

Master of Arts Thesis

FRAMING IN THE US MEDIA: CHINA'S PRESENCE IN THE AMAZON

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Introduction

How events or stories are covered by news media and how the final structure of news that enters public discourse can subsequently influence the public and foreign policy makers' perceptions have been studied in various fields ranging from cultural studies, media studies, sociology, psychology and political science (see, for example, Entman 1993, Goffman 1974, Lule 2002, Tuchman 1978, Norris 1974). Some argue, that the media's functions encompass framing and agenda-setting. The process of framing is conducted by employing specific words and images, which carry an influential role on a reader's political conviction by the level of its *cultural resonance* (e.g. words that are emotionally charged) and *magnitude* (salience and the frequency of use) (Entman 2004). The agenda-setting theory describes the transmission of media's agenda, understood as the coverage of selected most newsworthy content, to public's attention. The latter function, although regarded as non-intentional due to the simple need of limiting the number of news that can be conveyed by the media, entails that the media's agenda may result in influencing the public's perception on which issues to place salience (McCombs and Guo 2014, 251-252). Furthermore, the US media are viewed by some as politically biased and reflect in its content the political elites' interests or the US foreign policy line (Entman 1991, Entman and Rojecki 1993, Herman and Chomsky 2002, Keshishian 1997). Others however suggest that journalists maintain some independency from the media ownership structures in presenting a coverage that is diverging from the Washington's rhetoric (Althuis 2010).

The way China is framed in the US media is dealt with in a considerable number of studies. The studies on US newspapers' coverage of China bear out similarities between the depiction of China and the state of Sino-American relations. Moreover, the predominant tone in the coverage of China presents the country in a negative light (Chang 1989, Peng 2004). Turner (2014) writes that the images of China in the American imagery from the eighteenth century depicted China as exotic and mythical land. But aside from the idealized image of the Asian country, Americans portrayed it as backward and inferior to the West. In the contemporary American political discourse, the rise of China in the 21st century further stirred hopes of its potential to conform to American values of trade liberalization, but also build ups the notion of the country as threatening the Western dominance and the US security.

Since the expansion of China's economic relations with the Global South in the late 20th century, the dynamics between China and other developing countries¹ have become a subject of media's attention and academic research. The popular and practical geopolitics in representation of China's economic activities in Africa in the British newspapers was examined by Mawdsley (2008), who argues that the media, by reproducing stereotypical images, attributed the frame of 'ruthlessness' to China, to the West its 'trusteeship', and depicted Africa with the trait of 'weakness'. But, until the time of writing this thesis, there have been no studies dealing with the images of China in Latin America. Given the niche in the literature of media framing, I set out to answer the research question: How China, the US, Latin America and the Amazon were framed in the coverage of the US elite newspapers on Chinese companies presence in the Amazon?

This thesis engages in the debate of framing China in the US media, by analyzing the coverage of Chinese investments in *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post*. The aim of this research is to explore dominating frames with regard to China, Latin American countries, and the rainforest in the US elite newspapers. The depiction of the US companies in relation to China will be also taken under scrutiny. Moreover, given the vast literature on the relationship of the mass media coverage of foreign news to the US foreign policy, I engage in the discourse, by examining whether framing in the US newspapers reflected the state of the US-China relations, as well as the US government official rhetoric towards China and its advancement of economic relationship with Latin America during President Obama and President Trump administration covering period of 2009-2019.

The first part of the paper presents the literature review and methodology. Next section gives an overview of China-Latin America relations, Chinese companies presence in the Amazon, the state of Sino-American relations and the US official rhetoric towards China in 2009-2019. Then, I analyze the frames in the selected articles with regard to China, the US, Latin America and the Amazon. The results are compared with the Washington's rhetoric towards China in both administrations. The last part concludes with the summary of research findings and contextualizes the results in the literature.

¹ The term 'developing countries' in this thesis is used according to the country classification by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 2019).

Literature Review and Methodology

Framing in the US news media and foreign policy

News are defined by Tuchman in *Making News* (1978, 1) as “a window to the world [...] Americans learn of themselves and others, of their institutions, leaders, and life styles and of those of other nations and their peoples”. As the author writes, the reception of news can be constrained by news frames constructed by the news organizations, such as newspapers and television networks (Tuchman 1978, 1-2). The production of news is suggested to be influenced by the lack of access to the complete information, given the position or power relations between journalists and sources. Moreover, news media might bypass certain aspects of an event in reporting due to implicit understanding of concept taken as obvious or the limits imposed by journalists own perspectives (Tuchman 1978, 8). Entman (1993, 52) delineates of what constitutes news framing more specifically: “The frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for items described”. Moreover, Entman (2004, 5) features basic functions of the news frame, i.e. “defining actors or conditions as problematic, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment, endorsing remedies or improvements” (2004, 5). In practice, news frames are manifested in the consistent use of “ keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative”, while at the same time either discarding contesting perceptions or marginalizing them (Entman 1991, 7). Norris (1997, 358) further expands the definition of framing by defining it as the reinforcement of standard patterns : “Frames represent stereotypes, which slot particular events into broader interpretive categories that may or may not be appropriate. Because news frames can be expected to reflect broader social norms, political minorities challenging the dominant culture are likely to prove most critical of such treatment”.

The academic approaches to understanding the news framing and potential biases, was structured by the Keshishian (1997, 333) into four groups: the technological – foregrounding each medium's physical characteristics, sociological – claiming a news frame to be a social construct, cultural – focused on stories and cultural myths, and politico-economic approach prioritizing the political and economic system to serve as a prism through which the events are framed in the news coverage. The latter asserts the inherent political bias in journalism, by including sympathetic or unfavorable news content and which is based on the government agenda in foreign affairs (Keshishian 1997, 332-336). For instance, the myth-making role, as claimed by Lule (2002), revealed itself in the New York Times editorials in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks in their portrayal of victims and heroes. The political bias of the US media in non-political news, such as natural disasters, was evident in the comparative study presented by Keshishian (1997) on the reporting of an Armenian and Iranian earthquake, in 1988 and 1990 respectively, by *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post*, thus claiming the politico-economic inclination of news media. The first case of the coverage of the disaster in Armenia is said to be more sympathetic in terms of language and themes concerning the changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the coverage on the even more deadly tragedy in Iran, was less reported and involved political references to the state of relations between the government of the US and post-revolutionary Iran, including phrases such as “enemies”, “tensions” or “animosity”. Moreover, Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (2000) build on Hall's (1977) argument of framing as ‘ideological labor’ and link news framing to prevailing ideologies in a particular society, political and economic system, and occupational backgrounds. The authors further discern the influences in news media into the three types: dominant ideology, elite ideology and journalistic ideology. Taking the US as an example, as the authors contend, the ideologies dominating the American society are: capitalism, anti-communism and male world views. These values when espoused by the news network, play the essential role in understanding events and reinvigorating dominating values in the coverage (Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad 2000).

Norris (2000) traced the trajectory of dominating frames in the US network news before and after the major transformation of the balance of power in the World propelled by collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, which resulted in a remaining one sole superpower represented by the US. After the end of the Second World War and the ascent of geopolitical rivalry between the West and

the Eastern Communist bloc, the Cold War frame was a pervasive ‘interpretative structure’ of covering international events, which determined the selection of what makes news in the US and foregrounded the binary of friends and foes. The formerly prevailing frame set the precedence of the events with direct impact on America’s interests in the media and provided suggestions for policy actions based on the rivalry with the USSR (Norris 2000, 358-9). Along with the change on the global stage in the last decade of the 20th century, the author’s study demonstrates the decrease in the amount of the coverage in Russia and domestic affairs emerging to become the news spotlight, simultaneously with inadequate sufficient attention to obscure and intricate political and military events different parts of the globe. Norris (2000, 366-367) argues that, nowadays, the so-called “parachute journalism” of covering events deprived of a broader context results in leaving the public with no comprehensive frame to serve as a lens for contextualizing the events.

Another prevailing frame in the US news media, as argued by Entman (2003), was the September 11 frame of the *good vs evil* and the *war* against terrorism forged by the White House after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. Although, later, when the Bush administration set off to wage a war against Iraq, Entman (2003) asserts that the US media did not utterly play the role of a political propaganda mouthpiece. Instead, they attempted to break away from the White House’s frame at the time and provided attention to the skepticism of the administration’s decision to enter Iraq. Even though limited in its resonance among the US media, the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times* included articles with a counter frame offering an alternative perspective on the US Middle Eastern ally and pleading for the shift of focus from Saddam Hussain’s involvement in 9/11 to Saudi Arabia.

Scholarly studies on the US news media point out to the relationship between the incumbent US government’s foreign policy position and coverage of foreign news. Framing in such manner was illuminated in the Entman’s (1991) study of the contrasting news outlooks on the two incidents of shooting down the Korean Air Line passenger plane by the Soviet fighter plane in 1983 and Iran Air flight by the US Navy ship in 1988. The US media framed the two similar tragic incidents in a contrasting manner, by the choices employing certain terms, contexts, clashing images and vocabulary in order to exert a desired interpretation in the readers. The framing in this study displayed itself in different constructions of agency, by labeling the Soviet military as murders and downplaying the role of the US Navy, extending the agency of the perpetrators by making generalizations about the

Soviet Union's inherent "evil". While affixing moralizing judgements in the case of KAL incident, the media refrained from making sweeping conclusions on the US, reducing at the same time the salience of the Iran Air incident.

In the previously mentioned study on the framing of KAL and Iran Air incidents, Entman (1991) writes that the news outlets relationship with political elites resulted in the import of frames from the White House and suggest that journalist tend to refrain from opposing the government's agenda while covering breaking news. Even more explicitly, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (2002) take on the US media complicity in representing and shielding the political (and not only) interests of powerful privileged groups. To illuminate such connections, the authors coined a "propaganda model" displaying the structural dependency of media on the controlling and funding sources, as well as journalists internalization of what news align with the policy of the institutional structure. Herman and Chomsky (2002, xi-xii) suggest that the media is not deprived of its autonomy by the ownership structures, and news conflicting with the official agenda or uncomfortable to those in power position reach the public to a certain degree, however, are "kept on the margins". On the contrary to such strong assertions of media's dependence on Washington's officials, in the study on the case of covering the US-Libya crisis in 1980s by the *New York Times*, Althuis (2010) suggest the instance of marginalizing the Congress as a source of information on the perception of the issue and "surprisingly balanced" presented positions with a slight preponderance of oppositional views to the US administration.

As Cohen (1963,13) stated in *The Press and Foreign Policy*, "media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". Similarly, McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that one of the functions of mass media is an agenda-setting, which consist in the selection of topics or issues which are to enter the public discourse and shape the news public political agenda by "the transfer of saliences from one communicator to another" (McCombs and Shaw 1972, 94). The academic discussion on the entanglement of the US news media framing and foreign policy includes a considerable share of studies dedicated to representations of China's image in the US news media which I summarize in the next section.

Framing China

Jespersen (1996; as in Mawdsley 2010, 511) conceptualized the state of US's imagery of China as the following:

“Images and perceptions of China have been, and continue to be more of a product of the US domestic forces than the result of anything else. [...] Although China certainly has changed over the last 100 years, the basis for Americans' understanding of that nation and its people have not”.

In *The News and U.S.-China Policy: Symbols in Newspapers and Documents*, Chang (1988) concludes that the image of China in the US news media coverage mirrored the relations between the countries. Furthermore, Dorogi's (2001) in his dissertation study on the popular images of China in the US media in the periods before and after the Tiananmen square massacre in 1989 (and Taiwan Strait crisis in 1995) are argued to be underpinned by the prism of the liberal-democratic ideology and domestic values, as well as “standards of evolutionary progression”. The results of the study concur with Chang's (1989) assertion regarding the kinship of the media's attitude towards China and the current US China policy, as in the former period China was dominantly described by the media as a reformist country under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, whereas after the incident in June 1989 the media coverage fluctuated to the negative tone, focusing mostly on the oppressive nature of the regime towards human rights and the fear of potential military and economic threat posed by China's pursuit of expansionism.

The changing symbolism and imagery of China in *the New York Times* and *the Los Angeles Times* was studied more comprehensively by Peng (2004). Along with the consistent increase in the media coverage of China, the frames employed in regard to China were discerned by Peng (2004, 57-58) to political, ideological and economic categories of frames, where the first two are charged with unfavorable and negative tone dating back to the Cold War frame of the Communist countries. First, since the PRC establishment, prevalent was the use of ideological and emotionally-loaded symbols referring to communism or “Red China”. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979, the predominant frame is said to had shifted from the “Red” to ideologically reforming and more benign “Green China”, only to go back to the end of idealistic hopes of liberating progress which was further framed as the

“Dark China” after the government’s Tiananmen Square crackdown on protesters in 1989 (Peng 2004, 55-56). Since 1992, however, the dominating frames are ambivalent and ranging from the economic advancement, strategic importance of China to the US and their partnership to rivalry, oppression of human rights and communist nature of the regime (Peng 2004, 57).

The phenomena of the rise of China since the impressive economic takeoff due to the reform and opening up under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, which transcended into the so-called ‘China anxiety’ or ‘China as a threat’ in the US foreign policy rhetoric and media, received considerable attention in the literature on framing China (e.g. Yang and Liu 2012). Stone and Xiao (2007) contend that the US media coverage of China after the USSR’s downfall increased considerably with employing frames that shifted towards a more negative tone. Moreover, the authors suggest that the media fueled by a need for potential “enemy” to exist, and the perception of the collapse of the Communist Block possibly results in the emergence of a new global competitor and the US adversary– the People’s Republic of China. In the light of China’s rise, the construction of China as an often exotic and threatening “other” in current US news media and in political rhetoric is argued by Ooi and D’arcangelis (2017) to be based on long-standing Orientalist themes. Orientalism, as a term was first forged and called out by Edward Said, as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1979, 2). It is manifested in the West’s perception of identifying itself and the Orient in binary categories, such as the superior and progressive Occident against the inferior or backward Orient. In the discourse on China’s behavior in the East China Sea, cyber espionage and its currency devaluation, Ooi and D’Angelo (2017) found the depiction of the PRC to be formulated as the potential enemy, “thief”, “cheat” and “bully”, and by that underscoring the US dominance over China.

The prevalent imagery of China in the news frames in the US media is argued by scholars to be the anti-Communism ideology and dependent on the US foreign policy. This frame and its link to the US state of foreign affairs, for instance, was to be prevalent in *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* coverage of pro-democracy students demonstrations on Tiananmen in 1989 and in Kwangju in South Korea in 1980, where the latter received much less attention in the media, as well as the protesters values were less emotionally and positively covered in comparison with the former tragic event (Kim 2000). The same frame, displaying ideological influences in reporting, is claimed be employed in the US press depiction of the Fourth UN Conference in Beijing in 1995, where criticism of

China's communist system outweighed the importance of the substance of the global feminist movement (Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasdad 2000).

Nonetheless, a comparative study of the Western news media diametrical attitude towards similar events of the SARS outbreak in China and Vietnam, argues no inherent ideologically-biased negative coverage of China (Leung and Huang 2007). Different responses and handling of the outbreak crisis by the two countries, where the PRC's government attempted covering up the presence of the disease, while Vietnam's leadership presented transparency and effective measures in managing the crisis from the beginning, were argued to have contributed reasonably to the stronger criticism of China and its negative "othering" in the media (Leung and Huang 2000, 687-691).

Since China has transformed throughout its economic development process from a major receiver of foreign investments to putting forth its own outbound foreign direct investment agenda, China's involvement in the so-called South-South cooperation with other developing countries emerged as a subject of political discourse, media coverage, as well as a scholarly research. Mawdsley (2008, 510) examined the representation of China, Africa and the West itself in the UK broadsheet newspapers from the prism of critical geopolitics in discourse constituted by visual images and language, that is "establishing and maintaining hegemonic regimes of representation". The author's study points out to a tendency to highlight negative aspects of China's presence in the African continent and minimizing positive impacts of China-Africa relations. In contrast, the West in Africa was delineated as bringing good governance and development, as well as ethical practices that indicate the West's transformation from the colonial past and the times of cooperating with authoritarian leaders. In sum, the study concluded that Africa's image in the UK newspapers coverage showed a stereotypically corrupted and weak 'Dark Continent' with almost no agency of its own in relation to both China and the West.

In short, the literature vastly suggest that the images of China in the US official rhetoric and the media appear to be depended on dominating ideologies and in parallel with the dynamics of the US official foreign policy line towards China. The often negative bias of the US media's construct of China in the form of news frames is manifested in Orientalizing tendencies, but is also said to mirror the self-imagery of the US in relation to China.

The US imagery of Latin America and the ‘pristine myth’ of the Amazon

As this thesis studies the framing of China’s OFDI in the Amazon territory, it also aims at examining the coverage of the rainforest and Latin American countries itself. Hence, I attempt at examining whether and, if so, how the image of Amazon and LAC constitutes a distinct part of a news frame or is framed in relation to China and the US. Moreover, as the study concerns the news coverage of the Global South, it engages in the discourse on the representation of the so-called ‘developing countries’ in the US media and it is essential to present scholarly research conducted in this field as well.

In *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*, Pike (1992) illuminates the trajectory of the stereotypes of civilization and nature of Latin America in the US imagery. He argues, that there has been a patronizing tendency to regard Latin America as the ‘Other’ by the US from the early period of their encounter, which is said to be appropriated from the British settlers treatment of African slaves and the people of the Indian subcontinent. Aside from being an ‘Other’, Livingstone (2013, 5-6) writes that in the US foreign policy towards Latin America was marked by the imperially resonating term ‘America’s Backyard’, which implies the image of Latin America as wild, and where the US has the right to intervene. Pike (1992) asserts that the US imagines itself in a binary categories with relation to Latin America. It acts as a carrier of civilizational progress and strives to dominate over the ‘Other’, which in the general view of Latin America and its people is circumscribed as backward and remaining in the state of nature. Occasionally, although, the author writes that oppositional attitudes come out, as emotional longing after the coexistent with untouched nature that is seen as a virtue of Latin Americans (Pike 1992, xv). The author adds that, “the tone of the US media coverage sometimes emerges out of, while simultaneously reinforcing, conventional American stereotypes of Latin Other” (Pike 1992, 347). Moreover, some contend that the coverage of developing countries in the US news is scarce, superficial, predominantly negative, and focused on disasters or crises, such as oil spills (Rosenblum 1970, Potter 1987).

A part of the focus on examining news frames is the representation of the Amazon. A stereotypical image of the Amazon, that is argued to be still prevalent to this day, is construed by the term ‘pristine myth’, forged by Denevan (1992), denoting a false conception of the

Amazon by the 19th century romantics writers. Denevan (1992) contests the image of the Amazon as an untouched by the human hand, wild natural reservoir in its primordial form that is supposedly predating the Columbus conquest of Latin America in 1492. What European conquistadors encountered is argued to be an already humanized rainforest in its vast area with an altered landscape due to the human footprint such as “modified vegetation and wildlife, erosion, created earthworks, roads, and settlements throughout the Americas” (Denevan 1992, 379). Only after the start of colonization period and depopulation of Indians due to various diseases transmitted from Europe, the rainforest began to recover its biodiversity, although in a varied form from the very beginning of the native Amazonians habitation (Clement and Junqueira 2010, Denevan 1992).

Methodology

The scope of the study is the coverage of Chinese investments in the extraction industry in the Amazon rainforest in the four elite daily newspapers *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* from 2009 to 2019. This particular set of four newspapers constitutes the US elite press, which as Paletz (1998) writes, “tends to emphasize government and politics, employs or uses foreign correspondents, and indulges in investigative journalism. Its news stories include background and explanations, often containing more than one perspective and source. It treats news with relative sobriety, downplays flamboyant material, and eschews hyperbolic (but not evocative) language” (Paletz 1998, as in Sparks and Tulloch 2000). Moreover, the elite newspapers provide a representation of the US news media, by setting the agenda for other news organizations, as argued by Miller-Carpenter (2007, 763).

Factiva database is employed for searching relevant news articles which are selected by the search keywords: China, Latin America, Amazon. As the turnout of the articles was a relatively small number (7), a framing analysis a qualitative research method will be used in the form of textual analysis. Reese (2010, 18 as in Kuypers 2010) argues that frames are entrenched in a ‘web of culture’ and proposes to employ a qualitative approach “to give greater emphasis to the cultural and political content of news frames and how they draw upon a shared store of meanings”. Although time-consuming for larger amount of texts, the

extensive and detailed analysis of each unit by this approach includes examining the recurring themes with wider considerations. The research done by qualitative methodology allows for observing more subtle elements belonging to frames that would otherwise be omitted in quantitative search constrained by a fixed set of keywords only (David et. al. 2011, 331-332). In the analysis this study draws on the previously mentioned Entman's (1991) definition of a news frame, and examines the recurring "keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative".

China in the Global South: the resource extraction industry in Latin America

China's growing attention towards strengthening economic relations with countries in the Global South at the end of the 20th century coincided with a downward trend of the US's stake in the region (Li 2007). The demise of the US's agenda on maintaining Latin America as its 'backyard' and the sphere of influence was announced in the then Secretary of State John Kerry's speech on the end of the Monroe Doctrine in 2013 (Johnson 2013). One conspicuous instance of transformation in the balance of political and economic power in the region, is the turn made by Panama, a country with a historic US influence in the past century, towards strengthening its relations with China while signing 19 cooperation agreements and joining the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Giolzetti 2019). Almost 20 years after the US ceded control of the Panama Canal in 2000, the canal of a geostrategic importance may supply the massive China-led infrastructure project with the access to a logistic center for both North and South Americas (Hsiang 2018).

The PRC's interest in trade and investment with developing countries was epitomized in the formulation of the State Council's two policy papers - on Africa in 2006 and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2008 – promoting a “comprehensive and cooperative partnership featuring equality, mutual benefit and common development” (State Council 2016). Officially, China endorses its economic relations with other developing countries with the language of the ‘South-South cooperation’, ‘win-win partnerships’ or ‘mutual complementarity’. These terms, stressing that partnerships are made within the boundaries of the Global South, are also espoused in the public diplomacy of both China and Latin American leaders (Rajagopalan 2015). The agenda on the cooperation, last time updated in 2016, provides the non-interference policy in domestic affairs in LAC countries in exchange for adhering to one China principle as the foundation of the cooperation. These same values of a mutual interest and development, as in the policy papers, are articulated as the official basis of establishing the Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States established in 2014 (China-CELAC Forum 2016). However, such framing of partnerships with developing countries poses a question, whether a country that holds the rank

of the second largest economy in the world should still define itself as a developing country and a fellow to, for example, African counterparts in the aspect of the economic development (Kaye 2019)

According to Li (2007, 838), with the increase of a ‘visit diplomacy’ by the means of political, cultural and military exchanges, China aimed at slowly expanding its influence in the region. At the beginning of his second term in office, Xi Jinping embarked on the South America tour to, as in the official rhetoric, ‘usher’ China-LAC relations ‘to a new era’ and further bolster the bilateral cooperation proceeding the alleged end of the commodity boom from the beginning of 2000s (China Daily 2016, Ferchen 2016). In Xi Jinping’s words, China envisions Latin America as the “natural extension of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” - a part of the comprehensive Belt and Road Initiative under China’s leadership (Xinhua 2019). From 2017, as of the time of writing this thesis, already 19 countries in Latin America and Caribbean joined President Xi’s flagship infrastructure project, although the four biggest economies – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have not officially come aboard (Bermudez Lievano 2019). But even in the countries that have not joined the initiative yet, China pledged to invest in Brazil’s infrastructure with a billion dollars for port of Sao Luis or struck a momentous deal by opening its market to soy imports from Argentina (Ayres 2019, Bronstein and Heath 2019). What is more, China holds an ambitious agenda in the financing of an ocean-to-ocean railway spanning through Argentina and forming a Trans-Pacific Economic corridor, and providing an infrastructural network with the country’s five neighboring states (Malena 2019).

China-Latin America North-South trade relations?

Since the beginning of the 2000s when China’s economic relationship with Global South exacerbated by increasing its trade value from 17 billion dollars in 2002 to 306 billion dollars in 2018, the PRC gradually acquired the position of the second most significant trade partner of Latin America after the United States². To some countries, China became the main

² Data from World Integrated Trade Solutions (WITS) was used. Accessed December 25, 2019.

importer, as is the case in Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay³. Although, the overall share of Latin America and Caribbean exports to China accounts for 10 percent, the trade in natural resources equals roughly 76% of total trade⁴. While the PRC imports raw materials fueling the heavy industry production and China's further economic growth, at the same time Latin American markets are treated as the destination for China's manufacturing goods. Such structure of the economic Sino-Latin American relationship acquires, therefore, a very asymmetric shape (Miner 2018). Ironically, China's growing economic engagement in Latin America, resulting in the commodity-based trade evokes associations with the classic arrangement of the North-South trade relations (Ferchen 2011, 71).

The extractive and agricultural commodity boom in Latin America, propelled by China's need for natural resources, overlapped with a sudden shift in China's domestic economy structure. Contrary to the progressing development of the light industry espoused by Deng Xiaoping's leadership in late 1970s in place heavy industrial production in Mao's era, as Ferchen (2011) argues, the economic trend from the beginning of the century unexpectedly turned towards industrial production with more requirement for natural resources. Moreover, given such turn in China's domestic needs, a reversed trend in commodity demand might as well emerge in the same unforeseen manner (Ferchen 2011). If a decline in demand for commodities comes true, due to high dependency of some LAC countries on exports to China, it will result in leaving the region's resource extraction sector vulnerable to any changes in prices for commodities (Timini and Sanchez-Albornoz 2019, 6). But, already after 2013, a year marking the end of the commodity boom with falling prices of natural resources, China shifted its attention from investments in the extractive industry towards infrastructure deals (Ferchen 2018).

Chinese investments and the Amazon

From becoming a major destination of foreign investments in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) denoted by Deng Xiaoping from the beginning of 1980, China is nowadays placed among the top investors worldwide. As for 2018, China was the second largest FDI

³ According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity visualizations. Accessed December 25, 2019.

⁴ WITS. Accessed December 25, 2019.

host and investor in the world (UNCTAD 2019a) Although, from 2017 the investment flows dropped by 35 percent due to the government adjustments to serve the strategic objectives related to Belt and Road Initiative and the grand industrial plan *Made in China 2025* (ECLAC 2018, 26). To begin with, the official “going out” (*zou chuqu*) policy of OFDI under the state direction was initiated by Premier Zhu Rongji in 1999. Subsequent leaders of the PRC remained consistent in officially encouraging the outward investments and putting forth policies regulating overseas activities of Chinese companies. Under Xi Jinping leadership, the policy of international investments is supported by the comprehensive Belt and Road Initiative further aided by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund (Economy and Levi 2014, OECD 2018). Nowadays, the wide array of the institutional network providing support and control of the SOE involved in the OFDI consists in the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Communist Party itself with the authority of appointing officials. The financing is further bolstered by the Export-Import bank (EXIM Bank) and China Development Bank (CDB). Chinese companies also combine investments with, among others, overseas infrastructure development, granting loans for natural resources and foreign aid (Economy and Levi 2014, 46-57).

In Latin America and Caribbean, China’s FDI in 2018 accounted for roughly 184 billion US dollars, but still lags behind the amount of US and European countries investment quotas (CEPAL 2013, Xinhua 2019a). The majority of OFDI from China in LAC countries is dominated by mergers and acquisitions, focusing vastly in the energy (70%) and primary (25%) sectors (ECLAC 2018). The first Chinese companies to enter the mining industry in Amazon was the state-owned Shougang Corporation in Peru in 1992. After Beijing’s implementation of the Going Out policy, the Chinese (both state-owned and private) enterprises’ operations in the rainforest span from the extraction iron ore, copper, fishery or production of soya bean processing plants in among others Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador and Peru (Gonzalez-Vicente 2012, Wegner-Fernandes 2018). Apart from extraction industry, China invests in infrastructure, such as Belo Monte Transmission Line, the Amazon Waterway in Peru, the Rositas dam in Bolivia, or a hydro-complex in Argentina (Gallagher et al. 2019). The construction of Coca Codo Sinclair Dam by China in Ecuador stirred a loud controversy and opposition over its detrimental impact to the environment and local communities (Carvalho 2019).

Studies conducted on the factors of China's FDI differ in the gravity of factors at play in the choice of investment destinations by Chinese companies. Some point to the significance of natural resource endowment of a host country in having impact on becoming an attractive target of China's investments (Hurst 2011, Zhang and Daly 2011, Zhang and Roelfsma 2014). However, in the study of Buckley et. al. (2009), instead of natural resources, the size of a market and cultural proximity had a positive correlation with China's multinational enterprises decision-making on foreign investment. Economy and Levi (2014) point out to the fact that the quest for natural resources outside of a country's border dates back to the Western colonial period and constitutes an obvious part of world powers trajectory of growth. Although China may seem as a new non-Western actor investing in natural resources to feed the country's demand in light of its speeding economic growth, China's 'going out' of the FDI in commodities starkly reminds that of Japan's experience. As the authors suggest, it is not China but Japan who first shifted the global landscape of natural resource investments by government-owned corporations for fueling the country's economic growth, stirring concerns in the Western world contrary to the liberal market orientation of the US companies (Economy and Levi 2014).

China's Footprint in Latin America

Chinese companies activities operating with high potential environmental damage due to pollution, toxification, nature degradation, deforestation, social conflicts and negative impact on indigenous communities are appear to be inherent topics in the literature and reporting on China's investments in Latin America. Ray et al. (2017, 8) writes with regard to water export to the PRC, "if LAC had not traded with China in 2012 (by producing domestically everything it imported from China and consuming locally everything it exported to China), it would have saved roughly 90 percent of the volume of Lake Nicaragua". Projects such as Coda Coco Sinclair dam in Ecuador deemed as detrimental to the environment and the raise doubts whether Chinese companies actually comply with the local environmental laws (O'Neil 2019). Environmentalists and non-governmental organizations actively oppose Chinese activities in the extractive industry in the Amazon and report on the issues regarding possible corruption in the oil industry and indigenous communities protests against evictions for land provision to Chinese projects (see, for example, Amazon Watch 2019, Neher and

Pontes 2013). As a result, some LAC countries enacted environmental oversight policies, indigenous rights, domestic labour protection and transparency standards (Ray et. al. 2017, 12-13). Although, China began to invest more in renewable energies in LAC and the PRC's government put forth requirements for its investor companies environmental conduct, for instance, O'Neil (2019) questions the efficacy of the vague measures in practice and claims that the commodity demand or resources in Latin America will continue to harm the environment.

Nonetheless, Chinese companies are not the only actors with in the extraction industry in the Amazon with a poor record on the environmental damage, standard compliance or a number of accidents. The performance of Chinese companies and appear to be comparable with other foreign and domestic ventures operating in the rainforest. According to Irwin and Gallagher (2013), in the Amazon territory in Peru, an American mining enterprise Doe Run paid more annual environmental and labour standard violation fines than China's Shuogang Hierro Peru. La Oroya in Peru has been named as one of the most polluted places in the world, due to the American company operations resulting in contamination by among others lead and sulfur dioxide, and 90 percent rate of high lead levels in local children's blood (Reuters 2009). In addition, Vasquez (2018, 13-15) confronts the general myth of China's ventures non-adherence to environmental and social standards, and argues that, although the companies are not constrained by regulations in their country of origin, they exhibit compliance with rigid local regulations. Texaco Corporation, taken over by Chevron in 2001, was another American company with a gross record on environmental damage of allegedly spilling 18 billion gallons of toxic waste water and 17 million of gallons of crude oil throughout 1964-1992, resulting in local residents serious health issues (BBC 2014).

Latin American countries are also a major receiver of foreign aid from CDB and EXIM Bank, which predominantly concentrates in energy sector and infrastructure. As for 2019, in total roughly 141 billion US dollars have been granted, from which about 67.2 billion dollars were dedicated to Venezuela (Gallagher and Myers 2019). The economic aid to developing countries was met with distrust towards the effectiveness and underlying China's intentions. Naim (2009) famously labeled China's development assistance as non-transparent and 'rogue aid', which in contrast to the conventional aid from international organization such as the World Bank, is not imposing any conditionalities on aid-receiving countries regarding democratic reforms. Naim (2009) claims that behind the generous intent of development cooperation lies the main motivation for money, natural resources and acquiring political

allies in the region. Similarly, Chellaney (2017) contends that under the façade of ‘mutual development’, China sees other developing countries solely as its source of primary commodities, while disregarding the host country’s economy well-being. Chellaney (2017) describes Beijing’s strategy of unsustainable loan-lending to developing countries, under the Belt and Road framework, as a ‘debt-trap diplomacy’. According to which, China is deliberately entrapping its debtors to lock up the natural resources and consolidate Beijing’s influence.

However, contrary to claims of Beijing’s national strategy towards exploiting the Global South, Ferchen (2018) presents a ‘lose-lose’ dimension of China’s cooperation with developing countries on the case of unsustainable loan lending to Venezuela. The author writes that China is losing by not only being unable to receive the invested capital back, but also the decision to grant a loan to a country in crisis risked imports of commodities needed for China’s energy security. Akpaninye (2019) counters the ‘debt-trap’ argument, by suggesting that it is precisely Chinese companies greed for profit and Chinese state’s incompetence at play, and proposes the term ‘crony-diplomacy’ as a more appropriate denomination of China’s asymmetric relations with developing countries. The report by the Rhodium Group sheds more light on China’s lending practices over the years (Kratz, Feng and Wright 2019). The findings put forth that debt forgiveness by write-offs is the most common occurrence, followed by loan terms renegotiations and points to restricted bargaining influence of China in negotiations. The PRC’s leadership appears to be listening to criticism of its unsustainable debt lending and introduced measures in addressing some issues of concern. For instance, The PRC’s Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Finance have published official guidelines for investors to alleviate risks of granting bad loans based on the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries (LIC-DSF) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Zhang 2019).

The US foreign policy on China: A Great Power Competition

In the history of the United States and Europe, China has been depicted in the popular culture as exotic but also fearful ‘Yellow Peril’ (Mawdsley 2008). As it was touched upon in the previous section, since the formation of the People’s Republic of China, the ‘Red Scare’ denoted the Cold War animosity of the US media towards the Communist country. Later, the ‘opening up’ of China and the promise of capitalist reforms were seen as a In the contemporary US foreign policy, it is the emergence of China as a competing economic power to the US, that underpins the perception of ‘China as a threat’ (Pan 2004). Some argue that, it is in fact the US’s self-imagination that is projected on to the US-China relationship (Jespersen 1996, Pan 2004). The history of depiction of China’s images in the US is summarized by Turner (2014) as “Idealised, Opportunity, Uncivilised and Threatening”. As the focus of the thesis is the period of President Obama and President Trump’s administration, this section proceeds to examine the official rhetoric of the White House towards China during the years 2009-2016 and 2017-2019, respectively.

After the global financial crisis in 2009, China came out as an assertive and sound economic power, while the US economy hit with the crisis struggled with declining trajectory (Yahuda 2015, 55). As Turner (2014, 154) argues, the notion of a ‘rising China’, was prevalent in the 2009 presidential elections in the US and later during Obama’s presidency. Turner (2014, 154) writes that the wording itself conveys the underlying meaning of a non-Western actor that is threatening the stability of the world order, given that there is no tendency in of assigning similar terms to competing economies in the West. Although, prior to the elections Obama called China a ‘competitor’, the White House rhetoric towards China during the presidency moderated, by stressing the need for cooperation (Turner 2014, 150). But, during the first year of President Obama in office, China was acknowledged as the potential military threat to the US in the Pacific by the then Defense Secretary Robert Gates (Thompson 2010). Later, President Obama’s flagship Pivot to Asia or the US Rebalance in 2011 was interpreted as aiming at the containment of China’s rise exemplified by the PRC’s military assertiveness on South China Sea (Ford 2017). The same year, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said: “We face the threats from rising powers, China, India, others that we have

to always be aware of” (Reuters 2011). Moreover, China’s increasing volume of trade and investments in developing countries were not left unnoticed. In addressing the China’s activities in Africa, the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned the African nations of the neo-colonialist intentions behind the ‘South-South partnerships’ (Reuters 2011a).

“A great power competition” is how President Trump called the state of Sino-American relations in the National Security Strategy in 2017 (The White House 2017, 27). Trump’s presidency has been marked with the explicit rivalry of the two biggest economic powers and official recognition of China as a danger to the US national and economic security. In the beginning of 2018, the President waged the US-China trade war, by accusing China of unfair trade practices with the imposition of in total more than 360 billion dollar worth of tariffs in as for December 2019, which resulted in China’s own retaliatory measures (BBC 2019). President Trump’s trade advisor Peter Navarro, hailed by the media as an anti-China hawk, conceptualized the ongoing war as: "We are dealing with a strategic rival -- and they are trying to buckle our knees" (Egan 2019, Lee 2019). China was accused by the administration of technological intellectual property theft through cyber espionage and forced technology transfers in the White House’s policy paper *How China’s Economic Aggression Threatens the Technologies and Intellectual Property of the United States and the World* (The White House 2018). In the effect, more tariffs have been levied on technological products related to Beijing’s *Made in China 2025* strategy and put into effect more restrictions on Chinese investments in the US core technologies sector, as well as the export of products to China (Segal 2019). Another compelling dispute between the two powers is the US ban on Chinese company Huawei ‘fifth-generation (5G) network, recognized as a cyber security risk due to concerns over Beijing’s espionage through the technology (Yang 2019).

As regards Latin America in US foreign policy, contrary to the Obama’s second administration, the National Security Adviser John Bolton under President Trump stated in his speech that : "Today we proudly proclaim for all to hear: the Monroe Doctrine is alive and well” (Newman 2019). Moreover, at the UN General Assembly in 2018 the President stated: "It has been the formal policy of our country since President Monroe that we reject the interference of foreign nations in this hemisphere” (Newman 2019). The statement, to the concern of some Latin American states, may be interpreted as a sign of continuation the historic self-given right by the US to hold the major influence in the region and intervene in Central and South America. In the foreign policy rhetoric, China was named a “potential predatory actor” to which the US represents a “vivid contrast”, and was accused of trying to

“pull the region into its orbit” by the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (Reuters 2018). The theme of the US -China competition on the global stage is visible in the official warnings for LAC countries against the dangers of joining Belt and Road Initiative (Churchill 2018). Vice-President Mike Pence appropriated the term ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ denoting China’s strategy to influence Latin American politics for pursuing its own objectives in his *Remarks on the Administration’s Foreign Policy Towards China* (The Hudson Institute 2019). What is more, in Pence’s speech, China is presented as having moved further away from the ‘reform and opening’ era, of which liberalization policies the US had actively supported, to an aggressive and expansionist authoritarian state.

To put it shortly, China transformed into a major economic player in Latin America, a region deemed as the US’s ‘backyard’ in political and economic terms. The growing interest of China in the area was not left unnoticed by pundits and scholars, although the interpretations of China’s motivations are far from aligned and the long-term results of China’s presence in the Global South do not yet appear to be clear. What is evident, however, is that more countries in the LAC region embark on the attractive promise of ‘win-win cooperation’ with China by cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan, joining Xi’s ambitious global infrastructure project or officially welcoming ‘China as the future’ like Brazil’s President Bolsonaro recently stated (Agence France-Presse 2019).

**Images of China, the US and Latin America:
three actors in the Amazon viewed by the American press**

This chapter presents the analysis of the frames content in the coverage on China in the US newspapers. The results of the search in Factiva database showed one opinion piece and six reporting articles from *The New York Times*, and two reporting articles from *the Washington Post*, in which Chinese companies in the Amazon were the main topic in the years 2009-2019. No articles from *the Wall Street Journal* or *Los Angeles Times* turned up as relevant by the search of the keywords. Given the small sample of the articles for analysis, a qualitative inductive method analysis was used as the most suitable (David et. al. 2011, 331).

First, during the *in vivo* text analysis, I had constructed initial frames for each article by an open coding. After comparison of the results, I grouped similar frames under broader themes encompassing more than one article, selecting and divided by the main subjects: China, the US, Latin America and the Amazon (see Appendix I) . Only frames that turned up in the majority of articles (at least four pieces) were taken into consideration. The following short summary presents the predominant themes which I observed in the newspapers articles:

1. Both newspapers presented a coverage of Chinese companies in a negative tone. The image of China's presence in Latin America was limited to harmful impacts of Chinese investments on the environment, bad governance practices and projects failures of Chinese companies operating in the region. Furthermore, the coverage presented an orientalisng tendency to generalize the companies' practices, by grouping the characteristics of Chinese companies activities based on their source of origin, rather than focusing on a singular enterprise.
2. Latin American countries were predominantly presented as struggling, either in terms of economic growth, corruption scandals in domestic politics or dependent on foreign help for development. Moreover, the LAC countries were often depicted as vulnerable in the relation with China and complicit in the environmental degradation, sharing China's record of bypassing bad quality projects harmful to the environment and the

society. By the vast exclusion of the representation of inhabitants of the Amazon in the coverage, the image of the indigenous tribes imply the absence of local actor's agency against Chinese investments.

3. In regard with the depiction of the US, a part of the newspapers reporting focused on the geopolitical loss of power by the United States in the region in favor of China's rise, which further enforced the image of Latin America as a 'battleground' of the world's two superpowers, by stressing the passivity of Latin America that is inherently influenced by one or the other power. What is more, American companies poor records on environmental and labor performance were absent from the majority of the articles.

Based on the recurring themes, I suggest that the two elite newspapers delivered the "interpretation package" of China's activities in the Amazon through three prevalent frames in the period of examined coverage: the US as a displaced power, China as unscrupulous and Latin America as vulnerable. The findings in this analysis, support the arguments of the negative bias in the US media coverage on China (Chang 1989, Peng 2004) and point out similarities in the depiction of Latin America to Mawsdley's (2008) argument of the UK newspapers portrayal of Africa and Africans as weak and vulnerable in relation to China.

US-China geopolitical rivalry

In line with the perception of China's rise in the US foreign policy, the depiction of China in Latin America in three *The New York Times* (*The NYT*) articles and in one from *The Washington Post* (*The WP*), pointed out to a geopolitical shift that the biggest Asian economy had prompted in the global order. China's rise was not only presented as ascending its presence in Latin America, but the country is getting ahead of the US's dominant role in the Western hemisphere with an image of a rival 'Other' to the West. With the new competitor for the leadership in Latin America, the US found itself "displaced" by China, as it was "an unrivaled power in the region" and "a leading financial power in the developing countries" together with Europe (Krauss and Bradsher 2015, Casey and Krauss 2018). Such references to the US as a previously dominating force in the region, further confirms the perception

of Latin America serving as the US's 'backyard'. As "China's leadership is following the US", it "is taking the mantle from the West" and heads to "where the rest is reluctant to go", China's image in this context appears to be mirroring "the post-Cold war frame of a little brother who threatens to overtake his elder", argued by Ooi and D'angelo (2017) in their study on framing the rise of China in the US.

While reading the majority of the articles, one could pose a question whether the American or Western companies were ever present in the Amazon. Given the definition of a frame by Entman (1993), what was bypassed or downgraded in its significance in the reporting, is also regarded as a part of the frame. Hence, with no reference or comparison to other foreign companies, the information delivered by the media might suggest that either Chinese companies are the only investor coming to profit from the Amazon jungle or, perhaps, it is only China that brings in the all the detrimental ventures to Latin American countries and the rainforest. For instance, in *The NYT* op-ed, China appears to be the solely responsible actor for generating pollution in Latin America (Galzon and Salazar-Lopez 2017). In the same newspaper, one article, while mentioning the infamous 'Devil's Railway' or Madeira-Mamoré Railroad as the example of a failed project in Brazil that claimed thousands of workers' lives and China's plans to follow that path, did not include an indication of American connection to the venture (Romero 2015a).

In contrast with erasing the American presence in the rainforest, two other articles in *The NYT* provided a brief critical assessment the hundred-years long history of American and European operations in the same territory. Krauss and Bradsher (2015), as well as Romero (2015a), reproach the labor exploitation practices of the Western companies, Texaco's record on water contamination and the involvement of Americans in an attempt to construct the 'Devil's Railway'. Still, the presence of Texaco was briefly mentioned with no explicit indication of its American origin. Taking in mind that Chevron has taken over the company in 2001, the article leaves an unaccustomed reader to the case of Texaco with no conspicuous information on the US company operations in the Amazon. In sum, the the US companies were either absent from the coverage or limited to the past centuries. Due to the small number (2) of articles explicitly reckoning of the West's past wrongdoings in the Amazon was given a little attention only in a part of the coverage where the American activities were brought up, the lack of contextualization Chinese companies in the historic and current state of foreign companies record in the Amazon was the predominant theme in the coverage. Thus,

such salience place on the negative image of Chinese-owned entities in the Amazon, provides the public with the impression of China as exceptional damaging, and whitewashed the American companies poor performance, which corresponds to the *unscrupulous China* frame elaborated on in the section below.

Unscrupulous China in Vulnerable Latin America

To begin with, Chinese companies' presence in Latin America and the Amazon was principally characterized in *the NYT* and *the WP* by the record of the contentious, bad quality or failed projects, that are posing a threat to the environment and prompting resistance from local societies or governments. In *the NYT* coverage on Chinese projects in Ecuador, China's hydroelectric plant was surrounded by a "pall of acrimony", projections for a refinery project "look hazy", and the dam with "design flaws" built by a Chinese corporation was in "chaos" (Krauss and Bradsher 2015, Casey and Krauss 2018). Moreover, in Ecuador, the entrance of Chinese companies to Latin America was equaled with bringing in poor governance and "engulfing" Ecuador in corruption scandals. In Brazil, for example, "one large Chinese rail venture after another has come crashing against the hard realities of Latin American politics, resistance from environmental groups, and growing wariness of China" (Romero 2015a). The Three Gorges Dam on Yangtze river was mentioned in one article as the example of the effects of China's projects causing the environmental damage, exemplifying the inclination towards 'standardizing' Chinese companies detrimental practices to ecosystems. This Orientalizing tendency of lumping together all 'bad' investments from China under the umbrella of their origin, is likewise evident in *The NYT* op-ed piece, linking the poor environmental records in Latin America to other investments from China in Africa.



Figure 1. Garzon, Paulina and Leila Salazar-Lopez. 2017. "China's Other Big Export: Pollution".

The New York Times.

Secondly, in *the NYT* articles, the use of terms, such as “aggressive”, “resource-hungry”, “forcing countries to play by its financial rules” or with a “voracious thirst for energy”, creates an overall antagonistic aura of China’s that has been looking out for strengthening relationship with Latin America. The illustration (Figure 1) included *The NYT’s* opinion piece, China is framed as the World’s only polluter and a danger to the environment, evoking emotions strikingly similar to the ‘Yellow Peril’ imagery of a hostile and threatening China. The Asian power’s calculative and ruthless approach towards indebted Latin American countries resonates from the headline: “It doesn’t matter if Ecuador can afford this dam. China gets paid either way” (Krauss and Bradsher 2015).” In the two newspapers, China seems as it simply does not care about the safety and environmental protection, as the country’s growing interest in investing in Latin America is furthermore framed as complicit in the environmental damage in the Amazon through its demand for soybean in Brazil or construction projects.. Notwithstanding, China poses a threat to the Amazon, by exerting the pressure on indebted countries to repay the loans, which have to resort to expanding the extraction operations deeper into the Amazon. Here, the overall image of China emerges as a somewhat cold-blooded, corrupt and ignorant towards environmental concerns. With no broader contextualization in foreign investments in the extractive industry or infrastructure in the Amazon, the overall message of the articles creates the impression of Chinese companies as exceptional actors perpetrating detrimental activities. In contrast, as noted earlier, in the study of Irwin and Gallagher (2013), it is not necessarily reflected in the reality, as Chinese-owned enterprises environmental practices and labor standards were discovered to not

significantly divergent from other local and foreign companies in the Amazon. What is more, the predominant shoddiness of Chinese projects and the hostile narrative tone of China as “exporting its worst practices” signal the presence of an underlying ‘Yellow Peril’ trope of China as callous, as well as the traces of China as backward and incompetently following the West’s bad record of damages in the Amazon.

The frame of a vulnerable Latin America encompasses both the domestic governance, and suggests that China’s expansion of ‘win-win partnerships’ situates the developing countries and the Amazon as in a susceptible position. The coverage draws its main attention to omnipresent poor governance, corruption, economic struggles, problems with illegal mining, and complicity in deforestation of the Amazon as the recurring characteristics of South American countries in most of the articles from both *the NYT* and *the WP*. For instance:

“The struggling socialist government of oil-rich Venezuela, where the deforestation rate was the worst last year in South America, is similarly [to Ecuador] indebted to Beijing.”

“Struggling President Ollanta Humala has scaled back environmental regulations in but to attract new capital, while also pushing to open up more jungle areas to oil and natural gas development” (Miroff 2015)

“As Brazil struggles, Beijing offers loans and investment”

“[In Brazil] one megaproject after another has been stalled or abandoned in recent years, often because of corruption, lack of money, bureaucratic hurdles, cost overruns, or all of the above” (Romero 2015)

In light of these disadvantages for development, Latin America is mostly illustrated as seeking help from either the Washington or Beijing. The coverage in general stresses the resource-based, unequal and exploitative relation between China and Ecuador. *The NYT* and *the WP* articles wrote: “Ecuador turned to China to fill the void”, China is “helping to lift the small country out of poverty”, in Brazil “all the international bidders stayed away – except for the Chinese’, or “it has been China that has repeatedly come to his [Bolsonaro’s] aid when he needed help” (Casey and Krauss 2018, Miroff 2015).

Although, the framing of the Amazon was one of the objectives of this thesis, I did not find a discernible recurring frame of the rainforest, manifested in either in semantics or visual images. A reference to the “pristine myth” was observed in two articles, each in one newspaper. The denotation of the Amazon as ‘ancient’, which may evoke associations with the jungle as remaining in the same untouched state for centuries was observed in the aforementioned article in *the WP*. Nevertheless, the indigenous tribes and inhabitants of the Amazon were vastly omitted in the articles. By bypassing the considerations of indigenous tribes in light of Chinese investments, and their agency, the newspapers perpetuate the image of as passive, as well as an insignificant actor in the Amazon. Thus, I suggest that there was no consistent trend in frames employed in the coverage on the rainforest in the researched period of time, as far as the nature is concerned. However, the general downgrade of the importance of the inhabitants considerations in the articles, may suggest the stereotypical notion of the indigenous tribes as remaining in a passive position to foreign presence in their territory and the “state of nature”, as argued by Pike (1992).

Framing China and the US-China competition

The theme of China’s rise as the US decline present during both President Obama and President Trump administrations was likewise visible in *The NYT* and *The WP* coverage during the period of ten years. Similarly with the arguments put forth in the previous studies on the media’s coverage resemblance on the state of Sino-American relations (Chang 1989, Ooi and D’Angelo 2017), the frame of *the US-China geopolitical rivalry* in the newspapers echoes Washington’s wariness of the People’s Republic of China’s. The Obama’s second administration, at least in theory, put an end to the Monroe Doctrine the US foreign policy until the Trump’s presidency reversed rhetoric, yet the articles highlighting the image of the rival China shifting the balance of power in the Western hemisphere solidify the patronizing understanding of the of the Latin America as the ‘the US’s backyard’. The newspapers, hence, in framing the countries in the Amazon, proliferated the long-held worldview in the US imagery of Latin America,, where the US is losing its sphere of influence not because of the shift in the US foreign policy under Obama from 2013, but in most frames due to China’s expansion of the South-South cooperation partnerships.

As previously noted, the expansion of Chinese investments in developing countries regarded as the competition to the US was voiced by Hillary Clinton in 2011 (Reuters 2011).

After the former secretary of state hailed the general presence of Chinese companies in Africa as “new colonialism” based on exploitation, “predatory-lending”, and harming the good governance, the newspapers coverage coincided with the rhetoric through the *unscrupulous China* frame. The underlying weakness of African countries, as potential subject to the new Chinese colonialism and prone to corruption in Clinton’s remarks, are paralleled in the overall image of Latin American countries as vulnerable to China’s presence. The proverbial images of the “good” US and “bad” China, as in Tillerson’s remarks of the US as a ‘vivid contrast’ to China or Clinton’s comparison of the US’ presence to that of China in Africa, were not as explicitly displayed in *The NYT* and *The WP*.

Conclusion

As the turnout of the articles covering Chinese investments in the Amazon was limited to negative impacts of China's presence in the extractive industry and infrastructure projects, it supports the argument put forth in the previous studies, namely that there is negative trend of China's image in the US newspapers coverage over the years (see, for example, Ooi and D'Angelo 2017). As noted before, Cohen (1963,13) argues that "media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". In the researched case of the US elite newspapers coverage of Chinese investments in the Amazon rainforest, in the spotlight was the damaging activity of the ventures. First and foremost, the coverage, brings the attention of the public to China that is vastly painted as an unfavorable investor in Latin America. Under the frame of China as 'unscrupulous', the Orientalist tendency to stereotype all Chinese companies operations' characteristic in the Amazon under the umbrella of their country of origin. The negative image of Chinese companies is enhanced by the absence of adequate contextualization of their activities in the history of foreign companies operations in the same industries in the Amazon. Although the portrayal of American companies in the Amazon slightly differ from Mawdsley's (2008) findings on the image of the West as a good investor, the very scarce information on American past venture conceals some of the US companies harmful presence in the same region. The findings of the thesis also confirm that the Latin America in the coverage corresponds with the claims over the dominating negative focus on domestic struggles of the Global South (e.g. Rosenblum 1970). Moreover, the lack of attention to the local inhabitants' agency resembles the notion of Latin Americans as passive and vulnerable. Similarities between the White House's rhetoric were also found in the newspapers frames. The trope of the 'rise of China' and perception of Latin America as the 'US's backyard' present in the Washington, and American imagery, likewise resurfaces in *The NYT* and *The WP* articles the researched period.

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Appendix I

Framing analysis

	Displaced America in the US-China geopolitical rivalry	American/Western companies in the Amazon	Latin America: vulnerable, badly governed, in need of a foreign help	The Amazon rainforest	Unscrupulous China: bad quality projects, dangerous to the environment
Krauss and Bradsher (2015)	<p>“China’s rapidly expanding footprint here speaks volumes about the changing world order, as Beijing surges forward and Washington gradually loses ground”</p> <p>“[China] is wielding its financial heft [...] purpose of a global superpower”</p> <p>“China is <u>aggressively asserting</u> its economic clout”</p> <p>“President Xi and the rest of the leadership have pushed to extend China’s reach on a global scale”</p> <p>“displace the US and Europe as the leading financial power in large parts of the developing world”</p> <p>“the show of financial strength also makes China – and the world – more vulnerable”</p> <p>“China is going where the west is</p>	<p>“Chinese companies like many American and European companies in previous decades, have been accused of abusing workers overseas”</p> <p>“the operations of Texaco and the state company caused widespread pollution in the 1970s and 1980s”</p>	<p>“Ecuadorian foreign minister brushed aside many environmental concerns”</p> <p>“Ecuador turned to China to fill the void”</p>		<p>“shaky record when it comes to worker safety, environmental standards and corporate governance”</p> <p>“exporting its worst practices”</p> <p>“adding to pollution problems in developing nations”</p> <p>Protests against Chinese projects, incidents</p> <p>“lax standards”</p> <p>“a pall of acrimony surrounds the CCS hydroelectric plant”</p> <p>“the construction of multiple access roads threatens the Amazon ecosystem”</p> <p>“the prospects for the Ecuador refinery project look hazy”</p>

	<p>reluctant to tread”</p> <p>“taking the mantle from Western nations”</p> <p>“China’s leadership has followed the US [...] to own more overseas fields”</p> <p>“Washington worried that China will create its own rules, with lower expectations for transparency, governance and environment”</p> <p>“For President Correa of Ecuador, China represents a break with his country’s past – and his own”</p>				
Miroff (2015)			<p>“Struggling Venezuela, where deforestation rate was the worst last year in South America was similarly indebted to Beijing”</p> <p>“Struggling President Ollanta Humala has scaled back environmental regulation in a bid to attract new capital, while also pushing to open up more jungle areas to oil and natural gas development”</p> <p>Illegal mining, deforestation problems in Colombia</p> <p>“owing more and more crude to China, cresting new pressure for the government to expand the drilling frontier in the Amazon”</p>	<p>“the pristine forests”</p> <p>“Chinese road-building crews and drilling rigs will cut into ancient forests where indigenous groups and un-contacted tribes living in “voluntary isolation” have violently resisted the oil industry.”</p>	<p>“owing more and more crude to China, cresting new pressure for the government to expand the drilling frontier in the Amazon”</p> <p>“the struggling socialist government of oil-rich Venezuela, where deforestation rate was the worst last year, is similarly indebted to Beijing”</p>

Romero (2015)		<p>“More than 100 years ago, Americans were among the foreigners who rolled into the heart of South America with ambitious plan to build railways”</p> <p>[Devil’s Railways as] “a testament to the dangers of relying too heavily on commodity exports”</p>	<p>“one large Chinese rail venture after another has come crashing against the hard realities of Latin American politics, resistance from environmental groups, and growing wariness of China”</p> <p>“one megaproject after another has been stalled or abandoned in recent years, often because of corruption, lack of money, bureaucratic hurdles, cost overruns, or all of the above”</p> <p>“a very fragile government”</p> <p>“deplorable public roads”</p>		<p>“one large Chinese rail venture after another has come crashing against the hard realities of Latin American politics, resistance from environmental groups, and growing wariness of China”</p> <p>“[A Chinese project]) has been met with a broad skepticism about its feasibility as well as protests by farmers”</p> <p>“but in the shadows of the grain silos towering over soybean fields and the meat-processing plant here, the response have often involved more shrugging than jumping for joy”</p> <p>“Brazilian officials are investigating claims over gross overbilling in its [Sinopec’s] construction”</p> <p>“Brazil’s particularly nettlesome bureaucracy, laws prohibiting China from hiring its own labor workers, a web of auditing courts, and the capacity of dozens different prosecutors to cripple megaprojects with lawsuits.”</p>
Romero (2015a)		Referral to the Madeira -Mamore Railroad, but with no the indication of American involvement in the project.	<p>“Dilma Rousseff, who is dealing with a sluggish economy, austerity measures and a bribery scandal”</p> <p>“For some foreign companies, investing in Brazil is uncertain proposition”</p> <p>“Brazilian companies have been unable to finish</p>		<p>“contentious project”</p> <p>“[Chinese projects]have prompted resistance” in Brazil</p> <p>“another venture floated in Colombia”</p>

			<p>their own megaprojects”</p> <p>“All the international bidders stayed away – except for the Chinese’</p> <p>“It has been China that has repeatedly come to his aid when he needed help”</p>		
Garzon and Salazar-Lopez (2017)	<p>“While President Trump rolls back environmental projections and announces the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate accord, China is trying to position itself as the world’s climate leader [...]”.</p>		<p>“President Michel Temer’s administration has advanced the ruralistas’ goal of dismantling environmental safeguards by essentially providing a rubber stamp for even more dirty energy projects in places like the Amazon.”</p>	<p>“[...] remote, pristine rain forest”</p>	<p>“Expanding fossil-fuel production in this region results in more emissions and deforestation. Chinese money is fuelling the fossil-fuels industries in the places like the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve in the Ecuadorian Amazon [...]”.</p> <p>“Chinese investment in genuine sustainable-energy projects in Ecuador is scant.”</p> <p>“There [in Patagonia], The Chinese firm is pursuing the construction of \$4.7 billion hydroelectric dam complex [...]. The dams may damage the glaciers in Argentina’s Los Glacinares National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.”</p> <p>A reference to China’s presence in Africa: “China is worsening the climate crisis with its financing elsewhere as well.”</p> <p>Figure 1</p>
Casey and Krauss (2018)	<p>“two natural allies (China and Ecuador), both eager to change the course of the hemisphere and displace the United States as</p>		<p>“the two sides are hardly equal partners”</p> <p>“the gamble was all Ecuador’s”</p> <p>“to help lift the</p>		<p>“engulfing the country in corruption”</p> <p>“paid by the Chinese to overlook problem”</p> <p>“perilous amounts of debt”</p>

	<p>the unrivaled power in the region”</p> <p>“a clear swipe at American dominance”</p>		<p>small South American country out of poverty”</p> <p>“the country is looking for new loans to fill in many gaps including the money from China”</p> <p>“But we didn't have other options,” Mr. Borja recalled. “The doors were closed to the West”.</p> <p>“Latin America reel from their dependence on China”</p> <p>“escaping China’s orbit will be difficult”</p> <p>“help lift the small South American country out of poverty”</p> <p>“both nations are willing to overlook deep design flaws, questionable economics and interdependent warnings that the technical studies for the dam were decades out of date”</p> <p>“taking bribes from China”</p> <p>“the country [Ecuador] is looking for new loans to plug its many gaps’</p> <p>“hard realities of Latin American politics”</p>		<p>“pumping enough oil to repay China [...] threatening the Amazon”</p> <p>Yangtze river example – “inadequate security measures leading to deaths, environmental damage, destruction of forests”</p> <p>“the dam in chaos”</p> <p>“it is hard to tell that you are nearing a dam at all”</p> <p>“design flaws”</p> <p>“technicians notices cracks in the Chinese-made steel equipment”</p> <p>“shoddy translations”</p> <p>“resistance from environmental groups, grown weariness of China”</p>
McCoy (2019)	<p>“Now the collapse of [...] a promising union between the two economies in the Americas has opened the door for China to accelerate its push into Latin</p>				<p>“its production accelerated the deforestation of the Amazon - China announced it would buy more”</p>

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