China's Media Discourse on Trump and the United States: Perceptions of Great Power Relations

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The 2016 presidential election in the United States of America (US) was a very notable election, due to its particularly break with most previous elections. The election was rife with political battles that broke with the usual etiquette, as well as campaign promises and statements that shocked many politicians both in the US and abroad with its implications. The main cause of this political upheaval was businessman Donald Trump, who would eventually win the election without having any prior political experience. His eventual victory was perceived as almost unimaginable a year before. This election and Trump's subsequent political actions as president-elect and president were closely watched by countries all across the world (Flegenheimer, 9 November 2016).

One of the countries that paid particular interest in this election was the People's Republic of China (PRC). During the election campaign, Trump made several strong promises regarding the PRC, saying he would impose high tariffs on Chinese goods and that he would take action against the PRC's alleged currency manipulation (Phillips, 7 November 2016). Tensions between the two countries grew slowly higher after Trump accepted a congratulatory phone call from Tsai Ing-wen, the president of the Republic of China (from here on referred to as Taiwan), following his election victory. The phone call was seen by many in the PRC and abroad as a break with the 'One-China policy'. Countries that adhere to this policy regard the PRC as the true and only 'China', and do therefore not acknowledge the full sovereignty of Taiwan as an independent country. The PRC regards this policy as a fundamental principle that other countries need to accept in order to engage in diplomatic and economic treaties with the PRC. Trump further aggravated the situation by arguing that the One-China policy is something negotiable when he sets out to acquire new trade deals. The reaction by the PRC government and state media was one of outrage. Relations further soured when Trump started to surround himself with advisors who were known 'China-hawks' and who regarded the PRC as a threat (Phillips, 12 December 2016). The tensions between the two countries eventually calmed down after a particularly amicable phone call between the two leaders of the countries.

Although the relations eventually improved, there were many more instances in the first few months of Trump's tenure, where either he or members of his cabinet raised tensions with the PRC.

However, whether there is a strategy to the seemingly deliberate antagonizing of one of the US's biggest trading partners has yet to be seen. In the meantime, the PRC, and other countries for that matter, are more wary of the diplomacy of the new president (Lyman, 21 January 2017). The possibility of, for instance, a trade war between the two largest economies would have disastrous consequences not only for the bilateral relation, but the region and the world as a whole. Nonetheless, the PRC government response to the US has been quite limited, consisting mainly of warnings to not upset the status quo and to observe the importance of cooperation between the two countries (Phillips, 24 January 2017).

The perception a country has about another country, or its leader, helps to shape how that country will act towards that country. Most US and European news agencies have spent a lot of time examining how the PRC reacted towards the US and Trump in the last few months; but less attention was given to how officials actually perceive it. Although we cannot know for sure what is going on inside the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), there is a way that might shed some light on how it interprets this situation: through PRC news media. The way that media, and especially state-owned media, is framing and reporting on the statements and actions of Trump towards a Chinese audience can reveal, even if only slightly, how officials in the PRC regard this situation and how they want it to come across. The way media agencies in the PRC discuss these events and statements to a domestic audience is likely to be different from that of an international audience, in both content and language. Looking at these reports might wield some interesting insights in the PRC government and how it thinks about Trump and frames his statements.

Research Question

The research question of this thesis will be as follows: 'How did three different Chinese language newspapers report on Donald Trump and the US during the 2016 US presidential election and the immediate months after his victory, and how did this relate to the PRC?'

The reason the thesis centers around Chinese language newspapers is to get a better understanding of how the PRC government is trying to frame this situation towards Chinese audiences. This provides us with an insight how different kinds of newspapers in the PRC deal differently with political communication. Apart from that, it also give us a clearer view on the opinions that are present in the CCP regarding Trump and the US. Overall, this subject is quite relevant at the moment, due to the fact that in a very short time Trump himself has antagonized one of the US's most important trading partners. The reactions of the PRC government thus have a profound effect on Sino-American relations as well as the entire region of Asia.

The time period that will be examined is about four to five months, from the months of October 2016 up to February 2017. There will be a few articles that fall outside of this period. This thesis will focus on five distinct moments. The first moment will be on the last months of the US election, the second one on the time between Trump's election win and his phone call with Tsai Ing-wen, the third one on the week after the phone call and the fourth focus on the two weeks after his inauguration. The last moment will be on Trump's call with Xi Jinping and the week of reporting following that phone call.

The reasons for choosing these moments is to observe if there has been a change in the way that Trump and the US are being portrayed in the media and the tone and content of their discussion. I expect to find that most of the articles are focused on Trump, and that in most newspapers there is a shift in opinion after the call with Tsai Ying-wen and after the call with Xi Jinping, but the materials might show otherwise. The moments before and after the phone call with Tsai Ing-wen have been chosen to see if there is a very notable negatively reporting change happening, which I expect there will be. The last moment I focus on, is to see if there has emerged a more conciliatory tone in the Chinese media, since Trump has spoken to president Xi. It is likely too early to know how either side is going to adapt to the other party, but it nonetheless might provide us with a glimpse of what politicians in the PRC, and especially the CCP, are trying to bring across.

Finally, this thesis will also pay special attention to the way the media is portraying the PRC and the US on a global political stage towards a Chinese audience. This especially relates to PRC

media's view on the PRC and the US as great powers. A great power in the political sense is a state that is seen as playing a major role in international politics, which possesses economic, diplomatic, and military strength and influence, and its interests extend beyond its own borders (Wright, 2006,). I expect that the materials will discuss China's role as a great power and how that now has changed with Donald Trump in office, and how the PRC might take a greater leading role upon itself (Hilton, 22 November 2016). Furthermore, I expect the analysis to show that the PRC media examines Trump and the current state of the election as part of a greater decline of the US.

Methodology

For this thesis, I shall analyze 47 articles, about fifteen for each of the Chinese language newspapers, from three different, primarily state-owned, newspapers of the PRC. The articles that I shall examine all discuss current US president Donald Trump and his political career, both before and after taking office. Through analyzing these different newspapers, I shall discuss how discourse regarding Trump and US politics has evolved in Chinese state media since the election up until his first month in office. My research also touches on other elements of Sino-US relations, which I shall discuss later in this thesis. The method I shall use for analyzing these articles is discourse analysis.

A discourse analysis is a way of analyzing texts to find what and how people are communicating and how such communication practices shape social reality (Fairclough, 2012, 25-26). The usage of communication discourses to shape a certain social or political reality can be a very powerful tool for governments and other actors. By shaping a particular reality, one creates a way of how things are, or should be, perceived. Therefore, controlling the discourse of a subject can grant one a great amount of power. The analysis of such discourse can give us an insight into what the creators want to convey, and what they stress as important.

The discourse that I will focus on in this thesis, is that of the PRC state media as it frames news about Trump and the US. By using a discourse analysis I will examine the articles in search of general themes, references, intertextuality, phrasing, and other aspects that might spring out of the

ordinary in terms of content or structure. Apart from looking at individual articles, I will primarily pay attention to how the articles are related to earlier articles that appeared either in the same newspaper or in other newspapers; this will enable me to see if these sources possess a certain shared discourse. This method of research does not reveal with complete certainty what the CCP's view(s) on Donald Trump or the US are, but it does provide a thorough analysis of what the CCP at least wants to communicate to a Chinese audience. This form of political communication can still be very telling about how the state media shapes the discourse around these issues and what kind of message it wants to get across or what it wants to conceal (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, 26-28). Apart from merely discussing the US and Trump, I also expect the discourse to pay attention to the PRC's role in global politics compared to the US; this and any other findings shall also be discussed in this thesis. Nonetheless, the primary focus of this research is the overall representation of the US and Trump

I will use both quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct my discourse analysis. A quantitative discourse analysis is mostly concerned with finding certain keywords and phrases in different texts, and I will mostly use this approach to help me choose the articles I want to analyze qualitatively. The research itself will primarily be based on a qualitative discourse analysis. A qualitative discourse analysis is a method of analysis that thoroughly analyzes a single text in terms of its structure, context, phrasing, referencing and content. This work-intensive and rather selective analysis can help identify recurring patterns in regards to phrasing and content; it also helps to better clarify hidden meanings and assumptions in texts, as discourse is often seen as a way of constructing some kind of social reality (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, 16-22).

Due to the fact that qualitative discourse analysis takes up quite a large amount of time, I have to limit the amount of articles and the timeframe that I am going to analyze. The timeframe of my research is limited to about five months, starting at the month before the 2016 US election day on the 8 November 2016 and lasting until two days after President Trump's phone call with president Xi on 10 February 2017. I will focus on five distinct moments in this timeframe to get a good overview of the changing perspective of Trump and the US in the PRC. The five moments I will look at have been chosen for their relevance to the US-Sino relations. The first moment is just before the election on 8

November, to see what the tone in each newspaper is, regarding the election. The second moment is the period of a week after the election. The third moment is a period of 2 weeks after Trump's congratulatory call with Taiwan that took place on 2 December. The fourth moment is the aftermath of Trump's inauguration on 20 January. The last moment is the immediate reporting period after Trump's call with Xi Jinping on 10 February. The moments the newspapers reported these events vary per newspaper and I can therefore not give the same date for all events.

I will conduct a discourse analysis on all of the articles of the three different newspapers. Analyzing these media articles can provide insights into how the CCP narrative regards Trump and its relationship with the US, and how that narrative differs across various newspapers. The CCP mainly uses state media, not just newspapers, to guide public opinion, but CCP members themselves also often use state-owned newspapers as a mouthpiece for venting, sometimes differing, opinions that are deemed acceptable by members of the CCP. The newspapers are financed and owned by the government and have high-ranking cadre members that oversee and review what is being written. Therefore, everything that is written in state-owned media is held to a high degree of scrutiny and will most often not disagree with party line or deviate too far from it (Schneider, 2016, 189-193). Although these newspapers articles can give us a clearer idea of how the PRC state, and through it the CCP, want to frame the story about Trump and the US election, it does not mean we can know the inner working of the PRC political system with certainty. Overall, the CCP tries to convey a very unified narrative, but exploring what other discourses are also deemed acceptable to the CCP that they become part of the official news can help us identify differing opinions within the CCP. As much as the CCP might want to project itself as a unified front, in terms of political views, it is impossible for an organization as large as the CCP to be that homogenous. These differences in opinions will therefore most likely emerge in different kinds of state media.

Although the newspapers I will be analyzing do not deviate far from the party line, it does not mean all the newspapers write the same content, there is a political spectrum amongst state-owned media that discusses different party viewpoints. This political spectrum in the PRC functions differently than in many other states, although one can hold more leftwing or rightwing views within

the CCP, they all have to fit into the narrative of the communist CCP. This means that views expressed in the articles will not deviate too far from the official communist ideology or call into question the legitimacy of the CCP as the ruling party. The three newspapers I will analyze are: the People's Daily (*renmin ribao*, □□□□), Caixin (*caixin*, □□), and the Global Times (*huanqiushibao*, □□□□). The first newspaper, the People's Daily, is a politically centrist daily newspaper, which is also the official newspaper of the CCP, and therefore regarded as the party mouthpiece. Caixin is a more financially focused newspaper that leans more to the right of the political spectrum, Caixin is the only newspaper that is not state-owned, but is instead owned by the Caixin Media Company. The focus audience of Caixin is people from the educated middleclass. Even though Caixin is a commercial newspaper, it is still unlikely that it will differ far from what is deemed acceptable in state-owned newspapers, due to fears of repercussions that could hurt the company (Stockmann, 2012, 61-67). The Global Times is a more hardline leftwing newspaper, which is known for its more nationalistic and is part of the People's Daily Group. I expect that this difference in political spectrum will reveal different views of the same issues, whilst still reproducing the greater PRC political communicative narrative.

Although I discuss the traditional political terms of left- and rightwing in this context, the reality of this kind of political spectrum is not as clear-cut in the PRC as it is in more democratic societies. Many people in the PRC do not conform to a very coherent form of political ideology, this is mainly due to a lack of cultural and political capital. Therefore, most people derive their political believes from personal experiences and social groups. This means that people might certainly adhere to classic examples of either left- or rightwing ideology, but do not do so within a relatively clearly defined ideologies. Although this left-right divide is relatively unclear in the PRC, it can nonetheless be said that the stated ideological stances of the three newspapers roughly align with the traditional stances (Wu, 2014, 46-55). The articles that I will discuss will composed of more in-depth news reports, normal news reports, press briefings, opinion pieces, and open editorials. The articles were accessed and found through both the official websites of each newspaper and the Factiva database.

The articles I will be reading are all written in Mandarin Chinese. In my appendix I have written all the different news articles that I have analyzed. All the translations done in the analysis,

have been done by myself. I will aim to represent the original meaning as closely as possible and will provide the original characters of the translated parts.

Literature Review

In this thesis I discuss the way PRC media perceives not only the US, but also itself. This kind of reflection matters in terms of policy, as states produce policy based partially on how they see their own role in the international society. The analysis of state-owned media discourse can therefore reveal how governments view other states and how they to relate them. This notion that a state's policy is based on its own ideas and theories, fits into the theory laid out in the English School of International Relations Theory. The English School[1] argues that there is a kind of world society that operates internationally, where ideas and theories shape international conduct and politics, which therefore deserve to be analyzed. There are still some problems regarding the theory of the English School. These mostly relate to its strong focus on the global society instead of on regional or individual societies. This theory often ignores the possibility of states or regions acting together to build on common global international society foundations. Although the English School is primarily focused on the global scale, I do believe that ideas from the English School are still useful. These ideas are quite useful with regards to the analysis of state-owned media in thesis, as they deal with the perception of power, which influences policymakers, as argued by the English School. This is visible in the fact that although the PRC sees the US as a rival, it does not harbor any ambition to overthrow or act outside of the international society (Buzan, 2004, 1-5; 10-18).

With regards to actors in the world of international relations, academics like Wendt (2004, 313-316) make the strong case that states and governments can be treated as solitary actors. However, foreign policy and international relations are often influenced by multiple actors, although it can be quite hard at times to identify who those actors are. Especially in the case of the PRC, it is often hard

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1 Some essential readings include: Bull, H. (1977). *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. & Wight, M. (1978). *Power Politics*.

to say if decisions are being made by the government or by the Party, or both. Regardless, actors position themselves in public spheres and draw from discourses that can be found in media and society. This justifies the idea that analyzing different kinds of news agencies in the PRC will give a better overview of the present discourse in the PRC that influences foreign policy even if the actual actor is often unclear or unknown (Schneider, 2014, 693-703). Throughout the thesis I will refer to the main 'Chinese' actor as 'the PRC government', unless I know the specific actor with certainty.

The relationship between the US and the PRC has long been quite antagonistic, something that is reflected most clearly in their mutual media portrayal. Nonetheless, the relationship between the two countries has still seen plenty of changes over the past few decades. After the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war following the end of the Second World War, the US started to treat the PRC as a renewed threat, something that was partially exacerbated due to the McCarthyism in the early fifties. During the most part of the Cold War, the US foreign policy towards the PRC, as well as the US media coverage of the PRC, was profoundly negative (Turner, 2013, 914-918). This negative media coverage lasted until Nixon's historic visit to Beijing in 1972 when relations between the US and the PRC were officially formalized. Before this visit, the US foreign policy towards the PRC was containment, after the visit the US and the PRC had tacitly cooperated against the Soviet Union. It was around this time that the PRC also gained entry to the United Nations and the UN Security Council, whilst Taiwan lost its seat at the UN. This drastic change after more than two decades of containment policies created a more positive view of the PRC, within the US. Nonetheless, the positive media coverage and more benign foreign policy from the US would not last long. With the recent rise of the PRC as the second largest economy in the world, the idea of a threatening China reemerged in US media, which is reflected in recent foreign policies of the US. During the Obama administration, the approach towards the PRC can be best described as a combination of containment and engagement. Although there is definitely more economic and political engagement with the PRC than before, the US, together with various allies, try to contain the PRC both militarily and economically (Harris, 2015, 241-245). The persistent representation of the PRC as a threat is a large contributor to the US policy focus on containing the PRC. This representation creates a hostile attitude towards the PRC that excludes

possible bilateral talks and cooperation, as well as actually pushing the PRC into the role of a rival to the US (Turner, 2013, 918-924).

Although the US is engaging in a negative portrayal of the PRC, the PRC discourse, of both the media and officials, regarding the US has been increasingly negative as well in recent years. News coverage and attitudes towards the US were quite positive during the 1980s, but they turned increasingly negative towards the 1990s, and this continued into the 2000s. Part of this sudden decline in positive coverage is likely due to political incidents that happened during the early 1990s, such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade (Stockmann, 2011, 273-276). Most of the PRC's criticism was aimed at US foreign policy, but recently this criticism became more nationalistic and challenging; much of it is part of a vicious cycle in which both US and PRC nationalists interpret behavior from the other country as threatening (Gries, 2004, 135-147). This coincides with a recent change in PRC policy, which is more confrontational and does not shy away from confrontation with other great powers.

The recent emergence of the PRC as a relative great power in global politics comes after a long period of strategic pragmatism and non-interventionism, as promoted by Deng Xiaoping. After the death of Mao in 1976, the reform and opening up period started in the PRC, gradually entering the PRC up towards the global market. This period of fast economic growth and globalization, was in terms of foreign policy marked by the idea of 'keeping a low profile' (韬光养晦, *taoguang yanghui*). The idea behind this phrase was for the PRC to not be overly active on a global political scale in order to maximize political maneuverability and the PRC's own freedom and interests (Larson, 2015, 335-336). This idea carried on into the tenure of Jiang Zemin, but the PRC still started to pose more as a peaceful and responsible power that does not seek to overthrow the current world order (Larson, 2015, 336). After Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao's foreign policy efforts were more focused on promoting PRC soft power. Soft power is a concept developed by Joseph Nye and can be interpreted as the ability to shape the preferences of others through the attraction of one's values, culture and policies (Barr, 2012, 84). Hu tried to increase the soft power of the PRC through institutes like the Confucius Institutes, by offering Chinese culture and language courses abroad, and by offering scholarships to

study in the PRC. Another way soft power is promoted abroad is by helping developing countries with investments and infrastructure projects (Hartig, 2012, 57-64). During this time, the emergence of a specific 'Chinese' kind of value system based on 'Confucianism'[2] started to emerge in the PRC political discourse.

Since the start of the tenure of Xi Jinping, there has been a relative consensus among pundits that the PRC has become increasingly assertive. However, this perceived assertiveness in the foreign policy of the PRC was primarily a generalization based on several actions from the PRC. These generalizations were then discussed by pundits and rapidly shared and agreed upon, without taking into account the bigger picture (Johnston, 2013, 43-48). This supposed assertiveness showed itself more openly after the 2008 economic crisis that hit the US and European countries much harder than it did the PRC. This proved that the US as a great power was not absolute. Many people belonging to the IR realist camp (Jacques, 2010, 7-9), both within the PRC (Yan et al., 2013, 199-203) and outside of it (Mearsheimer, 2010, 381-388), view the PRC as the next great power contender that can replace the US, especially now with the perceived decline of the US as a great power. Nonetheless, the PRC seems unlikely to replace the US as the new hegemonic great power in global politics in the near future. Although the PRC projects a very strong image outward, or others project it upon the PRC, there are still plenty of internal problems that consistently plague the country and increase the possibility of escalation (Shirk, 2007, 255-269). Although the PRC does not lack in hard power with regards to economic and military power, the PRC still generally lacks the global soft power in comparison with the US.

The emergence of the 'Chinese' Confucian kind of ideological value system as a way to attract more soft power started to gain more political and mainstream traction in the PRC from the start of Xi Jinping's tenure as chairman. His public endorsement of this new form of Confucianism signaled a new ideological step in regards to PRC foreign policy. Although the PRC heavily promotes

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2 Confucianism itself is a very diverse constellation of ways of thinking, writing, behaving and practicing, that was only first theorized as a single unified tradition in the Chinese Han dynasty. Oftentimes when people refer to Confucianism, they refer to Song Neo-Confucianism, as is the case with the PRC (Paramore, 2016, 1-5).

'Confucianism', it lacks a clear definition of what this Confucianism exactly is and where it comes from; most of the slogans seem to be primarily based on sayings from the Analects. The reason behind the vagueness of this brand of Confucianism is probably due to the CCP's pragmatism; it has created an ideology that is so vague nearly everyone can identify with it. The values that are most often promoted are relatively general, already accepted values such as piety, stability, and respect towards elders and the state (Ford, 2015, 1032-1033; Noesselt, 2015, 224-225).

This ideology is also used abroad to show that to modernize as a country, one does not necessarily have to 'westernize' or become a democracy. This way, the PRC is differentiating itself from the US and challenges the notion that economically successful countries eventually become democracies (Callahan, 2015, 217-223). Nonetheless, the PRC's pragmatism and eclecticism has gained a certain emulation from many developing countries (Deslisle, 2010, 494-511). The PRC state-owned media and the officials themselves are now more strongly using this new kind of value system to criticize the Western liberal democratic values, and are more actively challenging the current global political status quo (Ford, 2015, 1032-1037). This challenge to the US's ideology is also part of the PRC's attempt to increase its soft power, by promoting its great power appeal. The effectiveness of this renewed ideology has its weaknesses. The Chinese-style of political ideology has a very Sino-centrist focus to it, something that is not going to appeal to other countries, whereas liberal democracy, as promoted by the US, is relatively more inclusive and more globally appealing (Buzan & Cox, 2013, 115-125). Together with this ideology, the PRC also presents itself as a different kind of great power, one that stresses non-intervention, peace, and stability. The PRC often mentions this as the defining characteristic for its state's ideology, as opposed to the US (Chou, 2014, 104-113).

The PRC has since recent times engaged in joint operations regarding pirates, preventing war, and supplying aid (Deslisle, 2010, 494-499). In recent years, the PRC has been more assertive and persistent towards its neighbors, especially in regards to issues related to territorial sovereignty. This has had a profoundly negative effect on the soft power efforts in neighboring countries, as it directly counters the PRC's claim of being a peaceful, non-intervening power (Deslisle, 2010, 494-511). This inconsistency in regards to claims and actual real world actions also severely undermines the PRC

efforts to promote its soft power. Generally the PRC's stance as a great power is very unclear; it stresses a number of key issues, but overall does not actually discuss how it would implement them. (Deslisle, 2010, 511-516).

The PRC is thus aiming to become a more influential great power, with a higher standing in the world. However, wanting to become a great power that is as influential as the US does not mean it wants to become the same kind of great power that the US is. Larson (2015, 326-327; 336-340) describes a number of ways of how countries can be accepted. He sees in the PRC a country that is pursuing a social creativity strategy in regards to international relations. A social creativity strategy means that a state is building new institutions and promoting economic development, through which a state gains more indirect influence. According to Larson (2015, 336-345), this is the strategy that the PRC is currently following, in which it is not actively seeking a confrontation with the US, but is trying to create a separate sphere in which it can also attain the influence that comes with being a great power. It is likely that the PRC does this to avoid an actual great power struggle, which could have devastating economic and military outcomes. This aligns with the notions that although the PRC has become more confrontational, it has thus far not risked to directly challenge the US, which fits with a social creativity strategy. The goal of this strategy is not necessarily replacing the US as the dominant great power, but rather that it seeks to gain more influence in a non-zero-sum game.

The question is now how the recent political changes in the US might have affected the PRC official narrative regarding the US, and by extension, the narrative of itself in comparison. As I discussed earlier, in international relations, the ideas one has about oneself and others shapes how policy is made. The following analysis will now discuss how different PRC newspapers examine the PRC's position and relation to the US as a great power.

Research Findings

Quantitative Findings

For my quantitative analysis I first looked into the amount of articles I could find relating to Trump and the elections. At first glance, there seemed to be a big difference between all the different newspapers; the Global Times had nearly 200,000 hits on its search engine, whilst Caixin had the relatively moderate amount of 3,500 hits, the People's Daily had the fewest hits with merely 239. Why the Global Times has so many hits, can partially be explained by the fact that most of its articles are reposts from other Chinese news agencies, primarily Xinhua and the People's Daily. The articles that appeared on the Global Times website were therefore mostly not original content, which was not something I was looking for in my analysis. Combined with the fact that the search bar on the Global Times lacked options to specify the search term, I looked for articles on the Factiva database. Although it is true that articles that were reposted on the Global Times can been seen as carrying the paper's approval, I nonetheless decided on only analyzing articles that were created by the Global Times, as this would eliminate possible criticism and would be more representative of the newspaper as a whole. When I searched through the Factiva Database, I found that the real number of articles of the Global Times related to Trump was 'merely' 1,500.

In terms of sourcing, the Global Times and Caixin were most transparent. Many of the articles of the Global Times cited more from other news sources than the actual reporting done by the Global Times. These cited sources most often included a combination of western and PRC sources, such CNN, BBC, Reuters, and Xinhua. Overall, the People's Daily lacked clear sources, unless it was quoting someone. There was also a large amount of overlap in regards to authors and journalist between the People's Daily and the Global Times, most of this probably had to do with sharing reporters abroad. Most of the articles that I read were commentaries, short news reports, and reports of PRC press briefings.

Content: Election and Victory

Overall there was a large difference in regards to the focus of each newspaper, although each newspaper had a relatively clear view of the situation that it wanted to convey. There were two distinct moments where I could discern a change in focus and tone of the articles in the newspapers. The first change happened after Trump's phone call with Cai Yingwen and the second change happened after the phone call between Trump and Xi Jinping. It is likely that the change in reporting came about due to the first moment being a very serious diplomatic faux pas on the side of Trump, which the PRC government likely did not anticipate. The second moment can be seen as a kind of reconciliation between the PRC and the US for the previous mistake and the relatively high tensions that followed. I will discuss the content of the articles in this context.

During the election, the focus of Caixin was primarily on the debates, and the current polls. The newspaper focused mainly on the fact that this election was rather extraordinary, but did not fully explain what made it so, apart from a the fact that a businessman without any prior political experience became the candidate for its party, even though he is mired by controversy. Commentaries from Caixin explain the popularity of Trump by pointing out that: "Trump is betting on the change in American society, especially on the majority of people that is unhappy about the elitist system that controls society" (〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇).[3] Although the articles of Caixin focused heavily on the campaign, the controversies, and the unhappiness of voters across the US, the reporting was quite balanced and did not attribute the election as something that was somehow part of a greater US decline. All of this seems in line with the general audience of Caixin, which is the educated middleclass. This kind of audience in the PRC generally has more knowledge of and interest in US politics. The more extensive and balanced coverage regarding to the 2016 election is therefore aimed more at this audience (Jiang et al., 2015, 97-98).

After the election of Donald Trump as president, Caixin discusses the surprise of his victory and what a Trump administration might entail for the US, the PRC and the world as a whole. Most of the Caixin articles are related to a sense of disbelief of Trump's victory and discuss how uncertain the

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3 Pangu Thinktank, 10 October 2016, "〇〇〇〇〇〇〇"〇〇"〇〇〇". Caixin.

future is now that he will become the president. One Caixin commentary focuses on the future of the US and the US-Sino relations, arguing that a Trump presidency is unlikely to be positive for the PRC. The author discusses how: "Although many scholars believe that Trump will weaken the relations with Asian allies, which will benefit China's rise, but it is impossible to deny that any uncertainty in the Sino-US relations is not going to have any benefit at all" (虽然很多学者认为特朗普会削弱与亚洲盟友的关系，这会有利于中国的崛起，但是不可否认任何中美关系中的不确定性都不会带来任何好处).[4] The author continues to argue that the arrival of Trump will divert a lot of resources of the PRC, and other countries, to deal with him. The fact that Trump is surrounded by people who are staunch anti-China hawks does not bode well either, on top of this, the presidency of Trump will still likely cause plenty of countries to reevaluate its relationship with the US.[5]

The focus of the People's Daily was more on the election as a whole rather than on Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. Commentaries from the People's Daily did discuss the flaws and scandals of the candidates, but tied this into the larger problem of the election. The People's Daily use the elections and the unpopular candidates to explain how the American democratic system is broken and how the US is in decline as a country.[6] The newspaper features some several long commentaries explaining why the US economy and society is in decline and has been for several decades. Trump is merely an apparent symptom of this decline, whose rise is explained by the loss of faith in the system and the unhappiness with the current political situation[7]. The articles are generally quite hostile towards the US democratic system and politicians of the US. They constantly criticize the system and call for it to be changed. One of the articles is particularly scathing by saying that: "The extreme confidence and arrogance of the "old democracy teacher" is now gone" ("老牌民主"的极端自信和傲慢已经荡然无存).
[8] The article later continues to argue that democracy and capitalism have thus repeatedly been shown to fail.

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4 Feng, C. 11 November 2016, "特朗普时代的全球化会怎样". Caixin.

5 Feng, C., 11 November 2016. 特朗普时代的全球化会怎样. Caixin.

6 Anonymous, 8 October 2016. 美国民主的制度性危机及其走向的思考. People's Daily

7 Anonymous, 25 October 2016. "特朗普"现象折射美国社会之变：美国民主的制度性危机. People's Daily.

After the election victory, the reporting of the People's Daily seems to be less overtly hostile, but still contains some criticism. The articles discuss how the presidency of Trump will likely change the relation the US has with most other countries, as Trump wanted to overhaul many of the treaties and organizations that the US is a part of. However, the same article continues to state that: "There is no reason to doubt, Trump's election will include the Sino-US relation as part of the international aspects he will influence. The large structure of the Sino-US relation will not change (…), for Sino-US relations are on the world's most important bilateral relations" (□□□ (…) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□).[9]

The Global Times's focus on the US election is more towards the impact of the election on people in the US and the PRC and their worries, it is also the only newspaper that interviews people in the PRC about the US election. The newspaper discusses how the election has made people feel very ashamed and disheartened about their democracy as a whole, but especially this election.[10]

After his election victory, the articles often discuss how unexpected the results were and how this is going to upset part of the political balance of the world. Nonetheless, the Global Times is very optimistic in the case of the PRC, stating that: "A tall tree catches wind, but China is one the strongest countries in terms of adaptability. The China that now responds to the change in American president has ample experience and ample power" (□□□).[11] Two other articles also discuss how most of his campaign promises are unfeasible and will not be met.

Two things struck me as quite odd about the focus on Donald Trump in the Global Times articles. First, in one article, the author goes on to discuss Trump's protectionism and how many

8 Anonymous, 8 October 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

9 Anonymous, 10 November 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

10 Zhang P. & Liu H., 14 October 2016. □□□□□"□□□□"□□□□. Global Times.

11 Anonymous 10 November 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

Americans nowadays see free trade deals and globalization as a negative thing. The author continues

to argue that: "Actually, globalization has already contributed to more and more winners, the US is

also among those that benefit, but this kind of thinking is still hard for people to accept within the US"

(□□)[12]. It basically comes down

to the author defending free trade, something that was also present in other Global Times articles.

In other articles, the Global Times comes to the defense Trump, arguing that he is being

attacked by a biased media and a corrupt political elite that controls everything. After his election

victory, the Global Times continues to defend Trump as a candidate that defeated the political elite and

that it is unfair for people to hate him. it praises him for his business-like approach and the fact that he

has no previous political experience and is therefore not influenced by the traditional political elite.[13]

The newspaper continues to describe the previous years under Obama as a period of decline and writes

that Trump stands at a crossroads and that his choices will decide the future of the US. The Global

Times continues to stand up for him in later articles as well; after his phone call with Tsai Yingwen,

one author argued that: "Maybe this was is the thinking of one of his conservative party advisors, but it

is not necessarily his own true thinking" (□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□).[14] The author

continues to argue that it could not be Trump's opinion, due to his lack of knowledge about

international politics. Although Trump's scandals and polarizing effects on US society are also

explored in the Global Times articles, the overall tone towards Trump is relatively sympathetic. It is

possible that this is mainly due to the comparison with Caixin and the People's Daily, both of which

portray the candidate more negatively. Nevertheless, it is still very odd to me to see a newspaper that is

often known for its nationalistic, leftist tendencies, praising the merits of free-trade and globalization,

and to defend a real estate mogul from the political elite.

All three of the newspapers have a tendency to discuss the election and Donald Trump as

aspects of US decline. The newspaper that does this the least is Caixin, which mentions the relative

12 Guo, Y. & Liu, H. 3 May 2016. □□□□□□□□□"□□"□□□□. Global Times.

13 Anonymous, 15 November 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

14 Yao, L. & Lin, P. 12 December 2016. □□□□□□"□□□□"□□□. Global Times

economic decline of the US and the lack of trust in the current political system merely once in all of the articles, but did not attach any greater political meaning to this. In this regard, the two state-owned media agencies are far more alike. The People's Daily's reporting in regards to the US is quite biased against the US and sees the entire election as signs of imminent decline. The People's Daily mainly focuses on the decline in terms of political and societal aspects. The Global Times on the other hand is also very focused on the decline of the US, but its arguments are more aimed at PRC superiority, rather than the decline and inferiority of the US that the People's Daily focuses on. This focus on either American decline or Chinese superiority was something that I could not discover in the articles of Caixin. One of the best ways to perhaps show this difference in vision and bias is in the prediction each newspaper makes for the presidency of Trump. The People's Daily and the Global Times both expect the new president not to be too much trouble for the PRC, the People's Daily argues that the bilateral relation is too important; and the Global Times argues that even if there would be trouble the PRC would be more than capable of overcoming this situation. There is also a strange contradiction in the two state-owned news agencies; they both claim, with different arguments, that the American president and the current American state is not strong enough politically to cause too much damage. Nonetheless, both newspapers still argue that he will upset the entire international political balance, which is quite a strange argument to make in the same articles. This makes Caixin the only newspaper that is critical towards the idea that Trump will not have an adverse effect on the bilateral relations with the PRC.

Content: Taiwan

After the phone call between Donald Trump and the president of Taiwan, Tsai Yingwen, the reporting across all the different news agencies took on a similar tone. There were notably less articles, especially commentaries, in all the newspapers and most of the newspapers focused only on remarks made by the ministry of Foreign Affairs. In all of the articles there was an almost complete lack of

information regarding the content and subject-matter of the call. The articles regarding the inauguration bore the same tone as the other articles that came after the phone call.

The phone call prompted an official response from the PRC minister of Foreign Affairs, which was reported in all newspapers verbatim. The message read: "This small trick on the side of Taiwan will not be able to change the position that Taiwan is a part of China, it also will not change the universally recognized One-China situation in the international community. We uphold the One-China policy and unflinchingly oppose the position of the Taiwanese independence movement, we possess a firm will, sufficient confidence, and enough capabilities to oppose any kind of Taiwanese independence, we will continue the process of unifying the country." (□□"□□"□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□"□□"□□□□□□□□□□□□□).[15] Many of the other articles from all three newspapers that dealt with the official response were directly or indirectly quoting this message.

This message was very prevalent in Caixin, which mainly reported on press briefings about the response of the PRC government, where the official response was continuously repeated. They all discussed how the One-China policy is the basis of Sino-US relations and that the US should maintain a good relation with the PRC, as that would be in the interest of both parties.[16] Different Ministry representatives are also quoted to saying that they expect the US to uphold these promises and relations made in regards to Taiwan and do not expect any kind of disruption. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to answer questions related to specifics regarding the content and facilitation of the call.[17]

There is a relative decrease in articles related to US politics and Trump up until his inauguration. Caixin has a few articles that merely discuss Trump's plans for when he is in office, and

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15 Zhang Y., 3 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Caixin. (also quoted in the other two news agencies around the same time).

16 Anonymous, 12 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Caixin.

17 Anonymous, 6 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□. Caixin.

how unlikely it is that he could fulfill many of his campaign promises. The articles do discuss how Trump still has a great amount of executive powers and that it is possible for him to impose certain economic tariffs on the PRC.[18] In another article that quotes a Foreign Office press briefing, the Foreign Office states the importance of its 40-year relation with the US and that the PRC will keep looking out for their mutual interests.[19]

The People's Daily barely mentioned the phone call at did not refer to it at all in any later articles. Instead it lashed out against the actions of Taiwan and the Taiwanese independence movement as a movement that wants to break up the PRC, and is trying to disrupt other countries adhering to the One-China policy. The language used in this segment was again very similar to the language used by the Foreign Affairs Ministry.[20] The People's Daily has only a short factual article reporting on the inauguration, noting that very few Democratic Party members will be present.[21]

Articles by the Global Times reported most thoroughly on the call by devoting two articles, one of which was a relatively large article, on the pro-Taiwan advisors surrounding Trump and the organization that went into orchestrating this phone call.[22] One article discusses how the people that Trump surrounds himself with are very pro-Taiwan, but that this and the phone call itself should not alarm the PRC. The article claims that "In regards to Trump, he wants to protect arm dealers and agricultural businessmen" (□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□)[23]. Several other articles also examine Trump's phone call and argue that Trump was merely being a businessman looking for possible opportunities to continue trading and perhaps improving trade deals with Taiwan. Two articles go on to

18 Qing Ying, 26 January 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□. Caixin.

19 Anonymous, 20 January 2017. □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□. Caixin.

20 Anonymous, 4 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

21 Zhang N. et al., 21 January 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

22 Anonymous, 6 December 2016. □□□ □□□□□□"□□□"□. Global Times.

23 Yu K., 5 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

argue that it is unlikely that Trump realized what he was doing when he accepted the phone call, as he has no training in foreign diplomacy, and therefore it must be the work of people around him.[24]

The Global Times continues with a relatively reconciliatory tone to its reporting. It elaborates on how Trump will be a very different president, but not necessarily a bad one. The article states that it hopes Trump will become more moderate when he is in office and that he will value diplomacy and cooperation. The article ends with the notion that: "China and the US have both experienced a process of nearly 40 years of uninterrupted cooperation, looking back, bilateral problems have always been present and at times been quite pronounced, but they have never dominated the bigger direction of the bilateral relations. The relatively friendly Sino-US relations represent the progress of mankind's political civilization, and they will not let it be cut short by a grave danger" (□□, □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□).[25]

There was one odd thing about a certain article in the Global Times that discussed the background of the call and eventually claimed that war could become an option if Trump continues down this path to normalizing relations with Taiwan, which was a radical break with the tone of the rest of the article. Possibly due to this, the Global Times ended the article with a disclaimer saying that the article does not represent the views of the Global Times, but merely that of the author.[26]

Generally the tone in the newspapers was more serious and less speculative after the phone call between Taiwan and the US, than earlier articles. The cause of this is likely due to the fact that a phone call with the president of Taiwan was something virtually nobody expected to happen, as it can be seen as a break with the One-China policy, which, in the PRC's words, forms the basis of Sino-US relations. Thus, the phone call could be perceived as the start of a possible break with the One-China policy, which would potentially be a political crisis. The state-owned newspapers no longer reiterated

24 Yao L. & Lin P., 12 December 2016. □□□□□"□□□□"□□□. Global Times.

25 Anonymous 20 January 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

26 Anonymous, 6 December 2016. □□□ □□□□□□"□□□"□. Global Times.

its claim that Trump would not pose a problem to the PRC, although most of its articles were still very critical of the US in general. Nevertheless, the tone of the newspapers seemed to have turned less confrontational and emphasized the importance of the relationship between the US and the PRC, but were still adamant about the importance of the One-China policy.

Content: Trump-Xi Phone Call

The greatest shift in reporting came after the phone call between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping on 10 February 2017. The aftermath of the phone call marked a very drastic shift in reporting and commentary towards Trump and the US in particular. The primary cause of this was Trump's tweeting about the phone call and stating his support for the One-China policy.

The articles in Caixin primarily discussed details regarding the phone calls, these details were quoted from the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The articles quoted that the phone call was a success and that the US president now fully supports and understands the One-China policy and will uphold it. The articles continue to examine how Xi Jinping and Trump both reiterated their dedication to the Sino-US relationship and how they are going to continue bilateral relations.[27] During a press briefing with the Foreign Affairs office, the spokesperson refused to go into much detail regarding the call and emphasized that the PRC has kept close contact during the last few weeks as usual.[28]

The articles from the People's Daily repeatedly emphasized the close contact that Trump had with Xi after his inauguration and that both men are looking forward to cooperating together. The articles are primarily focused on how warm and good the talks have been and how important the Sino-US relations are for both countries and the world.[29] The People's Daily articles are also reporting that Trump has now retracted his campaign claim that the PRC is a currency manipulator, and that he will seek to work more closely in the international market with the PRC than before. The People's

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27 Anonymous, 10 February 2017. 􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀 􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀. Caixin.

28 Anonymous, 9 February 2017. 􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀 􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀. Caixin.

29 Anonymous, 11 February 2017. 􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀􀀀. People's Daily.

Daily now lacked any apparent criticism towards the US and often repeated that: "Sino-US relations preserve healthy stable development, in accordance with the common benefit of the people of the two countries. The Sino-US relations are one of the world's most important bilateral relations" (□□□).[30] This phrase also came back in other newspapers and is most likely taken from the Foreign Affairs Office, but the repetition and referral to the Sino-US relations were most prevalent in the People's Daily articles.

The Global Times articles were very similar in content and reporting as the People's Daily and also mainly reiterated how well the talk went and that Trump affirmed his support for the One-China policy.[31] The Global Times articles also spent some time discussing how the world was relieved to have the US and the PRC working together again, although the sentiment was not shared by Japan and Taiwan according to the articles. One of the articles also discussed how the phone call was perceived online by people in the PRC, who were mocking Taiwan for trying to come between the US and the PRC. The author of this article also wrote that Trump knows that the PRC is the only one that matters economically.[32]

Although most of the articles related to the phone call were all very similar in content and tone, it was quite interesting to see that after the phone call there were no more articles criticizing Trump or the US. The articles themselves were overall quite similar in tone as well, part of this probably has to do with reiterating certain phrases from the Foreign Office. Nonetheless, the Global Times and the People's Daily, were both suddenly quite positive in regards to Trump and his administration, especially in comparison to earlier articles. These two state-owned newspapers also emphasized the importance of the Sino-US relations to the world in terms of economics and global stability. These newspapers also constantly discussed how: "He and Xi Jinping engaged in 'very good'

30 Anonymous, 11 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

31 Anonymous, 12 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

32 Zhang P. et al., 11 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

and 'very earnest' talks (中美双方进行了"很好的谈话"和"很坦诚的谈话"云云)[33], this is something I will discuss later as well. The articles from Caixin were more moderate in their tone and did not focus so much on how well the talks went and how important the bilateral relations are, and instead focused more on the situation around the talk.

In conclusion, there is a distinct difference in tone and focus of the three different newspapers. The newspaper that mostly deviated from the others was Caixin, its content was the least politically colored and had a less predetermined critical stance towards the US, it also did not have a complete reversal in tone towards the US either, thus staying rather consistent in its focus and tone in its reporting. The remaining two newspapers are both relatively similar, the main reason for this is likely their nature as state-owned newspapers. Nonetheless, the content of the two newspapers also differed here on some key issues. Personally I would describe the Global Times as pro-China and the People's Daily as anti-US. This is not to say that the Global Times does not feature parts that are overtly critical of the US, or that the People's Daily is not pro-China. Rather that the focus of the newspapers is either reinforcing the strength of the PRC or emphasizing the weaknesses of the US. The Global Times however, also features an apparent admiration for Trump, which I thought was quite unexpected, and definitely something the People's Daily did not engage in. In the end, both of these newspapers did fluctuate heavily in regards to their views on the US and Sino-US relations. Overall, this relatively negative portrayal of the US election in the Global Times is quite the change of tone. Seeing as eight years earlier, the editor of the Global Times called the democratic process in the US a very good and wonderful thing, albeit something that could never work in the PRC (Jiang et al., 2015, 93-94).

Intertextuality, Phrasing, and Keywords

There seems to be a great amount of intertextuality in all of the newspapers, this is primarily due to the fact that most of the newspapers (in)directly quote officials or official discourse. This is most clear in regards to articles talking about the Sino-US relations and Taiwan, where there was little deviation in

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33 Anonymous, 12 February 2017. 习近平同美国总统特朗普通电话. People's Daily.

regards to discourse used on this issue. Nonetheless, this intertextuality was the most prevalent in the Global Times and the People's Daily, which makes sense in regards to them being state-owned newspapers, which stick relatively close to the official line.

One particular case of intertextuality that I found in the state-owned newspapers was that they paid particular attention to media and political elitism in the US. Both newspapers spent several articles attacking the US media for siding with the liberal elitists, with in total seven articles focusing on the subjects.[34] These articles argued that US media did not engage in honest reporting anymore, and instead had been slowly taken over by big corporations, which compromised their journalistic integrity. Due to this, the media has undermined the position of democracy and the media itself. One article went as far to say that: "This kind of media is not good at reflecting the true situation of the US, it is also worth doubting how much of a contribution it is making in regards to the development of the US democracy. Under the mainstream media's protection and support, the US pursues an elitist society, and merely bring conjure the illusion of a democracy" (□□□).[35] The Global Times also discusses this elitism as a force that tries to keep Trump out of power.

All newspapers also shared the same discourse in regards to descriptions about the Sino-US relations, although this was most pronounced again in the state-owned media. Phrases regarding 'mutual benefit' (*gongtong liyi*, □□□□) and the 'safeguarding peace and stability' (*weihu heping wending,* □□□□□□) were present in twenty out of the total 47 articles.[36] This is considerable, especially when noting that articles only started mentioning this after the phone call with Tsai Yingwen. This shows the sudden shift in regards to the US from overtly critical, to emphasizing importance, and eventually appreciative.

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34 Anonymous, 15 November 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

35 Dai, L. 6 December 2016. "□□"□□|□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

36 Anonymous, 11 February 2017. □□□□□"□□"□□□□□□□. Global Times.

The language of the state-owned newspapers featured more evidentialities than Caixin. This use of evidentialities was quite forceful, and was mainly related to Taiwan and the One-China policy. Articles from these newspapers frequently wrote that countries 'must' (*bixu*, □□) adhere to the One-China policy, and that Taiwan 'should' (*yinggai*, □□) cease its meddling and independence seeking.[37] This use of forceful language by the PRC against Taiwan could be expected. Two separate articles eventually turned to Trump and other countries in their language, saying they 'must' (*bixu*, □□) respect the One-China policy as well if they want to maintain good relations with the PRC.[38]

In regards to language, there was also an interesting shift in regards to the description of the Sino-US relations. Right after the election of Trump, all the newspapers discussed the relation between the two states as 'good' (*lianghao*, □□), but after the phone call with Xi Jinping in February, the way the relationship was described changed. The Global Times and Caixin started to refer to the relationship as 'good' (*lianghao*, □□) and 'close' (*miqie*, □□)[39], whilst the People's Daily referred to the relationship as 'good' (*lianghao*, □□) and (*reqie*, □□).[40] This coincides with the increased (relatively) positive coverage and reporting on Trump and the US. This was, amongst other things, evident by the total lack of mentions of 'decline' (*xiajiang*, □□; *shuailuo*, □□) no longer appeared. Generally, Caixin did not engage in too many generalizations and did not judge the US or Trump from a political perspective. This partially fits with the newspaper's audience and which political stance, which is more rightwing than most state-owned media, although generally still loyal to the CCP.

Generally, most of the articles from all of the newspapers lacked any kind of picture that has or could have any implications for the discourse. Caixin had the most pictures with their articles, but these were mostly of people such as Trump or Tsai Yingwen. Caixin also featured a higher number of visual aids, such as graphs and charts; this was something the other news agencies completely lacked.

37 Anonymous, 6 December 2016. □□□ □□□□□□□"□□□"□. Global Times.

38 Anonymous, 4 December 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily

39 Anonymous, 9 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□. Caixin; Zhang et al., 11 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□. Global Times.

40 Anonymous, 12 February 2017. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

There were also virtually no weblinks to other articles or sources in the texts themselves, this leads me to believe there is no clear network between the newspapers, at least in regards to Trump and the US in this timeframe.

Conclusion

The research question I set out to answer was: 'How did three different Chinese language newspapers report on Donald Trump and the US during the 2016 US presidential election and the immediate months after his victory, and how did this relate to the PRC?'. Overall the three newspapers reported on Trump and the US quite differently. With regard to the only private newspaper, Caixin, the reporting remained relatively consistent. Although it has some, valid, criticism of the US and Donald Trump, the discourse itself was never solely focused on criticizing. Likewise, the discourse did not go through a reversal in tone after the phone call between Trump and Xi. Meanwhile, the state-owned newspapers, the Global Times and the People's Daily, are best described as: initially quite negative, then more critical yet wary, and eventually carefully positive of Trump and the US. Nevertheless, the two media agencies were not exactly the same in content. The People's Daily was far more critical of the entire election and Trump and especially the US democratic system. The Global Times on the other hand was primarily critical of the elitism present in the US society, but was interestingly quite positive of Donald Trump.

The relationship between the US and the PRC in the articles were mainly focused on the bilateral relations. The earlier shift from critical to more positive coverage in the state-owned media was noticeable here as well. At first, most of the articles mentioned how the decline of the US would affect many US relations, but not those with the PRC. The reason for this, they argued, was that the PRC was too important to be meddled with, and even if it did, the PRC would have the strength and versatility to weather the storm. However, the discourse regarding the US soon changed to emphasize the bilateral relation between the US and the PRC. The relation was then primarily described as one of the most important bilateral relations in the world due to its combined effort in order to preserve

peace, stability, and mutual economic benefit.

In the end, this shows a strong difference in the discourse of private and official media. Especially the state-owned media has shown a much more concerted and pronounced negative coverage of the US in comparison with private media, which is more balanced. Part of this more overt negative coverage is likely due to something called 'negative soft power'. Instead of normal soft power, which focuses on attracting people abroad to your cause, negative soft power focuses on a domestic audience. Negative power in the PRC is used as domestic tool to compare itself positively with a negative 'other', in this case the US (Callahan, 2015, 216-219). By showcasing and emphasizing the overall negative traits of the US, the PRC is indirectly trying to improve its own image. At the same time, it helps in its own great power discourse rivalry with the US. The constant criticism regarding the failure of democracy, due to the corruption and elitism, is also part of a fierce criticism of liberal democracy and the US. In one of the articles the PRC promotes itself in comparison to the US by writing that: "unlike the US, the PRC chooses leaders based on good virtues and political experience" (□□).[41]

However, in my opinion, this negative soft power is at the very least somewhat offset by the way the articles eventually discuss the importance of the Sino-US relations. By examining this bilateral relation and branding it as one of the world's most important bilateral relation in terms of economics and world stability is a reversal seems to be a callback of previous arguments. The PRC is this way not only trying to be fundamentally different from the US, but also try to cooperate on a large scale, by putting itself on near equal footing as the US as a great power. Generally, the PRC seems to derive quite a bit of its own great power identity from the US, which is what makes this identity quite fragile. As rebelling against the US has long been part of the domestic great power identity and is more and more becoming part of its foreign great power identity as well, if the US were to fall away, so too would the PRC's identity. Research has also shown that many regard the PRC as a great power, but that the exact identity and goals of this great power remain quite unclear (Zeng & Breslin, 2016,

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41 Zhang, R. et al. 16 October 2016. □□□□□□□□□□□□□. People's Daily.

794-795). I believe that the negative and positive soft power of the PRC will never be truly effective if the PRC still lacks a stronger overarching goal other than not being the US, in the eyes of other countries. This identity is also very reliant on how the PRC acts towards the US as well.

Generally, I believe that the great power identity and strategy for the PRC would be helped if it has clearer direction and did not rely as much on comparisons with the US. I think that such a solution might have presented itself with the arrival of Trump on the global political stage. This way, the possibility exists for the PRC to engage in what Larson (2015, 336-345) described as 'social mobility'. Social mobility means that a state tries to excel in areas that are accepted and popular in the international community. The election of Trump has made the option of social mobility within the international society viable. By posing itself as a world leader in fighting climate change and fighting for free trade, as Xi Jinping has increasingly done in previous months, the PRC can gain greater acceptance and influence in the international society, without having to directly challenge the US. Especially now that Trump has pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement, which was very badly received amongst all the countries that signed it. This way, the PRC is able to attain great power status more effectively. Although it is impossible to say that this will happen, it is quite telling of the sudden blow of the global status quo that this is suddenly an option for the PRC.

The research done in this thesis has mainly been focusing on PRC media discourse, and its relation to the US. However, this research has some shortcomings in that it is not expansive enough to know if the discovered change in media focus and tone is representative enough for the PRC (official) media as a whole. Similarly, there is also a lack of research done in regards to possible changes based on this shift in discourse. However, it is exactly these avenues that subsequent research could continue to build on. It is very worthwhile to see if the changes in discourse in the media have resulted in any change in foreign policy or official discourse. Or whether the official discourse was at the root of this change. Apart from that, further research into the development of discourse regarding Trump and the US is still worthwhile, as the opinions about the US are seemingly flipflopping quite frequently (Phillips, 7 November, 2016).

Most of the international society is increasingly seeing the PRC as a new great power. Only what kind of great power it is going to be, remains to be seen. The PRC's main great power identity is focused on an identity that is, according to its own media discourse, both cooperating with the US, as well as trying to undermine it. This lack of coherent great power discourse and clarity is perhaps the result of a clear strategy within the CCP itself.

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Appendix

Due to the great amount of notes, research and documents, it would be too much of an effort to add it all to the appendix. Therefore this thesis will only feature information on the articles, regarding the newspaper, author, date, and title.

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