselves as advocates and partners for government policies. This result is accordance with Chen, Zhu and Wu’s (1998) research. In their study, 64 percent of respondents attached priority to the “mouthpiece” role, which considers disseminating and explaining government regulations and the Communist Party of China (CPC) parties to be the most important duties. Thus, Hanitzsch (2011) argued that such a constructive role is strongly associated with the relatively low extent of press freedom and the interwoven linkage between the ruling party and media business. Because supporting the ruling elites reigns supreme in China in terms of role perception, it is not surprising to see that only 1 percent of journalists perceive themselves as the detached watchdog. Additionally, 25 percent of Chinese respondents identify as critical change agents and the remaining 11 percent as populist disseminators.

***Perceived influence*** Based on the recent study exploring journalists’ perceptions of influence using survey data collected from 1,700 journalists from 18 countries around the globe, Hanitzsch, and Mellado (2011) proposed six patterns of influence that journalists perceive in their professions: political influences, economic influences, organizational influences, procedural influences, professional influences and reference groups. Political influences refer to pressure and constraint from the political context (government officials, politicians and censorship). Economic influences are found in the expectation that journalists’ work to meet the profit goals of media organizations, advertisers and the needs of market. Organizational influences represent influences of management and editorial routines from multiple levels within media organizations. Procedural influences are conceptualized as “the various operational constraints faced by journalists in their everyday work, most notably those related to limited resources in terms of time and space as well as to establish standards and routines of news work” (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011, p.4). Professional influences incorporate the effect of media policies, regulations and professional norms of journalistic practices in general. The impact of reference groups is understood to come from various media sources, such as journalists in other media organizations, audiences, friends and families. The six dimensions of influences are measured as dependent variables on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not influential at all in their daily jobs and 5 meaning extremely influential. Table 1 illustrates the mean scores of each influence type for Chinese and American journalists as perceived in their work.

Table 1. Perceived influences in China and the U.S. (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011)

<i>Political Influences</i>		<i>Economic Influences</i>		<i>Professional Influences</i>		<i>Organizational Influences</i>		<i>Reference Groups</i>		<i>Procedural Influences</i>	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD

<i>China</i>	3.23	0.82	2.79	0.88	3.49	0.89	4.12	0.70	3.02	0.68	3.49	0.74
<i>U.S.</i>	1.75	0.89	2.22	0.95	3.78	0.86	3.46	0.85	2.90	0.80	3.84	0.78

As per the mean scores illustrated in Table 1, media workers in China perceived relatively high political influences in their jobs. On the other hand, journalists in U.S. felt much less impact from political factors. Additionally, higher economic influences are found amongst Chinese journalists compared to their counterparts in the U.S. Procedural influences have the largest impact in U.S., with professional influences and organizational influences considered secondary and tertiary amongst American journalists. On the other hand, organizational influences are highest in China, followed by professional influences and procedural influences. Media workers from both the U.S. and China perceive relatively strong influences from reference groups. Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) believed that the differences that exist between journalists’ perceived levels of political influences are not only related to the political features of society (index of democracy, level of press freedom and levels of political parallelism), but also to media ownership. The researchers concluded, “Media organizations that are owned by the state directly fall under the jurisdiction of the government. Under such circumstances, it is clear that members of the government have more power over newsroom decisions, either directly manipulating content or indirectly by placing “their” people in the editorial management” (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011, p.15).

***Journalistic trust in public institutions*** Based on the assumption that journalist’ attitudes towards public institutions affect the content they create, and based on the survey results of 2,000 journalists, Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) further explored the decisive forces behind journalists’ trust in public institutions. Enlightened by prior research, Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012)

categorized four main determinants to explain journalists’ confidence in public institutions: performance, interpersonal trust, media ownership and journalistic culture. Performance can be subdivided into the economic performance of a country (measured by gross domestic product and total GDP growth between 1998 and 2008) and general political performance (measured by press freedom, the index of democracy and corruption perceptions index). Interpersonal trust is introduced based on a cultural hypothesis that the more people have faith in each other in one society, the more opportunity for them to have institutional trust (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012). This variable is adopted from the World Values Survey 1999-2007. Here, media ownership is differentiated into three operational systems: private, public and state-owned. State-owned media organizations are expected to demonstrate less criticism of the government and show greater trust in public institutions due to governments’ tight control over editorial management.

In this research, power distance is utilized to measure journalistic culture, which represents journalism’s position toward the ruling elite of a society. Institutional trust is measured on a 5-point rating scale, with Table 2 providing a summary of the differences between Chinese and American journalists’ institutional trust.

Table 2. Institutional trust and performance (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012)

		<i>Political Performance</i>			<i>Economic Performance</i>			
	Institutional Trust Mean (SD)	Freedom of the Press	Index of Democracy	Corruption Perceptions Index	GDP	GDP Growth %	Interpersonal Trust %	Power Distance Mean
<i>China</i>	2.34(.66)	84	3.04	3.60	6,187	209.5	52.3	3.21
<i>U.S.</i>	1.79(.63)	17	8.22	7.30	46,901	47.2	39.3	3.39

As reported in Table 2, Chinese journalists indicate relatively higher institutional trust than American journalists. Journalists in China actually exhibit the highest confidence in public institutions amongst the eighteen investigated countries. Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) reasoned there are four main reasons for the relatively high institutional trust showed amongst Chinese journalists. First, that confidence is closely connected with transformation in the political and economic realm over a short-time period. It is believed that people may express higher satisfaction with institutional performance when they come to be conscious of positive changes in their lives (i.e. GDP growth), even other benchmarks (i.e. GDP, index of press freedom) only have relatively inferior performance. Secondly, Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) stated “survey respondents have usually limited personal experience to make informed comparison between the situation in their countries and other societies” (p.805). Thirdly, due to the comparatively authoritarian political context in China, journalists may not express their true thoughts to politically sensitive questions. Lastly, the majority of media in China is state-owned, while most media in U.S. is owned privately. Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) pointed out that journalists exhibit more trust in public institutions when they work for state-owned media.

### **Research Questions**

This study compared the use of frames in different media outlets and considers whether there are salient differences between the U.S. and Chinese media, how they differ and why they differ. Coverage from *The New York Times* and the *People’s Daily* are examined for comparative analysis. These two newspapers are selected due to their prominence, influence on other media, and large circulation. The core research question in this study is: How did *The New York Times*

and *People's Daily* compare in framing President Xi's 2015 state visit, and what political, ideological and cultural factors may explain their frames?

Building upon the theory and research of framing and journalism socialization, three research questions and one hypothesis are proposed in this study:

RQ 1: What are frames employed in the coverage of President Xi's state visit by the *People's Daily* and *The New York Times*?

Based on the different power distance and ideologies China and U.S. pertain to, as well as prior content analysis of Chinese media, Hypothesis 1 is proposed as follows:

H1: Due to the large power distance China features – compared to the U.S. – in combination with its journalism unconditionally toeing the party's dominant ideology, the general assessment of President Xi's state visit should be dominantly positive in *People's Daily*.

RQ2: What issue of the state visit is the most salient in the coverage of *The New York Times* and the *People's Daily*? (i.e., military power, economy, environment, cyber security, human rights, education, general Sino-U.S. relations, other.)

RQ3: What information sources do the *People's Daily* and *The New York Times* primarily cite?



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative content analysis (a combination of prior and emergent coding) and a qualitative assessment of overall frames in the news and editorials articles of published in *The New York Times* and *People's Daily* from September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The actual state visit was from September 22<sup>th</sup> to September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The time frame was selected because media started to warm up the trip twelve days before the official state visit. Additionally, President Xi addressed the speech at the U.N. on September 28<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, this study extended its search two weeks after the state visit in order to include any follow-up news reports.

### **Content analysis**

Quantitative content analysis is one of the most significant research mechanisms in mass communication research, which is useful for researchers to explore what audiences are encouraged to think, attend and expose to media message (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Berelson (1952) explained, "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p.489). Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005) defined quantitative content analysis as "the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods" (p. 3). They further emphasized the relationship between content analysis and content production: "News content is the product or consequence of those routines, practices, and values, is constructed by news workers, and reflects both the professional cultural of journalism and the larger society" (p.9). By examining news content, researchers could understand antecedent choices journalists and editors made in mass communication and what was happening at the time

of their production. From a cultural perspective, examining symbols used in media messages during a given period of time would reflect the dominant culture and ideology of that period, using specific images, messages or themes to clearly reveal antecedent cultural values (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

### **The People's Daily and The New York Times**

This study chose *The New York Times* and the *People's Daily* as representatives of newspaper coverage in the two countries. They were selected for this content analysis because they are widely considered as the most important national newspapers in their own country. In Pan's (2008) comparative study of framing anti-war protests, coverage from *The New York Times* and the *People's Daily* was used, and the reason for this choice was "their content influences other newspapers, wire services, news magazines and television and radio news, and has a big impact on public opinion" (p.367). Although the newspaper industry has experienced an overall decline in circulation, the newspaper is still acknowledged as a reliable source of providing information, interpreting important public events (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000).

In the case of *The New York Times*, it stands as an eminent newspaper in the United States and the world in general. Its total average circulation, which includes total print and total digital, was 2,178,674 for Monday-Friday and 2,624,277 for Sunday (O'Shea, 2015). It is generally believed as not only the most influential newspaper regarding U.S. domestic politics setting the agenda for other U.S. news media sources, but also exercises its strong influence on politicians and foreign policies in U.S. (Pan, 2008). The powerful impact *The New York Times* exerts on the international community has been recognized for a long time (Merrill, 1968). Many previous comparative studies had chosen it to represent the U.S. elite daily (e.g., Pan, 2008; Ma, 2008;

Hussein, 1996; Curran et.al, 2009). Elite press, as suggested by Merrill and Fisher (1980), is more likely to convey more serious and well-processed opinions of public events. Its website, nytimes.com, is one of the world's most popular English-language newspaper websites. According to statistics of *The Guardian*, it drew 41.6 million worldwide unique visitors in October 2014.

The *People's Daily* is selected to represent Chinese "elite press", which is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. It was founded in 1948 and is published worldwide in Chinese with a current circulation of 3 million. As one of the most influential and authoritative newspapers in China, it not only expresses Party voices, official regulations and policies, but also decides what is the appropriate tone for Chinese news media covering public events (Pan, 2008). It maintains an online presence as the *People's Daily* Online (people.cn), which is one of the most important news portals in China and provides information in 15 languages. According to the introduction of people.cn (2015), it now ranks as second most popular newspaper website worldwide with monthly unique users of 89.1 million. However, it should be noted that there are different media ownerships existing behind the *People's Daily* and *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* is completely privatized, while the *People's Daily* remains primarily state-owned. Even though the Chinese government implemented a systematic reform in media in the late 1970s (most party or state owned media organizations have attained financial autonomy from the state and are gradually becoming profit-making operations), there is still no fully independent and private newspaper in China available for this study. In fact, the *People's Daily* is the only newspaper equivalent to *The New York Times*, because of its prominence, influences and content.

## **Sampling**

Stories published by *The New York Times* were accessed by a key word search (President Xi state visit or China president state visit) from the nytimes.com and 66 articles were collected. Stories published by the *People's Daily* were screened by key terms searching (President Xi state visit or China president state visit in Chinese) from the people.cn and 112 articles were found. All news articles and editorials of President Xi' U.S. state visit were selected from September 10th 2015, twelve days before the official state visit, to October 10th, 2015, two weeks after the state visit.

## **Coding Scheme**

The unit of analysis for this research is full content. Specifically, the study pinpoints the units of analysis including, *issue salience*, *assessment of the state visit* and *main source*. Issue salience is used as coding units for salient issues identified in news messages. The general assessment of President Xi's state visit is used to code a rhetorical device used in news content. The main source is used to code incidence of sources attributed in the story. In addition, 20 percent of the sampling of this study was used as the initial assessment of media coverage. It also provides the foundation from which to develop further variables for the coding book used in analyzing the news frames from U.S. and Chinese coverage.

Issue salience: In the entire article, issue salience was coded. In other words, coders located content referring to the issue of the state visit in the story. There are eight categories: military power (i.e., South China Sea tension); economy (i.e., the importance of trade and business cooperation in a bilateral relationship); environment (i.e., policy to curb greenhouse gas emissions); cyber security (i.e., the cyberattacks and intellectual property issues); human rights

(i.e., democracy in China); education (i.e., to have American students learn Mandarin); general Sino-U.S. relations (i.e., new pattern of relationship between great powers); others.

The general assessment of President Xi's state visit: the coder located content that provided the general assessment of president Xi's state visit. Based on its inherent meaning and rhetoric description of the visit, it was categorized into four categories: a successful trip (i.e., President Xi's visit to U.S. is a major success); not an effective visit (i.e., Mr. Xi has in many ways confounded Mr. Obama's hopes and expectations); combination of achievement and conflicts in the state visit; not mentioned.

Main source: All news sources and their tones were used to measure items quoted, paraphrased or attributed in the story. The sources include twelve groups: President Xi; President Obama; Chinese official (i.e., President Xi's entourage); U.S. officials (i.e., U.S. congressman, U.S. senator); Chinese scholars (i.e., Chinese scholars who study Sino-U.S. relations and international relations); U.S. scholars (i.e., scholars who study Sino-U.S. relations and international relations); other foreign media (i.e., *the Guardian*, BBC News); Chinese citizens; American citizens; Chinese entrepreneurs; U.S. entrepreneurs; others.

### **Coding and Inter-Coder Reliability**

Two coders, who are fluent in Mandarin and English, participated in the coding procedure. All coders used a standard coding sheet written in English. Prior to coding articles, coders received training with 5 articles, which were not included in the study sample. In the training process, any inconsistent coding or unclear instructions were identified and clarified. The inter-coder reliability indicates the level of agreement among independent coders who code the same

material using the same coding instruction (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), which was calculated in this study through Scott's pi and achieved 0.83 agreements.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study compared the use of frames in different media outlets and considered whether salient differences exist between the U.S. and Chinese media, how they differ, and why they differ. Specifically, this study examined news frame, issue salience regarding the state visit, the general assessment of President Xi, and cited sources of coverage in The New York Times and People's Daily.

The number of mentioning President Xi's first state visit in People's Daily was found to be nearly twice that of The New York Times. During the selected period (September 10th – October 10th 2015), 112 related stories were published in the People's Daily, while only 66 stories were found in The New York Times. Five dominant frames emerged in the two newspapers' coverage of President Xi's first state visit to the U.S., namely: the anti-China frame; the provocateur frame; the recognition frame; the great-leader frame; and the description frame. In terms of issue salience, People's Daily mentioned 261 issues in total (or 2.33 issues per story) while The New York Times referred to 125 issues (or 1.89 issues per story). In both newspapers, the most frequently discussed issue was the economy. In terms of cited sources, People's Daily used a total of 648 sources (or 5.79 sources per story), whereas The New York Times used 446 sources (or 6.76 sources per story). The New York Times quoted U.S. officials the most, while the most commonly quoted source in People's Daily's coverage was President Xi. The next section highlights the findings from the data in light of the research questions and provides preliminary analysis.

**RQ1: What frames are employed in the coverage of President Xi's state visit by People's Daily and The New York Times?**

The press coverage of President Xi’s first state visit in the U.S. exhibited a consistent pattern of media framing regardless of the difference in national politics, ideologies and culture. Both The New York Times and People’s Daily underscored certain parts of the state visit and provided corresponding interpretations for mass audiences to understand the unfolding events. As noted above, five major news frames appeared from the press coverage of the two newspapers (anti-China frame, provocateur frame, recognition frame, great-leader frame and description frame). Each frame is comprised of a number of subthemes, which are elaborated below:

Table 3. Prominent news frames in coverage of President Xi’s first state visit

	Frames				
Media Outlets	Anti-China	Provocateur	Recognition	Great-leader	Description
<i>The New York Times</i>	32/66 (48%)	21/66 (32%)	2/66 (3%)	0	11/66 (17%)
<i>People’s Daily</i>	0	0	65/112 (58%)	24/112 (22%)	23/112 (20%)

#### *Anti-China Frame*

Consistent with the work of Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998), Wu (2006), and Hook and Pu (2006), *The New York Times*’ coverage was largely critical of the Chinese government’s action. This frame primarily depicted China as facing all kinds of crisis. Almost half (48 percent) of coverage in *The New York Times* pertained to this frame. Specifically, China was described in terms of weak economic performance, human rights controversy and aggressive military policy



(i.e., South China Sea and cyberattack), providing the foundation for extensive criticism of China as an opponent country to America. Skepticism regarding the Chinese economy was demonstrated in three aspects. The first doubt came from the uncertain performance of the Chinese stock market and broad economy:

*As President Xi Jinping heads to the United States next week for the first state visit by a Chinese leader in more than four years, his government is striving to restore confidence in its ability to manage the world's second-largest economy, after that of America. But the state's panicked response to the stock market slide and its surprise currency devaluation last month are causing concerns about China's growth prospects.* (Forsythe, 2015).

Secondly, this excerpt applies direct negative market expectations to China: "That said, China's stock market is a hot mess right now, and the country may be reaching the end of an era of enormous economic growth." (Manjoo & Issac, 2015).

In addition to explicitly highlighting China's slowing economy, *The New York Times* also discussed other emerging markets in the world. The article titled "India Replaces China as Next Big Frontier for U.S. Tech Companies" made the following assertion:

*Blocked from China itself or frustrated by the onerous demands of its government, companies like Facebook, Google and Twitter, as well as start-ups and investors, see India as the next best thing.* (Goel, 2015).

The article even made comparison between President Xi and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to emphasize the unamiable attitude of Chinese government:

*During a meeting in Seattle on Wednesday with American technology executives, China's president, Xi Jinping, was unwavering on his government's tough Internet policies. India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, on the other hand, was on a charm offensive during his own American tour.* (Goel, 2015).

This mentality of distrust was also expressed through the concern over the commitment China has made regarding climate change and its heavy reliance on coal-fired energy. In the article "China to Announce Cap-and-Trade Program to Limit Emissions", the following point is made:

*Mr. Xi's pledge underscores China's intention to act quickly and upends what has long been a potent argument among Republicans against acting on climate change: that the United States' most powerful economic competitor has not done so. But it is not clear whether China will be able to enact and enforce a program that substantially limits emissions. China's*

*economy depends heavily on cheap coal-fired electricity, and the country has a history of balking at outside reviews of its industries. China has also been plagued by major corruption cases, particularly among coal companies.* (Davis & Davenport, 2015).

*The New York Times* also cited experts' opinions on China's promise to curb carbon emissions and presented these opinions with obvious doubt:

*The challenges in China are compounded by unreliable statistics, corruption and local officials who have made blazing economic growth a point of honor. Overcoming those problems will demand far-reaching changes to the energy sector, so that trading emissions translates into reduced consumption of coal and other polluting fuels, several experts said.* (Buckley, 2015).

The second dominant script under the anti-China frame is the depiction of the Chinese government as a human rights' abuser. The frequency of this script in *The New York Times* articles was 10 (15 percent). The key word "activist" appeared 24 times, "arrest" 20 times, and "detained" 18 times. Based on those key words, it is clear that China was framed as being a society facing the deterioration of free expression and a strongly oppressive political force. Activists and their family members are portrayed as continuously having their freedom restricted in various ways by the Chinese government:

*As of Wednesday, at least 286 lawyers, legal staff, human rights advocates and their family members have been detained, arrested, held incommunicado, forbidden to leave the country, questioned, summoned or had their freedom restricted. Of these: Twenty-seven have been criminally detained or are under "residential surveillance" in a secret location. At least 10 of those detained have been charged with national security crimes, none of whom has been permitted to see a lawyer. Those in criminal detention have been held incommunicado for 46 to 69 days. Eighteen people have been forbidden to leave China, including six children of lawyers.* (Tatlow, 2015).

In addition to providing profiles of imprisoned writers, scholars and intellectuals who were imprisoned for their political views, *The New York Times* also tended to feature stories associated with the pro-democracy demonstration in Hong Kong, which was the most recent movement that evoked an image of the Chinese government repressing activists' protest. One story quoted a Hong Kong activist's warning about how the Chinese government was untrustworthy and how Americans should not trust the promises it makes:

*“If China doesn’t deliver on democracy on Hong Kong, then your president ought to know that any agreement that he might enter into with Xi Jinping could end up the same way,” Mr. Lee said. (Gladstone, 2015).*

Aside from citing activist comments, *The New York Times* also made its own judgment clear regarding the Chinese government’s intervention in democracy in Hong Kong, and it attributed the rejection of an appointment of a Hong Kong University professor to Beijing’s influence:

*But supporters of Mr. Chan say the vote is the latest sign of the growing influence of mainland China’s authoritarian politics in the vibrant civic life of Hong Kong, where many fear that the semiautonomous city’s cherished freedoms are being eroded. They say Mr. Chan was rejected because of pressure from Beijing. (Forsythe, 2015).*

*The New York Times* also insinuated that releasing the scholar who helped activists gain U.S.S asylum was interpreted as a publicity stunt:

*Hu Jia, a prominent Chinese dissident and a friend of Mr. Guo’s, described his release as a “diplomatic card” that the government hoped would ease criticism of Beijing’s crackdown on independent journalists, rights lawyers and advocates for political reform. (Jacobs, 2015).*

The summit meeting that President Xi’s attended in United Nations to recognize the 20th anniversary of a landmark women’s rights conference in Beijing was also used as an opportunity to criticize China for imprisoning prominent feminist activists. Only one article mentioned that U.S. had also lagged on women’s rights and that both America and China could commit greater effort on women’s issues:

*Women’s rights advocates point out that neither the United States nor China has a spotless record on women’s rights. A World Bank study this month said the United States was one of four countries around the world with no national laws requiring paid parental leave. The United States has also not met the global target for having women make up at least 30 percent of its legislature, and its share of roughly 19 percent is significantly lower than that of many countries in the world. (Sengupta, 2015).*

In addition to the portrayal of China as an abuser of human rights, *The New York Times* also framed its coverage around the image of an aggressive and threatening Chinese government with regards to the military issue. This script appeared 12 times (18 percent) in *The New York Times* reports, focusing on denouncing China’s military expansion both in cyberspace and the South China Sea. In the article “China Building Airstrip on 3rd Artificial Island, Images Show”, the

author repeatedly used the term “contested water” to describe the South China Sea, which is the area China claimed to have “indisputable sovereignty” over. The report also cited Western analysts’ views on how these artificial islands would strengthen China’s military capacity and how the airstrip would function in order to communicate the message that China was threatening U.S. interests in East Asia:

*In April, when satellite images showed that China was building the 10,000-foot runway on Fiery Cross, 170 miles west of Mischief Reef, American military analysts called the installation a strategic game changer. The size of the runway meant a fighter jet could land on the island, they said. (Perlez, 2015).*

Besides presenting China’s military expansion in South China Sea, this script also mentioned additional aggressive military performance in the form of China endangering U.S. homeland security. A Chinese fighter jet passed a United States spy plane 80 miles east of the Shandong Peninsula in the Yellow Sea. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei stated that “China was committed to maritime and aviation security”, whereas Pentagon officials declared that “the Chinese fighter jet executed a barrel roll, apparently to show off its weapons payload to the American pilot” and “China has continued to show off its military prowess to the United States in the years since the Hainan episode. This month, five Chinese Navy ships entered United States territorial waters off Alaska, Defense Department officials said. That move came as President Obama was touring Alaska” (Cooper, 2015). This script also quotes third party resources to highlight extensive complaints about China’s military strategy and referred to it as the “Chinese Invasion”: “Renato Etac, 35, a fishing boat captain who says Chinese vessels there routinely chase and try to ram his ship. “I can’t even count the Chinese ships I see, there are so many” (Hernandez, 2015).

Aside from condemning China’s threatening military presence in East Asia, the cyber threat China posed gained high-profile media attention. First, *The New York Times* reports tended to

underline the large-scale cyber espionage that the Chinese military has been hugely involved in has become a critical national security threat, from “Unit 61398 of the People’s Liberation Army in China was exposed as the force behind the theft of intellectual property from American companies” to “the theft of the 22 million security dossiers from the Office of Personnel Management”. Just one day before President Xi met with President Obama in the White House, the report still emphasized, “the Office of Personnel Management said Wednesday that the hackers who stole security dossiers from the agency also got the fingerprints of 5.6 million federal employees” (Sanger, 2015) and attributed this attack to China. Coverage of failed dialogue between the U.S. and China on the cyberattack issue helped to depict an uncooperative and obstinate Chinese government in the face of high-tension bilateral relations:

*Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, described the talks with the Chinese as “pretty blunt,” and one of the officials who met with Mr. Meng, China’s domestic security chief, was less diplomatic, calling the talks “pretty ugly”.* (Sanger, 2015).

Skepticism about the fulfillment of the Chinese government’s promise to address intellectual property theft was demonstrated after President Xi and President Obama agreed to stop cybercrime:

*Spencer Rascoff, chief executive of Zillow, a real estate website, who was at the technology meeting, “They are saying all the right things. But the American business community is still skeptical — actions speak louder than words”.* (Perlez & Wingfield, 2015).

*The New York Times* reports also cited Obama’s warning regarding America’s willingness to take sanctions against China if China continued its rampant cyber espionage:

*Mr. Obama said in a question-and-answer session with business leaders on economic issues. “We are prepared to take some countervailing actions in order to get their attention”.* (Davis, 2015).

Four of the articles did briefly mention that U.S. government has also often conducted similar cyber espionage to China, Iran and Russia, but in a self-justified way:

*And while American officials rarely discuss it, even while off the record, the idea of placing too many limits on America’s offensive cyberpower sends a shiver through the Pentagon and*

*its new United States Cyber Command. They believe the American-led attack on Iran's nuclear infrastructure is critical to forcing it to the bargaining table. (Sanger, 2015).*

### *Provocateur Frame*

The second dominant frame in *The New York Times* coverage is the depiction of President Xi as a “provocateur” whose image was built as an autocrat to deliberately confront the U.S. and harnesses nationalism and propaganda more so than his predecessors. Of the 66 articles from *The New York Times*, 21 stories (32 percent) included some form of the term “provocateur” to portray President Xi. U.S. government officials and analysts of Sino-U.S. relations were the major sources in *The New York Times* reports. On the basis of information these ‘insiders’ provided, President Xi was framed as an intractable and obstinate leader who continuously makes decisions against U.S. will in various matters.

In the economic sphere, reports criticized President Xi for “reasserting the primacy of the state regardless of the long-run economic cost” (Buckley & Perlez, 2015). With regards to foreign policy, the following point was made:

*Mr. Xi “seems less interested in cutting deals” than his predecessors, Professor Lampton said. “He has demonstrated a willingness to have more friction with the outside world than his predecessors” (Buckley & Perlez, 2015).*

One report explicitly summarized President Xi as “the Chinese president who defied American predictions by challenging the United States’ superpower status early and directly” (Sanger & Davis, 2015), which has heavily frustrated and disappointed the American side due to the deliberate causing of friction and conflict. To practice the journalistic principle of balance, *The New York Times* report gave a Chinese scholar the opportunity to defend President Xi, quoting:

*Shen Dingli, a professor of international relations and expert on Sino-American relations at Fudan University in Shanghai, said American policy makers had trouble understanding Mr. Xi because he’s an initiator, whereas traditionally Chinese leaders were reactive, waiting to respond. He believes we are a major power and is more willing to confront the U.S., Professor Shen added. (Buckley & Perlez, 2015).*

Secondly, *The New York Times* coverage devoted a substantial attention to portraying President Xi as a leader whose vision is primarily built around concentrating his authority, leading to the suggestion of dictatorship and authoritarian control:

*After almost three years in office, Mr. Xi has amassed daunting power. He has taken control of the party's most important policy committees. His scorching anticorruption campaign has subdued potential opponents. His prime minister and other colleagues have been relegated to cheerleading roles.* (Buckley & Perlez, 2015).

In addition to describing how President Xi keeps a tight grip on his power, this script rhetorically employed symbolic apparatus to enhance the suggestion President Xi's totalitarian attitude:

*President Xi Jinping of China looked regal as he stood in a limousine moving past Tiananmen Square this month, wearing a traditional suit of the kind favored by Mao and waving at parade troops assembled at attention. But the luster of Mr. Xi's imperial presidency has dulled lately.* (Buckley & Perlez, 2015).

To give its "power-accumulating" leader depiction more strength, *The New York Times* featured three stories on Xi Jinping's inner circle to emphasize the opaque policy councils in his authority and challenges presented to the U.S. and other nations:

*The Chinese president keeps a tight grip on his power and does not permit others to speak for him. Foreign officials and scholars have found it difficult to penetrate President Xi's inner circle and get to know the men who advise him on policy and matters of state.* (Wong, 2015).

*The New York Times* believed cold shoulders offered by President Xi's inner circle to develop ties with U.S. officials arose because of the mentality the Chinese have: "Western ideas and influences will undermine the Communist Party and lead to a "color revolution" (Wong, 2015). This was also one of the reasons for Xi's renewed emphasis on nationalism: to secure the "China Dream" and lead the nation along the road to rejuvenation. On the other hand, the U.S. side was quite negative about Xi's top-down nationalism policy and considered it as failing to meet U.S. expectations for bilateral relations:

*As the most powerful leader in China in decades, Mr. Xi presented an opportunity for greater collaboration," said Bonnie S. Glaser, senior adviser on Asia at the Center for Strategic and*

*International Studies. Instead, he “turned out to be an ultranationalist, bent on achieving the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation even if it meant damaging ties with the U.S. as well as China’s neighbors. (Davis & Sanger, 2015).*

In terms of President Xi’s publicity efforts, *The New York Times* satirized the Chinese propaganda video and it was released to coincide with President Xi Jinping’s state visit to the United States: “What follows is three minutes of sycophantic soundbites, many of which could have come from Justin Bieber fans gushing about their pop idol” (Levin, 2015).

### *Recognition Frame*

In sharp contrast to its U.S. counterpart, *People’s Daily* had built a generally supportive and complementary image of the Chinese government in its coverage of President Xi’s state visit to the U.S. Among the 112 stories collected from the *People’s Daily* newspaper, 65 articles (58 percent) were written under the recognition frame. This frame primarily refers to China as a rising power that must receive acceptance across the globe, stressing that its increasing global influence has to be recognized. The recognition frame was constructed through extensive reports expressing a welcoming attitude towards the U.S. side and emphasizing China’s increasing confidence and corresponding responsibility in the international community. One of the most important themes in the *People’s Daily* report is the insistence that President Xi received a warm welcome from the U.S. before and during his visit, in order to demonstrate that the trip was supposed to be an equal dialogue between two countries. A typical example of this can be seen in the following excerpt:

*The governor's office of Washington released the invitation letter to President Xi, which was written by Governor Jay Inslee on April 17. In the letter, Governor Inslee extended the invitation for President Xi to visit Seattle this autumn. He particularly applauded President Xi’s contribution to establish sister city ties between Fuzhou and Tacoma in 1994 and emphasized that was an important milestone and helped further strength U.S.-Sino relations. (Chen, 2015).*



In addition to citing U.S. officials' welcoming words during the visit, this script underscored how President Xi reached a consensus with President Obama on various issues and China had earned the respect of the U.S.:

*Vice President Biden said the two presidents had candid and in-depth discussions on many occasions in the last two days, adding that both sides reached broad consensus on strengthening mutual trust, promoting cooperation in various fields, and properly managing their differences. He reaffirmed his country's stance that China's peaceful development will have a positive influence on the world. The United States and China share broad common interests, and there is no problem that cannot be resolved although there are indeed some problems between the two countries, he said, the two countries are facing competition, but it is a healthy one. (Du, 2015).*

In order to make sense of the “welcomed by the U.S.” script, reasoning devices were used in the *People's Daily* reports to provide plausible explanations for the respectful and courteous treatment President Xi received from the Obama administration. First and foremost was the importance of Sino-U.S. relations. Not only would a partnership between the two nations have a tremendous impact on the lives of citizens in each of the two countries, such relations between two super powers would have enormous global influence:

*The two nations have cooperated with each other closely in the fields of combating terrorism and piracy, responding to climate change, and international peacekeeping, etc. The two countries have played great roles in promoting global economic recovery, reaching agreement on the nuclear issue of Iran, fighting the Ebola epidemic and promoting the peace process in Afghanistan, among others. Presently, China and the United States are both standing at a historical point, faced with opportunities and challenges. Therefore, it is inevitable for the two countries to hold different points of view and to have differences between them. Yet, their common interests outweigh by far their differences, and cooperation is the mainstream in the bilateral relations. (Wan, 2015).*

Secondly, it was highlighted the profound friendship between the U.S. and China also accounts for the warm hospitality President Xi received in the U.S.:

*China has a long history of friendship with the United States. In 1971, the visit of U.S. table tennis team had opened a new chapter of U.S.-China relations. Since the reform and open policy, China had begun to interact and committed closer engagement with America. At present, the two countries have formed a 43 friend provinces/states and 200 sister cities ties. The number of people traveled between two countries last year were more than 4.3 million. Currently, China has opened more than 100 Confucius institutes in the United States. Also,*

*there are thousands of primary and middle school students in U.S. learning Mandarin at present. (Wang & Yuan, 2015).*

Since the Chinese government has been criticized for not taking sufficient responsibility in international affairs, another recurring theme under the recognition frame was the emphasis that China has committed considerable effort to United Nations' work. By illustrating specific statistics, this script was able to convey the message that China already shouldered responsibility in various ways, which was consistent with its economic strength and position:

*Over the past 60 years, China has provided nearly 400 billion yuan in assistance to 166 countries and international organizations, forgiven inter-governmental interest-free loans owed by heavily-indebted poor countries seven times, and given medical support to 69 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania. (Li, 2015).*

Aside from referring to the contributions of the past, this script devoted a large amount of attention to the promise that President Xi made in his U.N. speech to construct the image of a responsible world power:

*President Xi pledged an initial \$2 billion investment in developing countries, and to step up investment in the least developed countries - mostly in Africa - to reach \$12 billion by 2030. While it was warmly welcomed by leaders of the developing states at the meeting, this Chinese offer, plus the earlier \$3.1 billion offer to help developing countries in fighting climate change, also did much to defuse a muffled discontent among the developed countries headed by the US that China was not doing enough for the developing world, beyond just rhetoric. (Li, 2015).*

Surprisingly, two *New York Times* articles fall under this frame. One addressed President Xi's remarks in the U.N. speech and the other emphasized the courteous reception the President received at the state dinner:

*In a reflection of just how important Washington's relationship with Beijing has become, President Obama on Friday held his second state dinner for China, the only country to receive such a double honor from him. (Harris, 2015).*

### *Great-leader Frame*

The second major frame in the *People's Daily* coverage is the great-leader frame. Nearly 24 stories (22 percent) in *People's Daily* suggested that President Xi is an admirable leader with vision

and competence. This theme essentially deals with the remarkable achievement President Xi had attained as a result of the trip and with the image of President Xi as an approachable leader who was immensely popular with the masses. The key word “成果” (achievement) appeared in the *People's Daily* reports 105 times, while “共识” (consensus) was used 70 times. Overall, this frame painted an optimistic portrait of President Xi, with excellent diplomatic skills and an attitude of cherishing the people. The accomplishment President Xi achieved during his visit to the U.S., on various issues, was a recurring topic in the *People's Daily* coverage. For example, it was mentioned that 49 results were achieved during the meeting:

*During Xi and his US counterpart Barack Obama's summit on Friday in the White House and a three-hour-long talk on ties in the Blair House on Thursday night, covering a wide range of issues regarding investment, people-to-people exchanges, climate change and coordination and cooperation in multilateral affairs. (Du, 2015).*

In order to make those achievements more relatable to readers, *People's Daily* also featured three stories that thoroughly analyzed how these results were reached between two presidents and how they would impact normal citizens' lives on daily basis:

*During the visit, President Xi and President Obama held in-depth, candid, constructive conversations. The two sides reached broad consensus and achieved 49 important results, including the new type of international relations, the bilateral cooperation, the Asia-pacific regional affairs and global climate change. The following will tell you how these achievements will affect your life in several aspects. (Yuan & Fu, 2015).*

The other prominent aspect of the great-leader frame is highlighting the genial and amicable attitude of President Xi when engaging with the masses. To add some historical perspective to the depiction of Xi as China's populist leader, *People's Daily* featured several stories on the experiences President Xi acquired when visiting the U.S. during the three years prior to his presidency. Such stories attempted to create the impression that President Xi is an everyman', referring to 'normal' things that the average Chinese person could relate to: “watched the LA Lakers face off against the Phoenix Suns”, “Xi Jinping and Joe Biden ate chocolate in the meetings” and “New York's times square giant screen played welcome video on Xi Jinping's visit

to the United States”. Not only do these humanistic stories stress that President Xi is an experienced leader in diplomatic affairs, they also make him a real person rather than a government official who appeared highest on the social ladder. In addition, Chinese-Americans or Chinese people living in the U.S. were frequently quoted to comment on their experiences meeting with President Xi during the visit in order to underline President Xi’s popularity and charm:

*This morning I came to Seattle downtown at 6:30 am to welcome President Xi and the first lady. When I got there, there were already nine buses full of people waiting in the parking lot. People from various places waving the flag of China and the United States seemed like to attend a party. Even this morning was only 50 degrees Fahrenheit, but I felt deeply warm when I got together with those joyful compatriots to greet President, said by the Seattle residents Jiang Mingfei. (Han, 2015).*

#### *Description Frame*

The description frame is primarily concerned with coverage describing affairs related to President Xi’s state visit. Instead of presenting an in-depth analysis of the events that occurred during President Xi’s state visit, coverage pertaining to this frame typically tended to provide descriptive information regarding the trip. A total of 11 stories (17 percent) in *The New York Times* and 23 stories (20 percent) in *People’s Daily* can be categorized under the description frame. Both news outlets devoted considerable efforts to conveying facts related to the state visit without providing excessively subjective interpretations.

In the U.S. case, although stories did not explicitly criticize China or the Chinese government’s actions, some of the journalists did express negative feelings about China in a more implicit and indirect way by demonstrating specific matters:

*And while Pope Francis chose to break bread in Washington on Thursday with hundreds of homeless people, President Xi Jinping of China will be feasting on lamb and lobster at the White House on Friday night at a black-tie state dinner. The visits of the bishop of Rome and the Chinese president to the nation’s capital came only hours apart, but they could not have been more different. The pope came bearing a message of peace and help for the least privileged, while Mr. Xi’s trip was choreographed to maximize the image of China as a great*

power worthy of respect and the highest measures of protocol from the leader of the free world. (Demczuk, 2015).

On the other hand, the *People's Daily* articles belonging to the description frame were mainly concerned with the official statement of the Chinese government or supplementary stories related to the state visit, such as: “外交部：习近平主席访美是一次历史性访问” (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the state visit of President Xi in U.S. is a historical one); “专家解读：为何习近平访美首站选择西雅图” (Expert analysis: why President Xi chose Seattle as the first stop in his state visit); and “随习近平访美的 15 位商界大佬有何背景？” (What is the background of the 15 entrepreneurs who participated in the visit along with President Xi in U.S.?).

**H1: Due to the large power distance China features – compared to the U.S. – in combination with its journalism unconditionally toeing the party’s dominant ideology, the general assessment of President Xi’s state visit should be dominantly positive in *People’s Daily*.**

Table 4. General assessment of President Xi’s first state visit - news coverage distribution

The General Assessment		<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>People’s Daily</i>
Positive	Count	1	53
	% of total articles	1%	47%
Negative	Count	15	0
	% of total articles	23%	0%
Combination	Count	13	7
	% of total articles	20%	6%
Not mentioned	Count	37	52
	% of total articles	56%	47%

Total	Count	66	112
	% of total articles	100%	100%

H1 predicted that the general assessment of Presidents Xi’s state visit would be different between Chinese and American newspapers because of the different ideologies, journalistic systems and power distance the two nations are characterized by. *People’s Daily* tended to make a relatively higher positive evaluation of the state visit, while *The New York Times* tended to reflect a less positive evaluation of President Xi’s trip.

The findings of the research strongly support H1 according to Table 4, with almost half (53 articles) of the Chinese newspaper articles using a positive tone to appraise the outcome President Xi achieved during his first state visit in the U.S. This figure was much higher than that of *The New York Times*, where only one article presented a positive evaluation of the trip. The positive tone was identified consistently in the *People’s Daily* reports during the sampling period. Before the state visit, the Chinese newspaper set high expectations for the President’s trip to the U.S., declaring it a major “historical”, “meaningful” and “milestone” event for Sino-U.S. relations. During and after the visit, the Chinese articles summarized the visit as “fruitful”; declared that President Xi and President Obama “reached broad consensus on the bilateral relations”; and reported that the two countries promised to “strengthen cooperation and jointly cope with challenges on various issues”. No Chinese articles were found to have a negative tone towards President Xi’s state visit, unlike 23 percent of the articles in *The New York Times*.

Prior to the actual state visit, 6 articles in *The New York Times* repeatedly demonstrated that the U.S. side had no expectation that President Xi’s visit would have tangible results, employing negative rhetoric to emphasize the sharp conflict between two countries: “There is little chance,

he said, that the sharp differences will be resolved at the meeting between Mr. Xi and President Obama”; “Mr. Xi is expected to yield little on points of contention between the United States and China”; and “There is little expectation that Mr. Xi will promise anything as drastic as he did last year”. Instead of providing a general assessment for the whole trip, around half of the coverage from the Chinese and U.S. newspapers were focused on particular aspects of the trip. In addition, 13 articles (20 percent) from *The New York Times* demonstrate a combined or balanced evaluation of President Xi’s trip, while only 7 articles (6 percent) from *People’s Daily* were found to be under the same category.

**RQ2: What issue of the state visit is the most salient in the coverage of *The New York Times* and *People’s Daily*? (i.e., military power, economy, environment, cyber security, human rights, education, general Sino-U.S. relations, other.)**

Table 5: Issue salience in President Xi’s first state visit to the U.S. - coverage in *People’s Daily* and *The New York Times*

Issues (Count, % of total articles)	<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>People’s Daily</i>
Military power	18 (15%)	24 (9%)
Economy	27 (22%)	65 (25%)
Environment	13 (10%)	19 (7%)
Cyber security	24	28

	(19%)	(11%)
Human rights	20 (16%)	9 (3%)
Education	2 (2%)	20 (8%)
General Sino-U.S. relations	4 (4%)	62 (24%)
Others	17 (14%)	34 (13%)
Total	125 (100%)	261 (100%)

The second research question sought to examine issue salience in the coverage of *The New York Times* and *People’s Daily*. The economy was the most prominent issue in both newspapers, which mainly discussed business, commerce and trade agreements between the two nations. However, the ways in which *The New York Times* and *People’s Daily* presented the same issue varied tremendously. In the U.S. case, discontent over the Chinese government’s extracted pledge of compliance from U.S. high tech companies was easily detected. Concerns were raised that the Chinese government was using its country’s vast market as leverage in order to force some American firms to commit to turning user data and intellectual property over to the government when required. In contrast, coverage addressing economic issues in *People’s Daily* primarily explained the importance of bilateral trade and financial corporation. It also suggested that China was appealing to international investment with the market under the CPP’s administration.



The second salient issue in *The New York Times* was cybersecurity at 19 percent of articles, which was presented in just 11 percent of coverage in *People's Daily*. Similar to most other issues, the Chinese and American newspapers chose to highlight different aspects of the cybersecurity issue. *The New York Times* primarily condemned the cyber espionage that China had conducted in the U.S. and was suspicious of whether China would fulfill its pledge on cybersecurity. On the other hand, *People's Daily* predominantly celebrated the agreement China had reached with U.S. to jointly fight cybercrimes, in which both countries “agreed to step up investigation assistance and information sharing on cybercrime cases”.

The cybersecurity issue was closely followed by human rights issues, at 16 percent of articles in *The New York Times* and only 3 percent of articles in *People's Daily*. *The New York Times* devoted considerable attention to constructing the depiction of China as an abuser of human rights, while *People's Daily* applauded the progress China had achieved in women's rights. Military power took fourth place in *The New York Times* articles, at 14 percent compared to 9 percent in *People's Daily*. With regards to this issue, *The New York Times* explicitly criticized the aggressive island building the Chinese government had taken in the South China Sea, while the *People's Daily* repeatedly underscored the concept of “China's peaceful rise”, which stressed that, as a rising power, China would not violate the sovereignty of other nations. Environmental issues were discussed in 10 percent of articles in *The New York Times* and 7 percent of articles in *People's Daily*. The former newspaper questioned the viability of China's cap on the carbon dioxide emission plan while the latter primarily claimed that China and the U.S. would work together on climate change to benefit the world.

Interestingly, the issue of general Sino-U.S. relations stressing a “joining of hands” between China and the U.S. gained considerable attention from *People's Daily* at 24 percent, but just 4

percent in *The New York Times*. Regarding this topic, *People’s Daily* was concerned with the “new model of major –country relationship between U.S. and China”, which is a relationship “based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation”. Additionally, both newspapers published numerous articles pertaining to the “others” category, at 15 percent and 13 percent in *The New York Times* and *People’s Daily*, respectively. In the *People’s Daily*, 11 articles discussed the cooperation that China and U.S. had achieved in China’s anti-corruption action, whereas only a single American article mentioned this topic, and only briefly. *The New York Times* devoted more attention to the Pope’s visit to the U.S. and to the state dinner. The issue of education occupied 2 percent of coverage in *The New York Times* coverage and 8 percent in *People’s Daily*. Both newspapers discussed about the announcement of the “One Million Strong” plan, which aimed to have one million American students learning Mandarin by 2020.

**RQ3: What information sources do *People’s Daily* and *The New York Times* primarily cite?**

Table 6: Source frequencies on the President Xi’s first state - visit coverage of *People’s Daily* and *The New York Times*

Sources (Count, % of total articles)	<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>People’s Daily</i>
President Xi	41 (9.2%)	235 (36.3%)
President Obama	67 (15.0%)	7 (1.0%)
Chinese Official	51 (11.4%)	43 (6.6%)

U.S. Official	104 (22.3%)	80 (13.3%)
Chinese Scholar	20 (4.5%)	61 (9.4%)
U.S. Scholar	47 (10.5%)	22 (3.4%)
Other Foreign Media	1 (0.2%)	29 (4.5%)
Chinese Citizen	46 (10.3%)	5 (0.8%)
U.S. Citizen	15 (3.4%)	48 (7.4%)
Chinese Entrepreneur	0 (0%)	13 (2.0%)
U.S. Entrepreneur	10 (2.2%)	31 (4.8%)
Others	44 (9.9%)	74 (11.4 %)
Total	446 (100%)	648 (100%)

The third research question sought to discover the sources that *People's Daily* and *The New York Times* quoted in their coverage of President Xi's first state visit in the U.S. In both newspapers, all officials (i.e. including President Xi, President Obama, Chinese officials and U.S.

officials) were the major sources, with those sources appearing in 56.2 percent of *People's Daily* articles and 58.9 percent of coverage in *The New York Times*. However, if examining source distribution separately, there are observable differences between the two newspapers. Specifically, the most dominant source in *People's Daily* coverage were President Xi (36.3 percent) followed by U.S. officials (13.3 percent). In *The New York Times*, however, the most frequently cited source was U.S. officials (22.3 percent) followed by President Obama (15.0 percent). It is worth noting that *People's Daily* quoted more American officials (13.3%) than domestic officials (9.4 percent), whereas *The New York Times* used domestic official sources (23.3 percent) more often than Chinese official sources (11.4 percent). A similar pattern was also found in the source categories of Chinese citizens and U.S. citizens: *People's Daily* cited U.S. citizens (7.4 percent) more often than Chinese citizen (0.8 percent) while *The New York Times* quoted Chinese citizens (10.3 percent) at a higher frequency than U.S. citizens (3.4 percent). Both newspapers were more inclined to cite the comments of scholars from their own countries, with Chinese scholars and U.S. scholars cited in 9.4 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively, of coverage in *People's Daily*. On the other hand, *The New York Times* cited Chinese scholars in 4.5 percent of articles and U.S. scholars in 10.5 percent of articles. The voices of entrepreneurs, including entrepreneurs from the U.S. and China, appeared less frequently, representing a combined 6.8 percent of coverage in *People's Daily* and 2.2 percent in *The New York Times*. In addition, *People's Daily* cited other foreign media more frequently, at a rate of 4.5 percent, while *The New York Times* cited other foreign media in just 0.2 percent of coverage. Finally, other resources occupied 11.4 percent of coverage in *People's Daily* 9.9 percent of all quoted sources in *The New York Times*.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### **Discussion**

This thesis conducted a quantitative content analysis and qualitative evaluation of news frames to examine the coverage of President Xi's first state visit to the United States in *People's Daily* and *The New York Times*. The aim of this research was to compare the different news frames employed by Chinese and American newspapers while noting political, ideological and cultural factors to explain corresponding frames. As the results from the previous section illustrated, both *People's Daily* and *The New York Times* interpreted President Xi's trip to the U.S. through the adoption of different frames, subjective evaluation, selection of issues and the choice of quoted sources.

Five dominant frames were articulated in the two newspaper. *The New York Times* successfully constructed an "anti-China" frame (with "aggressive military action", "abuser of human rights" and "weak economic performance" scripts), the "provocateur" frame (with "autocrat deliberately confronting U.S." and "harness nationalism" scripts) and the description frame. In contrast, the three distinct frames embedded in *People's Daily* articles were the "recognition" frame ("welcoming attitude from the U.S. side" and "China as a responsible rising power"), the "great-leader" frame ("productive trip in U.S." and "populist leader") and the description frame. Although both newspapers devoted some of their coverage the description frame, the two news discourses constructed completely different social realities for President Xi's state visit - specifically, different images of the Chinese government and President Xi.

The general assessment of the trip found in *People's Daily* was largely positive with no negative comments identified. In contrast, 43 percent of *The New York Times* articles gave a negative or

mixed evaluation of President Xi's trip. The commonality that the two newspapers shared was that around half of each of their articles made no specific comment towards President Xi's entire trip.

Thirdly, the most salient issue in *People's Daily* was the economy (25 percent) followed by general Sino-U.S. relations (24 percent, other issues (13 percent) and cybersecurity (11 percent). In *The New York Times*, the most frequent topic was also the economy (22 percent), followed by the issue of cybersecurity (19 percent), human rights (16 percent) and military power (15 percent).

The fourth major finding of this research was concerned with the sources that *People's Daily* and *The New York Times* quoted in their articles. Consistent with the results of previous studies, the results of the current study suggest that both news discourses were inclined to cite official sources more often than any other type of source. In fact, the overall category of officials (including President Xi, President Obama, Chinese officials and U.S. officials) appeared in 56.2 percent of *People's Daily* articles and 58.9 percent of articles in *The New York Times*. However, *People's Daily* quoted U.S. officials more frequently than domestic officials. Similarly, both newspapers were found to be more likely to cite foreign citizens than their domestic counterparts. Finally, American and Chinese entrepreneurs appeared infrequently in the chosen articles from both *People's Daily* and *The New York Times*.

#### *General assessment and frames*

*The New York Times* constructed an antagonistic image of President Xi and the Chinese government in various aspects, with coverage casting the Chinese President's state visit under the overarching "anti-China" frame, which remained consistent throughout coverage of the whole trip. The framing device used by *The New York Times* depicted China in a negative light, suggesting that China was a problematic nation both internally and externally, that it behaved deceitfully, and

that it had to follow certain rules in order to earn respect from the international community. Firstly, coverage emphasized the incompetence of the Chinese government as evidenced by its handling of the slowing economy and unstable stock market. Secondly, the aggressive island building in the South China Sea area and the increasing cyberattack both contributed to the construction of an image of China as an “uncooperative”, “unamiable” and “threatening” government. By providing stories related to the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement and recently arrested activists, *The New York Times* successfully reinforced the predisposed “human rights’ abuser” image it had built for the Chinese government. Although *The New York Times* did have two stories that recognized China as a rising power, playing an important role in international affairs, neither of these articles constructed a positive image of the Chinese government via in-depth analysis. In terms of the depiction of President Xi, *The New York Times* was inclined to portray him as a “provocateur” who dared to go against U.S. will directly. The script of the “mysterious inner circle of President Xi” and “vigorously advocate nationalism” further reinforced the proposition of an “autocratic” communist leader.

The reports of *The New York Times* were evidently influenced by journalistic norms of the “China frame”, dominant ideology of anti-communism and elite ideology in the United States. As Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) assert, a “China frame” has persisted in U.S. newspaper coverage of China throughout the last several decades, in which journalists have attempted to highlight the failures and problems that the communist state has experienced while enforcing the image of China as a nation of “deceitful communists”. Although the anti-communist narrative had been suspended for years around the time of President Nixon’s visit to China, the Tiananmen Square student protest caused this frame to reemerge in American news coverage. This pre-existing narrative of reporting about China with a negative skew could have impacted the manner

in which U.S. journalists wrote stories about President Xi's trip, since they might utilize this standardized pattern or "shared reality" to guide their work, as suggested by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). Media practitioners need to learn how journalism is accomplished in an organization and how a similar story has been written in the past, especially when they enter the newsroom environment. The standardized "anti-communist" framing pattern that existed for decades may become the reference to guide the story, and previous studies (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 1998; Wu, 2006; Duan & Takahashi 2016) confirmed this.

In addition, the dominant ideology of capitalism and anti-communism helped shape the negative portrayal of the Chinese government and its president. In *The New York Times*, journalists explicitly claimed that China was "ideological adversary" to the U.S. in five different comments, stating that China's aggressive action was extremely threatening to American national security. One article quoted a former Chinese Colonel to support the mutual adversaries' statement: "Colonel Liu said, 'Washington sees 1.3 billion people as enemies. Washington sees China as an adversary, and as a result that will push China to become an enemy of the United States'". (Wong, 2015). In addition, some of the reports in *The New York Times* were inclined to associate China with other "ideological enemies" of the U.S., such as Russia and Iran, in order to stress the point that "China is not one of the U.S. alliances". This point can be seen in the excerpt:

*But the escalating cyberconflict poses a particularly complex problem, because there is no equivalent of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty for computer networks. That is exactly what makes the use of cybertechniques and weapons so attractive to the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians and the North Koreans — and, to some extent, the United States.* (Sanger, 2015).

As Chin-Chuan Lee (2003) claimed, "A nation has to construct 'them' to anchor 'us'. Progressive voices at home can turn indifferent, intolerant or belligerent when it comes to foreign countries. The U.S. media habitually made what Herman and Chomsky (1988) called 'worthy victims' out of Communist abuser to highlight the superiority of capitalism democracy, while



playing down human rights atrocities committed by U.S. allies” (p.77). Furthermore, the elite ideology also prevailed as one the primary influences on the “anti-China” framing and the general assessment, and the attitude of the administration in power towards China clearly demonstrated their negative feeling about the Chinese government and President Xi:

*One of the Republican contenders in the 2016 presidential election, Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin, urged Mr. Obama in August to withdraw the invitation to Mr. Xi and to “focus on holding China accountable over its increasing attempts to undermine U.S. interests.” His rival for the nomination, Donald J. Trump, has led the charge against China, taking to television and Twitter to disseminate harsh words about China’s economy: “Because China’s going bad it’s going to bring us down, too, because we’re so heavily coupled with China,” he recently told Fox News. He has also said he would offer Mr. Xi a McDonald’s hamburger rather than a state dinner. (Perlez, 2015).*

Additionally, the value of favoring conflict in U.S. journalism was also obvious in the quantitative results of the study (Table 4), with a total of 43 percent of articles mentioning that confrontation and controversy occurred during President Xi’s trip. At the same time, the journalistic values of “objectivity” and “balance” were reflected in the general assessment of President Xi’s state visit, in which 56 percent of articles gave no specific evaluation of the whole trip (Table 4). Moreover, the small power distance that American society features and journalists’ perceived role as “fourth estate” may also account for the neutral and slightly negative assessment of President Xi. Because of the relatively small power distance that exists between journalists (less powerful members of the society) and political leaders, it is easier – and makes sense - for journalists in the U.S. to critically comment on foreign governments’ policies and actions.

*People’s Daily*, on the other hand, presented an efficient and respectful picture of President Xi and the Chinese government in its news coverage. Instead of focusing on providing a negative depiction of the other country, the reports in *People’s Daily* paid more attention to the results that the Chinese government had achieved in diplomacy, the economy and politics in the international arena. The “recognition” frame served to build a supportive image of the Chinese government in

dealing with diplomatic issues. Through this frame, the Chinese government was portrayed as being welcomed by the Obama administration, being committed to caring for its people and people from other nations, and being confident in its promises and actions. *People's Daily* positioned China as an important nation at the center of global attention. Its framing device presented China as a rising country, actively participating in multilateral affairs, with its standing deserving of recognition by other nations. The sense of national pride is obvious in the *People's Daily* articles, in which China was promoted as becoming a major world power. With President Xi's visit, the U.S. and international community showed its respect to China, suggesting that China as worthy of equal status with the United States. Although there were different opinions between the U.S. and China on various issues, *People's Daily* devoted a large amount of coverage to conveying the message that China was open-minded about cooperating with the United States and benefiting the international community, rather than driven to engage in conflict and confrontations. In terms of the portrayal of President Xi, *People's Daily* was dedicated to praising the achievements President Xi had made in his trip and featured several stories to build the image of a "populist and approachable leader" image. The discourse analysis of the frames supported the view that the *People's Daily's* reports on President Xi's state visit were mostly along the party line and legitimized the authority of the party, which was significantly influenced by journalistic culture, ideology and the large power distance within in Chinese society.

As Chin-Chun Lee (2003) stated, China became eager to raise its reputation and discursive power in the new world order once its communist government embraced global capitalism. From Beijing's perspective, the growth of China's economic and military power should earn the international recognition it deserves. China's ambitious membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games was portrayed in the Chinese media

as discourse that demonstrated China passing the threshold into the elite power club (Chin-Chuan Lee, 2003). Consistent with Chin-Chuan Lee's result, this study also found that the coverage of President Xi's state visit in U.S from *People's Daily* profusely hailed the achievements and attention President Xi had gained from the U.S. side and the rest of the world, clearly illustrating China's genuine eagerness to elevate its international status. The *People's Daily* reports were a result of mixed elements in the process of framing, especially the dominant ideology the Chinese government has ceaselessly advocated in the increasingly globalized world: nationalism. Chin-Chuan (2003) concluded that communism, as a grand ideology, had gradually diminished as a belief system in China, because the economic reforms implemented during the late 1970s had altered substantial principles of communism ("class struggle", "egalitarianism", "proletarian dictatorship" and "public ownership of property"). This made the remaining aspects of communist ideology in China the hierarchy of social class and discursive convention originating from the ideology (He, 2003).

In order to remain in power, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduced "socialism with Chinese characteristics" to justify communism and its legitimacy in China. With the demise of communism in China, nationalism emerged as an alternative ideology to replace communism and had been covertly encouraged by the CCP since the early 1990s. He (2003) considered the definition of nationalism:

*To most citizens of China, nationalism is a combination of national pride, economic power, culture supremacy, xenophobia and even revenge. As the children of the Culture Revolution and the reform era come into power and money, observes Barne (1996:207), they are 'resentful of the real and imagined slights that their nation has suffered in the past, and their desire for strength and revenge is increasingly reflected in contemporary Chinese Culture. (p.200).*

Therefore, it was reasonable to witness coverage of the *People's Daily* to depict President Xi's state visit as a celebration of the CCP's regime legitimation and international status China had earned in the new world order.

Secondly, the supportive depiction of President Xi and the Chinese government found in *People's Daily* was highly related to the long-term state-press relations the Chinese government had built with the media. When the CCP took over power in 1949, the role Chinese journalists were supposed to serve was defined as propaganda cadres of the communist party-state (Cheek, 1997). Although the commercialization and privatization policies executed since the late 1970s did loosen state-press tensions to some extent, the bottom line for most journalists in China was still to report along the party line. In Hanitzsch's (2011) study, journalists' perceived role as advocates and partners of government policy prevailed among Chinese journalists, with 56 percent in the professional milieus. As the official newspaper of the CCP, *People's Daily* inevitably served as "mouthpiece" of the CCP in its published articles. In the case of media coverage regarding President Xi's state visit, the *People's Daily* report was consistent with previous studies (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 1998; Wu, 2006; Hook & Pu, 2010), following the pro-government tradition. For example, it devoted the majority of its coverage to the achievements China has made in the economic and diplomatic spheres, to the promise and effort the Chinese government had made to benefit the world, and to the positive comments of external sources regarding the Chinese government's performance and President Xi.

Thirdly, the *People's Daily* report was influenced by the relatively large power distance in China. According to Hofstede (2010), China scored 80 while the U.S. scored 40 on this cultural dimension. The relatively high score on power distance means that the subordinate-superior (media-state) relationship tends to be polarized, which partially explains why the mission of

promoting the CCP's interests, policies and ideology still remained steadfast among Chinese media organizations. Additionally, sitting in the higher rankings of power distance also demonstrates that people hold a generally optimistic attitude towards leaders' capabilities and initiative (Hofstede, 2010). In the case of coverage of President Xi's state visit, *People's Daily* devoted 22 percent of articles to portraying President Xi as well-rounded political leader and cited external sources as evidence, such as:

*The former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said to the reporter he had talked with Xi Jinping several time. He thought President Xi is a decisive man with rich experience and is one of the most outstanding Chinese leaders. (Wen & Li, 2015).*

In terms of the general assessment, almost half of the articles made confirmedly positive comments on President Xi's trip, which revealed the general attitude of support from Chinese journalists.

#### *Issue salience and sources*

The content analysis results showed that *People's Daily* and *The New York Times* attached different priorities to various issues involved in President Xi's trip. The three most frequently discussed issues in *The New York Times* were the economy (22 percent), cybersecurity (19 percent) and human rights (16 percent). The emphasis on the issues of the economy and human rights in *The New York Times* might be a reflection of the twin pillars of United States: democracy and capitalism. As Chin-Chuan (2003) suggests, these two values are substantial concepts embedded deeply into American society. Therefore, when there are issues with trade (capitalism) and human rights (democracy), these issues are more likely to appear in U.S. journalistic discourses. Coverage of *The New York Times* regarding the economy largely condemned the tight control of Chinese government rather than focusing on a specific trade agreement. It seemed that *The New York Times*

usually confused the boundary between politics and economics, criticizing the Chinese government for constructively engaging with American firms:

*China's Internet czar, Lu Wei, is holding an Internet forum on Wednesday that many of the top American technology companies — such as Apple, IBM and Uber — are expected to attend. The meetings have rankled the Obama administration because the gatherings show that China has sway with American business leaders, even though China's policies do not align with Washington's. (Issac, 2015).*

In terms of human rights, U.S. elite media discourse on this topic has consistently demonstrated its “ethnocentrism” and perceived itself as a guardian of democracy. Coverage of *The New York Times* addressing human right issues focused on the condemnation of suppression of dissidents, the continued surveillance of activists and their families, and the persecution of journalists who do not toe the CPC's line. *The New York Times* illustrated that the U.S. is “exceptional” in democracy by constructing the presidential summit as President Xi coming to receive a lesson on human rights from President Obama.

In the coverage of *People's Daily*, the three most salient issues were the economy (25%), general Sino-U.S. relations (24 percent) and other issues (13 percent). The attention paid to these three issues is believed to be mainly due to the dominant ideology, the elite ideology, and party-press relations in China. Firstly, the dominant ideology (nationalism) has been not overtly advocated by the CPC for a number of years. Nationalism can be understood as the mentality that one's country has become stronger than ever before and that they should be proud of it. Therefore, China's economic growth turned out to be one of the most tangible results to go along with nationalism. The *People's Daily* coverage often utilized statistics to encourage readers feel a sense of national pride:

*China's investment in the United States has reached the highest on record in almost all 50 states and covered many fields such as food, real estate, television, and energy. The data from U.S. department of commerce also showed that China's investment in 2014 reached \$9.5 billion, which has a significant growth compared with 3.3 billion in 2010. (Wan, 2015).*

In addition, the intensive party-press relations and elite ideology are reflected in the *People's Daily's* reports on President Xi's trip, as it gave considerable coverage to Sino-U.S. relations - especially the "new type of great power relations", which is an abstract concept President Xi has vigorously elaborated since he took power in 2012. According to Zeng (2016), President Xi called for a "new type of great power relations" when he met President Obama in 2012, which "represents a high-profile Chinese initiative to avoid confrontation between the rising power and the existing hegemony" (p.423). The more China emerged as a rising power, the more its conflict with the United States was likely to intensify. In order avoid repeating the tragedy of great power politics, the concept of a "new type of great power relations" was advocated by the CPC and interpreted as an essential part of President Xi's "big country" diplomacy, with Chinese characteristics. However, no articles in *The New York Times* mentioned this concept. This may confirm Zeng (2016)'s conclusion that "From the strategic perspective, once the United States accepts this concept, it also recognizes China's status as a 'great power', and thus, China will win the commensurate strategic space. In addition, it will be seen as the victory of Chinese diplomacy under Xi's leadership" (p.431).

Furthermore, promoting party leaders' political agenda can also be detected in the coverage of *People's Daily* on "anti-corruption" issues, coded as "other issues" in this study. Since President Xi became the general secretary of the CCP in November 2012, his robust anti-corruption campaign has been a significant part of his grand policy. More than 90 officials at and above the vice-ministerial level have been investigated by prosecutors over the past five years, according to a statement made by the Supreme People's Procuratorate in 2016 (Xinhua, 2016). Reports from *People's Daily* concerning "anti-corruption" mainly emphasize China's close cooperation with the U.S. in fighting corruption and tracking down fugitives.

In terms of quoted sources, both newspapers relied heavily on governmental sources for information and were dedicated to conveying the government's diplomatic policies. In *The New York Times*, U.S. official (22.3 percent) were the most prominent source. Statements from President Obama accounted for 15 percent of total quoted sources in the sample population of news articles, followed by Chinese officials at 11.4 percent. One possible reason for the lion's share of official sources might be the routinized practices of beat reporting. On the other hand, *People's Daily* turned to President Xi for 36.3 percent of quotations, followed by U.S. officials (13.3 percent). President Xi's dominant presence in *People's Daily* coverage can be explained by the party-press relationship, in which the media is supposed to accurately and effectively communicate a party's political policy and message. An interesting finding was that *People's Daily* was more likely to quote American officials (12.3 percent) over domestic officials (9.4 percent). A similar pattern was also found in the source categories of Chinese citizens and U.S. citizens, in which *People's Daily* cited U.S. citizen more often than Chinese citizens, at 7.4 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. This pattern could possibly be due to readers' belief that statements made by both foreign and domestic sources are more reliable than those made solely by domestic sources. In addition, the voice of scholars took relatively significant share in both newspapers. Most of the sources were either international relations professors from elite universities or senior analysts from research institutions, mainly serving the role as "chief interpreters and secondary definers of the issue, inflecting and translating the official line for newspaper readers" (Zhao, 2003, p. 42). Finally, *People's Daily* cited 29 other foreign media sources, including the BBC, The Guardian and Agence France-Presse. Almost all of these sources were utilized to share positive commentary regarding President Xi's state visit and to celebrate the contribution China had made



to the international community, which served as the evidence of the nation's rising international status and recognition.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study conducted content analysis to compare coverage of President Xi's first state visit to the U.S. from articles published in *People's Daily* and *The New York Times*. The findings indicated that newspapers from different nations attach different interpretations to the same event. In both newspapers, the Chinese government and President Xi were constructed as the major actors across the entire sampling period, but they were depicted from completely different perspectives. In *The New York Times* articles, the Chinese government was described as incompetent and dishonest in handling its slowing economy and unstable stock market. The depiction of the Chinese government as human rights "abuser" was promoted consistently during coverage of the entire trip. China's aggressive military action in the South China Sea and cyberspace issues was interpreted as a huge threat to U.S. national security. The portrayal of President Xi primarily emphasized the direct threat he posed to U.S. interests and on his "greedy" gathering of power in China. Unlike the consistently negative anti-China frame used by *The New York Times*, *People's Daily* framed a positive and pro-government image in its coverage of President Xi's trip. Discourse in *People's Daily* largely celebrated economic growth, diplomatic results and the international recognition China had achieved under the CCP's leadership. It attempted to describe President Xi as a great leader who is approachable and beloved. *The New York Times* was mostly affected by the dominant ideology of "anti-communism" and predisposed "China frame" in the elite press. However, *People's Daily* served the role as party publicity firm and was therefore deeply influenced by press-state relations, increasing nationalism and the large

power distance that Chinese society features. While both newspapers included economic issues among the top three most prominent issues covered, cybersecurity and human rights issues were highlighted most by *The New York Times* and anti-corruption and general Sino-U.S. relations by *People's Daily*.

The priority attached to different issues is believed to be largely due to ideology. In the U.S., China is considered an ideological adversary. Therefore, it is important to criticize the “soft spot” of the Chinese government in order to contain it as a rising power. On the other hand, China is seeking to gain more discursive power to go alongside its unprecedented economy growth. Hence, the *People's Daily* articles primarily focused on China's success in the economic and political realms. It avoided contradictions and conflicts that China, as a rising power, had with the existing hegemony of the U.S. and did not engage in building any antagonistic images of the U.S. government. In terms of the distribution of quoted sources, both newspapers cited official sources more frequently than other sources, which might be due to journalistic routines embedded in media organizations. As Shoemaker and Reese (2014) suggested, news coverage is heavily influenced by various social forces. Since such differences exist between U.S and Chinese ideology, political policies and journalistic culture, it is unsurprising to observe that journalists in each country made different interpretations regarding the same media event.

The coverage of both newspapers regarding President Xi's trip essentially reflected their governments' perspectives, which suggests that the process of framing is rooted deeply in the given government regime type and the power relations that exist between the media and the government. The important lesson to be drawn from this study, for journalism education purposes, is related to the practice of news framing. Based on the results presented in this paper, it can be seen that freedom from government intervention does not guarantee that journalists produce truthful,

objective and fair news stories. Unlike *People's Daily*, *The New York Times* not only enjoys freedom of expression as protected by the Constitution, but also operates independently from the state. However, its reports mainly convey government positions and policy preferences, which possibly reinforces public distrust in China. Due to intense press-state relations and increasing nationalism, coverage in *People's Daily* primarily cheered for the accomplishments the Chinese government had attained.

Journalists and journalism educators should therefore pay more attention to the influence of national ideology, elite opinion and journalistic culture in covering foreign news and controversial issues. This is particularly important when journalists are covering an event that involves their home country and a potential competing nation, and when there are cultural, ideological and political conflicts between their homeland and their “adversaries”, since objectivity and fairness are more difficult to achieve under such conditions. One thing journalists could do is to focus on obtaining facts - especially facts that are not provided by their own government or parties. As Jiang and Hao (2010) suggested, “When there is conflicting information about facts which is most likely to happen in the context of international conflicts, cross-checking and further investigation are always required. When conflicting information cannot be verified, journalists should present stories from both sides and highlight their differences, in order to not only help the audience make a better judgment but also to put on record the differences for future verification” (p.266). By presenting information from both sides, journalists could not only better understand how the other side perceived and interpreted the same event, they could also report the other side’s opinion more accurately.

As for the future American news coverage of the Chinese government, in my opinion the anti-China frame would persist for a long time, in which China is treated as a major enemy nation to

compete with the U.S. As stated by Hook and Pu (2010): “the deep-seated, culturally bound cleavages reflected in both countries’ news coverage may aggravate rather than mitigate the solution of diplomatic ruptures” (p.179). Especially under the new Trump’s administration, who have repeatedly expressed his criticism towards China on various occasions. He recently twitted how he talked with Taiwan’s president, Tsai Ing-wen, which break American diplomatic practices and gave Beijing a wakeup call that the fragile Sino-American relations might get even worse. On the other hand, the recognition and great-leader frame would be reinforced in China’s media discourse to go along with the prevailing ideology- nationalism. The Chinese government would continue to construct grand narratives to legitimate its authority and obtain confidence relying on China’s material power. The Chinese Communist Party would make sure media correctly disseminate the message that only under theirs rule Chinese citizens’ standard of living would be improved and only them would be able to maintain a stable and unified society. Also, Beijing may see Trump’s isolationism diplomatic policy as an opportunity for China’s rise, since his policy orientation would withdraw the U.S. influence in Asia or even around the globe.

### **Limitations**

It should be noted that this study has several limitations. Firstly, the analysis was limited to one form of elite press in China and one in the U.S., which may not be representative enough of all news outlets in each of the countries. Other market-oriented, mainstream and tabloid newspapers in China and U.S., and the image they built of President Xi’s state visit might differ from the results of this study. Secondly, this thesis only examined the text content of news stories and excluded the visual part. However, the visual images used in these reports may convey information that cannot

be explained through words. The exclusion of pictures for analysis might have affected the findings of the study.

### **Future Studies**

To further explore how ideology, politics and culture could potentially influence the framing process regarding President Xi's state visit, a survey could be conducted among journalists and editors who covered this media event. Conducting surveys with the journalists who actually participated in the news-making process would help scholars better understand how ideology, culture and politics are intertwined in news framing and how journalists perceive these forces. For example, journalists could answer questions like, "To what extent were you influenced by anti-communist ideology when you wrote the story about President Xi's trip to the U.S.?" Additionally, future studies could analyze different types of media to examine how these media types framed the state visit. By including more types of media, research samples could be more representative and produce more reliable results. Finally, future studies could examine the effect of different media frames – for example, whether public opinion towards President Xi and the Chinese government was influenced by the coverage of *People's Daily*, and whether the reader feels that the Chinese government is inept and untrustworthy after reading the articles in *The New York Times*.

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## APPENDIX A

Major events for Sino-U.S. relations

*Source: China Daily*

A Cold War icebreaker by two former opponents leads to growing contact to solve thorny issues, and in a new century, efforts to forge a new type of major-power relationship

July 1971:

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger makes a secret trip to China.

February 1972:

President Richard Nixon spends eight days in China, meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong and signing the Shanghai Communiqué with Premier Zhou Enlai.

Jan. 1, 1979:

China and the US mutually grant full diplomatic recognition.

January 1979:

Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping visits Washington D.C. and initiates a series of high-level exchanges, which result in many bilateral agreements in the areas of science, technology, cultural exchange and trade.

August 1982:

China and the US publish the August 17 Communiqué, in which both sides reaffirm the statements made about the Taiwan question.

April 1984:

President Ronald Reagan pays a six-day official visit to China, becoming the first US president to visit the country while in office after the normalization of relations.

July 1985:

Chinese President Li Xiannian pays an official visit to the US, the first by a Chinese head of state.

February 1989:

President George Bush pays a two-day visit to China.

Oct. 26-Nov. 3, 1997:

Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits the US and the two sides decide to implement the 1985 agreement on Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation.

June 1998:

President Bill Clinton visits China, during which he travels extensively and has direct interaction with the Chinese people.

October 2000:

President Clinton signs the US-China Relations Act, granting Beijing permanent normal trade relations with the US and paving the way for China to join the World Trade Organization.

October 2001:

President Jiang meets with President George W. Bush for the first time in Shanghai on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. The countries reach consensus on developing bilateral relations and anti-terrorism cooperation.

October 2002:

President Jiang again meets with President Bush at his Texas ranch, marking their third meeting in a year.

December 2003:

Premier Wen Jiabao visits New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C. and has extensive interaction with American citizens.

November 2005:

President Bush pays an official visit to China, and the two countries reaffirm their intention to promote a constructive and cooperative relationship in the 21st century.

April 2006:

President Hu Jintao pays a state visit to the US and delivers a key speech on Sino-American ties.

November 2008:

President Hu visits the US at the invitation of President Bush to attend the G20 leaders' summit in Washington D.C.

June 2009:

The two countries hold the first China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington D.C.

November 2009:

President Barack Obama pays a state visit to China.

January 2011:

President Hu pays a state visit to the US

February 2012:

Vice-President Xi Jinping pays a five-day official visit to the US

June 2013:

Xi Jinping, now president of China, meets with President Obama for two days in Annenberg Retreat, California, in an effort to build a new type of major power relationship.

November 2014:

President Obama visits Beijing and meets with President Xi. The two countries agree to mutually issue 10-year multiple-entry visas for business travelers and tourists, and 5-year multiple-entry visas for students.

June 2015:

Fan changlong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, visits the US and meets with Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter at the Pentagon.

## APPENDIX B

### President Xi's state visit itinerary

Sept. 22: President Xi landed in Seattle, where he was welcomed by a delegation that included the former Washington governors Christine Gregoire and Former US ambassador to China Gary Locke.

At the dinner sponsored by the National Committee on United States-China Relations and the U.S.-China Business Council, President Xi delivered a major policy speech for representatives of business leaders and other dignitaries.

Sept. 23: President Xi participated in a round-table discussion with chief executives sponsored by Henry M. Paulson Jr., chairman of the Paulson Institute at the University of Chicago and a former Treasury secretary. He also visited Boeing's factory in Everett, Washington, the largest production site for commercial aircraft, since China is an important client of Boeing. After that President Xi went to Lincoln High School in Tacoma and had cordial exchanges with school faculties and students, which he visited in 1993, when he was an official in Fuzhou in Fujian Province.

President Xi attended the U.S.-China Internet Industry Forum, hosted by Microsoft and the Internet Society of China, with Lu Wei, the Chinese official in charge of Internet policy, and guests who could include Robin Li of Baidu, Jack Ma of Alibaba, and executives from Apple, Facebook, Google, IBM and Uber.

Sept. 24: President Xi flew to Washington D.C., where he had a working dinner at the White House with President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry and U.S. national security adviser Susan E. Rice.



Sept. 25: President Xi was greeted with a 21-gun salute at the White House and held a joint news conference with President Obama. Then he attended the lunch at the State Department hosted by Mr. Kerry and Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. This was followed by a visit to Capitol Hill to meet with congressional leaders and a state dinner at the White House in the evening.

Sept. 26: President Xi proceeded to New York for events at the United Nations headquarters.

Sept. 27: President Xi was scheduled to make opening remarks and to serve as chairman of the first session in the Global Leaders' Meeting on General Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, which was jointly held by China and United Nations.

Sept. 28: President Xi delivered a speech at the United Nations' 70th anniversary session. This was his first speech at the United Nations and underscored China's status as a charter member, a co-founder of the postwar international order and a permanent member of the Security Council.

APPENDIX C

Coding Sheet

Column Record	Variable Name	Variable Label	Value Labels	Remarks
1	Article	Article number	1-178	
2	Media	Name of Media	1=People's Daily 2=New York Times	
3	Date	Publication Time (Before, during and after the actual state visit)	01=09/10/2015-09/21/2015 02=09/22/2015-09/28/2015 03=09/29/2015-10/10/2015	
4	Issue Salience	The issue mentioned in the report	1=military power  2=economy  3=environment  4=cyber security  5=human right  6=education  7=general U.S.-Sino relations 8=others	
5	General Assessment	General assessment of President Xi's state visit	1=a successful trip 2=not an effective visit 3= combination of achievement and conflicts  4= not mentioned	
6	Source of Quotation	The type of information source	1=President Xi 2=President Obama 3=Chinese official 4=U.S. official 5=Chinese scholars 6= U.S. scholars 7=other foreign media 8=Chinese citizen 9=U.S. citizen 10=Chinese entrepreneur	

			11=U.S. entrepreneur 12=others	
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### Term Definitions

Issue salience: This refers to the issues discussed in the articles. Each article maybe discussed more than one issue and each issue may be discussed more than once.

The general assessment of President Xi’s state visit: the coder will locate content that provided the general assessment of president Xi’s state visit. Based on its inherent meaning and rhetoric description of the visit can be categorized into three categories: (1) a successful trip (i.e., President Xi’s visit to U.S. is a major success); (2) not an effective visit (i.e., Mr. Xi has in many ways confounded Mr. Obama’s hopes and expectations); (3) combination of achievement and conflicts in the state visit.

Source of quotations: In this study, the type of information source is defined as a person or an interest group whose words are directly quoted by reporters. That can be indicated by attributions such as “he said,” “she argued,” or as so-and-so put it. The sources includes nine groups: (1)President Xi ; (2)President Obama ; (3)Chinese official ( i.e., President Xi’s entourage ); (4)U.S. official (i.e., the members of the Congress (senators and representatives), and federal, state, and/or local government officials.); (5)scholars(i.e., university professors or government organizations’ researchers who study Sino-U.S. relations and international relations);(6)other foreign media (i.e., the Guardian, BBC News); (7) Ordinary Chinese citizen; (8)Ordinary American citizens; (9) Chinese entrepreneur (10)American entrepreneur (11) others (this category includes sources that cannot be categorized by any of the above-mentioned categories).

### Key Words

Media	The general assessment of President Xi’s state visit		
	Successful	Not effective	Neutral
<i>People’s Daily</i>	成功 成果 达成共识	相违背 含糊不清 未到达预期目标	NA
<i>NY Times</i>	Success Achievement consensus	Blunt Vague Confound	NA

Media	Issue Salience							
	Military Power	Economy	Environment	Cyber Security	Human Rights	Education	General U.S.-Sino relations	Other
<i>People's Daily</i>	中国南海岛礁	贸易协定	二氧化碳排放 大气污染	网络攻击 知识产权 网络威胁	异见者 民权运动 抗议	交换学习 汉语学习	新型的 大国关系	NA
<i>NY Times</i>	South China Sea Contested water	Trade Business	Greenhouse Gas emissions	Cyberthreat Intellectual property Cyberattacks	Dissident Activist Protests Jailed	Education al exchanges Mandarin Learning	New type of great power relations	NA