



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Framing Tibet: A thematic discourse analysis on how Tibet is framed by the People's Daily**

Weir, Zoé

### **Citation**

Weir, Z. (2022). *Framing Tibet: A thematic discourse analysis on how Tibet is framed by the People's Daily*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3453491>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# Framing Tibet

A thematic discourse analysis on how Tibet is framed by the *People's Daily*



Zoé Weir, s2004569  
Submitted on: 1 July 2022

Master thesis  
MA Asian Studies: History, Arts and Culture of Asia (60 EC)  
Thesis supervisor: Dr. Rogier Creemers  
Word count: 12.523

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1 The concept of framing.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Frames .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Framing effects.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>2.2 The concept of framing in China’s media system .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3 Chinese media and its representation of Tibet.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.4 Frames in this study .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.1 The themes found in the news articles about the Tibetan Unrest .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.2 The themes found in the news articles around the event of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4.3 Discussion on the themes from 2008 and 2021 .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.4 Discussion on the frames.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Linguistic mechanisms .....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Themes .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>The themes without a frame .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<b>5. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.1 Framing Tibet .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.2 Limits and further research .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>35</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Tibet is governed as an autonomous region of China (BBC 2016). Beijing claims a sovereignty over the Himalayan region, but the allegiances of many Tibetans lie with the exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who is seen as a separatist threat by China (BBC 2016). Tibet has a tumultuous history, during which it has spent periods as an independent entity and as part of Chinese rule (BBC 2016). In 1959 the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama fled Tibet and set up a government in exile in India (BBC 2016). Contemporary Tibet is the subject of one of the world's longest running ethno-territorial conflicts, dating from just after the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Sautman and Dreyer 2006, 3). The parties involved in this conflict are the supporters of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China has important national minorities, some of whom have aspirations that are politically sensitive (Sparks 2008, 12). The Tibetans are one of these groups. The relation between Tibet and China has been long an ongoing debate where legitimacy and territorial rights are at the centre. There are also debates about human rights, demographics, development, and language usage. The question of history touches the matter of Tibet's status and, therefore, the question of the legitimacy of its incorporation into the People's Republic of China (Sperling 2009, 25). According to Sperling (2009), China claims that Tibet had become part of China during the Yuan Dynasty, but Republican-era writers had a different opinion. Tibet did not become part of China during the Yuan Dynasty, but it was during the Qing period. At first these claims were not problematic. Ultimately, it was the revolt in Lhasa and the flight of the Dalai Lama that elicited clearer and more forceful formulations of the PRC's position on Tibet's historical status (Sperling 2009, 28). That Tibet became part of China during the Yuan Dynasty faded and a new position emerged. The position holds that Tibet has been part of China "since ancient times" (Sperling 2009, 34). This claim is still being published by Chinese media (e.g., Xinhuanet 2021) as a part of framing.

Representations of Tibet in Chinese state media have increased sharply since Spring 2008 when protests erupted across Tibet (Kehoe 2020, 38). The demonstrations and riots in Tibet were the largest anti-Chinese protests there since the 1959 revolt (the Tibetan Uprising) (Smith 2010, 2). Kehoe (2020) states that these protests were a response to frustrations, inequalities and broken promises arising from the "Open Up the West" campaign. This campaign began in 2000 and seeks to advance economic development across China's western

regions, and it was also an expression of long-standing issues surrounding the legitimacy of Chinese rule in Tibet (Kehoe 2020). In addition to this, Smith (2010) argues that the occasion for this protest was the forty-ninth anniversary of the 10 March 1959 revolt against Chinese rule. The unrest attracted considerable international attention, challenging official claims of ethnic unity and state legitimacy, and resulting in an increasingly hard-line position on Tibet's historical status (Kehoe 2020, 1138). The response from China was a typical combination of repression and propaganda where the Chinese government and the Chinese people regarded the protests as an attempt to spoil the Beijing Olympics and to damage China's reputation (Smith 2010, 2). Besides the response from China, World leaders called on the Chinese authorities to exercise restraint and to talk to the Dalai Lama (Smith 2010, 4). However, China responded with propaganda denouncing the Dalai Lama and blaming him for being the purpose of the riots (Smith 2010, 4). Smith (2010) also states that Chinese people themselves are not aware of any reason why Tibetans should question or oppose Chinese rule. They have been taught that China had liberated Tibetans from their own feudal misrule, but according to them, Tibetans must have forgotten this, and Western supporters of Tibet are ignorant of this history (Smith 2010). It shows that there is a big difference between the views of the Chinese people and how the Tibetans themselves and the Western world sees this issue. For instance, in China the events of the 1959 riots became to be called "The Peaceful Liberation of Tibet". The fact that most Chinese people would not be aware of what is really going on, shows that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is successful in delivering in how they want their own people to view this. It all has to do with framing. This is a concept where you select aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text (Entman 1993, 52). The media uses this in different contexts, but for the same purposes, namely, to promote something, highlighting words, and present events and problems in the way you would like others to perceive it.

Studies on the conflict between Tibet and China discuss the historical aspect of this issue (e.g., Smith 2010; Sautman and Dreyer 2006; Sperling 2009) and when studies focus on how it is being framed, then they examine how the riots are perceived through a Western lens (e.g., Guo 2008) or they focus on comparing Western and Chinese media (e.g., Shou 2012). The research from Kehoe (2020) examines Chinese state discourse about Tibet, however it is a more general discussion of how different state media discusses Tibet. A recent in-dept study

that focuses on how one Chinese medium frames Tibet during two different periods, by attributing themes, is a research that has not been done.

In this study, I will investigate how twenty news articles from the *People's Daily* frame Tibet during two important events. The first event is the Tibetan Unrest that took place in 2008. The reason I choose this event is because of the big international response it got from the international community (Department of Information and International Relations 2010). Extensive research about the international response has been done, but how a Chinese state medium frames this can be further examined. The second event is the 70th anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in 2021. When in May 1951 Tibet and China came to an agreement, they signed the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. This was a big step for both sides, so examining how the *People's Daily* frames Tibet during the year of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation gives us a recent case on how they are being framed. With these events being in two different time periods, the focus of the frames can be different. Therefore, a comparison of the applied frames is also conducted in this study.

The research question is "how is Tibet being framed by news articles from the *People's Daily* during the Tibetan Unrest (2008) and the year of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (2021)?" The method used is a combination of a discourse analysis and content analysis. Through combining these two methods, this research aims to give new insights in how the *People's Daily* frames Tibet, what are the most common themes discussed, and how have the frames that China used in this context changed overtime.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the concept of framing. It will look at different typologies of framing and it explains frames and framing effects. Secondly, explaining China's media system gives us an understanding of how Chinese media operates together with framing and how the *People's Daily* use framing for their purposes. Lastly, a discussion about how the Chinese media represents Tibet delivers a framework for establishing a few frames used in this study.

### 2.1 The concept of framing

There is an extensive literature on the concept of framing. One of the earliest definitions comes from Entman (1993). He argues that the concept of framing a way offers to describe the power of a communicating text. It essentially involves selection and salience, because to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way that it is like a promotion for the item described (Entman 1993, 52). Entman (1993) also gives a definition of salience, and it means making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. So, salience in framing and presentation of news or events in mass media systematically affect how recipients come to understand these (Scheufele 1999, 107). According to Vreese (2005), the concept of framing lies in the focus on communicative processes. Because communication is not static, it involves frame-building and frame-setting, thus, it is rather a dynamic process (Vreese 2005, 51). Here frame-building refers to the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames and it continuous takes place in an interaction between journalists, elites, and social movements (Vreese 2005, 52). A journalist must consider what is normal and acceptable for the audience because they create products for public consumption, and they consider the expectations of the audience (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke 2016, 8). Frame-setting refers to the interaction between media frames and an individual's prior knowledge (Vreese 2005, 52) or better said, it describes how public perceptions of what is applicable to explaining a problem are influenced by how the media frame that problem (Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke 2016, 9), so frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events (Vreese 2005, 52). Another definition comes from Chong & Druckman (2007). They state that framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue (Chong and Druckman 2007, 104).

Caciatore, Dietram, Scheufele & Iyengar (2016) discuss another sort of framing. They call it psychology-rooted framing, and this refers to variations in how a given piece of information is presented to audiences, rather than differences in what is being communicated. They also state that a sociological tradition, framing considers as a means of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of the everyday world (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar 2016, 10). The more general definition they give is that framing operates by making some aspects of a problem or communication more accessible, visible, or salient to an audience (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar 2016, 11). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) mention policy framing and thus use a political approach. Three acts that framing carries out is being explained by them: (1) sense-making, (2) naming, and (3) storytelling. For sense-making framing organizes prior knowledge and values held, and it guides emergent action. Secondly, naming is seen through selecting features in phrases and then names them, and at the same time it categorizes. Lastly, framing puts the context of the situation together into a coherent story (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 97-101). Besides, storytelling is often meant to persuade, but it may also be a way to listen to others, to reflect, and reframe (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 101).

What all these definitions do, is showcasing that framing consists of how something is presented, so this study aims to answer how Tibet is being presented by the *People's Daily*. Framing is a tool that tries to persuade people or better said influence people about an event, problem, or statement. It is done in a subtle manner to make it seem like the information is not altered, but the way of thinking of the audience will be influenced. This thinking can be influenced in a positive or negative way. Framing can be seen as a strategy to manipulate and deceive individuals, or it can refer more neutrally to learning processes in which people acquire common beliefs (Chong and Druckman 2007). Furthermore, the positive or negative influences are being conceived on the individual and the societal level. At the individual level alter these consequences attitudes and on the societal level contributes it in shaping social level processes such as decision-making and political socialization (Vreese 2005, 52). According to Chong and Druckman (2007), framing usually takes a negative connotation because framing effects suggest that distributions of public references are arbitrary, and that political elites can manipulate popular preferences to serve their own interests. In this research we are able to find out whether there is a negative or positive connotation when discussing Tibet.



## *Frames*

Frames are a means of presentation whereby certain elements of the communicated text are emphasized or excluded by the communicator (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar 2016, 11). A consequence from this is that frames can affect the attitudes and behaviours of the audiences (Chong and Druckman 2007, 109), because through emphasizing or excluding elements in a text, you can give viewers new thoughts. So, a frame provides a way to understand an event or issue by emphasizing some elements of a topic (Vreese 2005, 53). One of the earliest persons who gave a definition of a frame comes from Gamson (1989). He defines a frame as a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue (Gamson 1989, 157). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) state that frames guide the ways situational participants perceive their social realities and present these to themselves and to others. Or better said, a frame reflects an actor's organizing principle that structure those perceptions and furthermore, the basic components of a frame are capable of being itemized (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 94). Another definition defines 'frames' as something that organizes everyday reality by providing meaning to an unfolding strip of events and promoting definitions and interpretations of political issues (Chong and Druckman 2007, 106). This is in line with the interpretation of Vreese (2005), he claims that frames are parts of political arguments, journalistic norms, and social movements discourse. They are alternative ways of defining issues, endogenous to the political and social world (Vreese 2005, 53). What all these statements have in common, is that they see frames as a highlighter because a specific piece of information is being highlighted to see it in a different way. As Entman (1993) would say "frames elevate information in salience".

The analysis of frames illuminates the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted by the transfer of information from one location, such as speech, news report or novel, to that consciousness (Entman 1993, 51-52). Additionally, Giles & Shaw (2009) argue that media influence may be understood as the process by which the frame works its way from the media source into the discourse of the audience. And what framing analysis us offers is the way in which this process operates (Giles and Shaw 2009, 390). News sources have a strong impact in constructing social reality. In media discourse, such as the news, frames can be identified by the presence or absence of certain keywords and stereotyped images (Entman 1993, 53). But media effects are also limited by an interaction between mass media and recipients. Media discourse is part of the process by which

individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists develop meaning in public discourse (Scheufele 1999, 105).

The criteria that a frame must meet is being discussed by Vreese (2005). He gives four criteria that are essential for frames: (1) a news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics, (2) it should be commonly observed in journalist practice, (3) it must be possible to distinguish the frame from other frames, and (4) a frame must have representational validity and is not merely a figment of a researcher's imagination (Vreese 2005, 54). Besides these four criteria of a frame, Entman (1993) discusses the four functions that a frame has, namely, (1) frames define problems, (2) diagnose causes, (3) make moral judgements, and (4) suggest remedies. He claims that it is possible that many sentences more than one of these framing functions possesses, although many sentences in a text none of them has. And a frame in any text may not necessarily include all these functions (Entman 1993, 52). Chong & Druckman (2007) agree with this and state that people are not exposed to just one frame of an issue or problem. However, they also state that people are rather exposed to competing frames. When the audience receive different views of a problem, they naturally choose the alternative that is most in line with their values or principles (Chong and Druckman 2007, 112). It shows that frames are valuable tools in how they can influence someone's view. There is, however, a distinction between changing the content of one's beliefs and changing the weight assigned to different beliefs in one's attitude (Chong and Druckman 2007, 115). Frames introduce new considerations about a subject and highlights existing beliefs (Chong and Druckman 2007, 116). The purpose of frames is not to change one's belief, but there is a probability that a person changes his opinion about something, and frames naturally try to change the weight assigned to different beliefs in one's attitude.

### *Framing effects*

Chong & Druckman (2007) discuss what framing effects entails. According to them, framing effects occur when changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce changes of opinion. They go on about how an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations (Chong and Druckman 2007, 104). They also believe that the frames in the communication of politicians and media outlets influence the frames from citizens and their attitudes (Chong and Druckman 2007, 109). When looking at media outlets, for instance the news, frames can tell many different

stories about the same event. So, a frame analysis of news content calls attention to omissions as well as inclusions (Gamson 1989, 158).

Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar (2016) give us an example of a “framing effect”. They say that the conceptualization of audiences of reading a news article will determine which stored knowledge structure becomes active. In turn, this knowledge structure will be used to interpret the news article. So, choices from journalists and editors can play a role in determining the cognitive structure that a reader will apply when reading a news item (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar 2016, 16).

## 2.2 The concept of framing in China’s media system

The media system in China cannot be compared to that of a Western country. They have a system with a different purpose. The media system is a set of interacting and interdependent organisations or groups of people (Luo 2015, 52). Luo (2015) mentions that there are three forces most important for influencing Chinese media. These are (1) Party Force, (2) Governmental Force, and (3) Capital Force. “Party Force” could be defined as the control and influence of the CCP. “Governmental Force” is the power that generates from the central government and embedded in organisations and regulations from the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television. When you combine these two forces together, you could label it as the Party-State model or authoritarianism model. And capital force is the incentive from the “free market”. This started to be one of the players in Chinese media after the opening up policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s because the media found a drive to make profit (Luo 2015, 52).

Cho and Wang (2021) mention that not only the people are being influenced by the content of a text. Because privatization of media outlets is prevented to ensure the state’s political control, journalism is used as a tool controlled by external stakeholders to intervene in the politics. So, the Chinese media system shows the highest level of political instrumentation (Cho and Wang 2021, 256). They also argue that the ‘Soviet model’ remains in the Chinese media system. This model considers the primary function of mass media as enlightening the masses’ awareness and raising support for the ruling party (Cho and Wang 2021, 255). Shambaugh (2007) discusses how all editorials in the *People’s Daily* must go through a review process. Their editorials are cleared by the CCPPD (Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department) prior to publication. And particularly in the *People’s Daily*, the

CCPPD drafts the editorial in the first place. They very clearly establish the substance and even the language to be used in those articles. The CCPPD sets and enforces the exact wording to be used by journalists, scholars, and broadcasters in reporting on a given event. When one deviates from this, then it is serious transgression, and is punishable (Shambaugh 2007, 53). It shows that all the published items are being checked on their wording. Framing is clearly used to maintain the trustworthiness of the Chinese Communist Party. In China an escalating crisis may lead to a governance crisis and damage government legitimacy, this could lead to an international crisis and could threaten the national economic interests (Cho and Wang 2021, 257). So, in such a situation the state mobilizes state-owned, party-controlled news media to frame the crisis in a pro-government way (Cho and Wang 2021, 257). Because the Chinese Communist Party holds a monopoly of political power, it can vigorously repress any movement that even appears to threaten it (Sparks 2008, 11).

The Chinese Communist Party influences the media through ownership, sponsorship, and censorship, they have maintained ownership of one of the largest newspapers in China, the *People's Daily*, since its launch in 1949 (Luo 2015, 54). They do not own every media source in China, but its propaganda department oversees the censorship of all media content (Luo 2015, 54). As stated, before by Chong and Druckman (2007), news can be positively or negatively framed. Cho and Wang (2021) claim that Chinese news media a crisis depicts by emphasizing effective governmental crisis management, rather than the severity of the situation. The Chinese government may attribute positive achievements of crisis response to the collective experiences, the benefits of socialism, and the leadership of the CCP (Cho and Wang 2021, 258). So, censorship is important for the Party to suppress material and promote the official ideology and consolidate the power of the state (Luo 2015, 54).

### 2.3 Chinese media and its representation of Tibet

State media is an important element in Chinese rule. In the immediate aftermath of the Lhasa Uprising or the Tibetan Uprising from 1959, state media produced a wave of articles that variously proclaimed “backward, dark, and brutal old Tibet” (Kehoe 2020, 1337). Between 1987 and 1989, responding to protests in Lhasa, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising, state media produced dozens of pieces reiterating that Tibetans were “part of the Chinese nation” and emphasizing that only through following the path to socialism can Tibet have a bright future (Kehoe 2020, 1138). This corresponds to what Chairman Mao has

said in the early 1950s, Tibet should fulfil China’s need for natural resources while China would fulfil Tibet’s need for people (Smith 2010, 1). It expresses how Tibet and China need each other for their own purposes and the bond between them will not fade. So, it is from this incident onwards that state media has played a key role in reaffirming and motivate Han support for Chinese rule across the region (Kehoe 2020, 1138). What we see is that representations of “old Tibet” often appear alongside depictions of “new Tibet” (Kehoe 2020, 1140). While “old Tibet” is represented as a “hell on earth” full of oppression, backwardness, and darkness, “new Tibet” is depicted as democratic, free, and reaping the benefits of socialist transformation (Kehoe 2020, 1140). In this narrative, 1959 is referenced as a turning point, when Tibetans overturned their fate under a feudal serfdom and embarked on a new path towards socialist modernisation under CCP rule (Kehoe 2020, 1140). The result of the Tibetan Unrest has been that China became more aware of the issue and tries to resolve it in their own way. They try to wash away all the opposition within Tibet through repressive force and eliminate international criticism (Smith 2010, 9). These riots show that Tibetans reject the Chinese rule and the desire to retain their own culture (Smith 2010, 9).

According to Lee (2009), the Chinese media presents different topics in the portrayal of Tibet (figure 1). He argues that China should more focus on the positive developments in Tibet rather than attacking the pro-independence movement and blaming them for the riots (Lee 2009, 229).

Issue framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National sovereignty, unity, and stability.</li> <li>- Poverty alleviation and emancipation of slaves.</li> <li>- Raising the standard of living of ordinary Tibetans who suffered terribly under the former regime.</li> <li>- Uniting the diverse Chinese people as one nation, while preserving unique differences.</li> </ul>
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- China liberated a whole population from the cruel rule of elite slave-owning theocrats.</li> </ul>
Cultural preservations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tibetan culture is one of the most highly treasured cultures in all of China. Preserving traditional Tibetan language, religion, food, dance, and lifestyle is a high priority.</li> </ul>
Political power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tibetans hold key positions of political and decision-making power in Tibet.</li> </ul>
Religious freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buddhism thrives in Tibet as it does in all of China.</li> </ul>
Journalistic freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objective, fair-minded journalists have never been denied entry and report constantly from Tibet.</li> <li>- Journalists who write positive stories about Tibet do not have their material reported in Western news.</li> </ul>
What do ordinary Tibetans think?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tibetans enjoy an increasing standard of living and more civil liberties than in the past. They do not want a return to the bad “old ways”.</li> <li>- The Dalai Lama speaks only for a very small elite minority who are trying to hurt China.</li> </ul>

Figure 1. Chinese media on the issue of Tibet (Lee 2009, 217)

## 2.4 Frames in this study

This study will use five frames as the main frames. These frames are: (1) the human-interest frame, (2) the responsibility frame, (3) the economic consequences frame, (4) the victim versus villain frame, and (5) the Party-State frame. The first four frames were determined by previous studies and the last frame was created for this research by the literature reviewed on China's media.

The first frame is the "human-interest frame". This frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 95-96). This frame refers to an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or emotionalize the news, in order to capture and retain audience interest (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 96).

The second frame is the "responsibility frame". This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 96).

The third frame is the "economic consequences frame". This frame reports an event, issue, or problem in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 96).

The fourth frame is the "victim versus villain frame". This frame generates a confrontation between the persons being subjected to brutality and those who use violence toward them, it creates a dichotomized world of victims and villains out of the news story (Guo 2008, 94).

The fifth frame is the Party-State frame. This frame not only reports on the control and influence of the CCP and the central government, but also how support is raised for the ruling party (Luo 2015; Kehoe 2020; Cho and Wang 2021).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

To gather my data, I focus on one Chinese mass media. I used the Chinese newspaper, the *People's Daily*. The *People's Daily* started publishing in June 1948 and it is now the most influential and authoritative newspaper in China (People's Daily Online n.d.). According to UNESCO, it takes its place among the top 10 of the world (People's Daily Online n.d.). The newspaper is the official voice of the central government of the People's Republic of China for the last 74 years (OriProbe n.d.). Furthermore, it says that it reflects the views of the Chinese people, expounds on justice, and lambasts various forms of malpractice (People's Daily Online n.d.). The newspaper brings the latest news of policy information and resolutions of the Chinese government and major domestic news and international news releases from China (People's Daily Online n.d.).

This study examines how the *People's Daily* frames Tibet around two important events. The first event is the Tibetan Unrest in 2008 and the second event is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tibet's Peaceful Liberation. For both events, ten newspaper articles have been analysed. To see what kind of frames have been applied, I coded the material according to themes and then I examined to which frame it belongs.

For the newspaper articles from 2008, I chose the ten articles that were published closest to the start of the protests from the Tibetan Unrest. I found these newspaper articles in the database of the *People's Daily*. I got access to this database through the Leiden Catalogue, and it can be found as "Renmin Ribao Full-Text Database". Here I entered the year, 2008 年, and I also added the keyword, "西藏" (Tibet). 10 March is viewed as the starting date of the protests, but in the database relevant articles about these protests only show from 15 March. That is why the date range for the analysis of these newspaper articles is from March 15 until March 21 (figure 2). This database gives a clear overview of all the articles they have published, but it only allows you to search for articles published from the year 1946 to 2012. That is why I used a different database to search for the newspaper articles from 2021. This database can also be accessed through the Leiden Catalogue and can be found as "Ren min ri bao = |b Renmin ribao = People's daily – 人民日报". This database did not allow me to select a time frame, but you could arrange the newspaper articles from new to old. For my selection, I only analysed articles that contain the word "西藏" and "和平解放西藏地方" (Peaceful Liberation of Tibet) in the headline. I did not set a specific date range when finding

these newspaper articles, because there were many articles where the content was not useful for my research. Therefore, the date range is larger compared to the articles from 2008 (figure 3). For all the articles, I analysed the whole story of the newspaper.

NR.	DATE	TITLE
1	2008.03.15	就拉萨极少数人打、砸、抢、烧破坏活动 西藏自治区负责人答新华社记者问 The head of the Tibet Autonomous Region answers Xinhua's questions on the vandalism, smashing, looting, and burning activities of a very small number of people in Lhasa
2	2008.03.17	达赖集团破坏西藏社会稳定注定要失败 The Dalai group destruction of social stability in Tibet is doomed to failure
3	2008.03.18	任何破坏西藏稳定、制造分裂的图谋都注定要失败——西藏自治区主席就拉萨打砸抢烧事件答中外记者问 Any attempt to destabilize Tibet and create separatism is doomed to failure - the chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region answers questions from Chinese and foreign reporters on the incident of beating, smashing, looting, and burning in Lhasa
4	2008.03.18	就拉萨发生打砸抢烧严重暴力犯罪事件 外交部发言人答记者问 Foreign ministry spokesperson's remarks on the serious violent crime of beating, smashing, looting and burning in Lhasa
5	2008.03.19	拉萨社会秩序基本恢复正常 The social order is largely restored to normal in Lhasa
6	2008.03.19	外交部发言人表示 达赖是长期从事分裂祖国、破坏民族团结活动的政治流亡者 Foreign Ministry spokesman says the Dalai is a political exile who has long been engaged in activities to split the motherland and undermine national unity
7	2008.03.20	热地任第二届西藏自治区发展咨询委员会第一次会议上说 西藏正处于历史上发展和稳定的最好时期 暴力犯罪事件严重破坏了西藏的社会秩序和社会稳定, 不得人心 Raidi said at the first meeting of the 2nd Tibet Autonomous Region Development Advisory Committee that Tibet is in the best period of development and stability in its history. Violent crimes have seriously damaged the social order and social stability in Tibet, they do not have popular support.
8	2008.03.21	帕巴拉·格列朗杰: 西藏发展进步的历史进程是任何势力都阻挡不了的 Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai: The historical process of Tibet's development and progress cannot be stopped by any force
9	2008.03.21	外交部举行例行记者会 中央政府与达赖对话的立场是一贯和明确的, 达赖必须彻底停止一切分裂祖国的活动 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds a regular press conference. The Central Government's position on dialogue with the Dalai has been consistent and clear, and the Dalai must completely cease all activities to split the motherland
10	2008.03.21	一些国家政府支持中方依法处置拉萨打砸抢烧严重暴力犯罪事件 Several governments support the Chinese side in dealing with the serious violent crimes of vandalism and looting in Lhasa in accordance with the law.

Figure 2. Overview of the articles from 2008

NR.	DATE	TITLE
1	2021.05.22	《西藏和平解放与繁荣发展》白皮书发表 White Paper on "Peaceful Liberation and Prosperous Development of Tibet" published
2	2021.05.22	书写新时代西藏发展新篇章 Writing a new chapter of the development of Tibet in the new era
3	2021.05.23	西藏发生翻天覆地的历史巨变 Tibet has undergone earth-shaking historical changes
4	2021.05.27	西藏人权事业取得全方位进步和历史性成就 The cause of human rights in Tibet has made all-round progress and historic achievements
5	2021.07.09	西藏改革完善社会救助制度 Tibet's reform and improvement of the social assistance system
6	2021.07.29	聚焦西藏的发展与变迁 A focus on the development and changes in Tibet
7	2021.03.25	谱写铸牢中华民族共同体意识的西藏篇章 Creating a Tibetan chapter to forge a sense of community among the Chinese people
8	2021.05.24	西藏和平解放的伟大意义及经验启示 The great significance and experience revelation of Tibet's Peaceful Liberation
9	2021.06.07	境内外媒体在西藏感受和平解放 70 年巨变 Domestic and foreign media experience great changes in the 70 years of Tibet's Peaceful Liberation
10	2021.06.01	西藏自治区强化党建引领, 推动基层治理——强基惠民 稳边固边 Tibet Autonomous Region strengthens the leadership of party building to promote grassroots governance -- Strengthening the foundation for the people and stabilizing the border

Figure 3. Overview of the articles from 2021

The method used to analyse the newspaper articles is a combination of a discourse analysis and a content analysis. The method of Schneider (2013) shows how you can code your data by assigning attributes to specific units of analysis, such as paragraphs, sentences, or words. In this study I coded the data by assigning attributes to sentences. Schneider his method also



gives me the opportunity to code the material according to themes, so I attributed themes to every sentence. Attributing themes to the data show the flexibility of this approach. It leads to a wide range of themes and gives me the opportunity to broaden the results of the data.

Clarke and Braun (2017) state that analysing your data through themes is not simply summarizing data, but it is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. This method is unbounded by theoretical commitments and therefore an unusual tool for examining (Clarke and Braun 2017). Themes itself provide a framework for organizing and reporting observations and is particularly useful when having an inductive approach (Clarke and Braun 2017). So, I did not decide the coding categories (themes) beforehand, because this could limit the categories and therefore, I have chosen to use an inductive approach for coding the material through themes. By using this method, I found out that not every sentence contains one theme, but several themes could be attached to a particular sentence. In the figure below is an example of how I analysed each sentence according to themes (figure 4).

CH	EN	THEME(S)
西藏自治区负责人说，近日，拉萨极少数人进行打、砸、抢、烧破坏活动，扰乱社会秩序，危害人民群众生命财产安全。	The person in charge of the Tibet Autonomous Region said that recently, a very small number of people in Lhasa have carried out beating, smashing, looting, burning and subversive activities in which they disrupt social order and endanger the safety of people's lives and property.	Violence
西藏是中国领土不可分割的一部分，这是国际社会的广泛共识。	It is the broad consensus of the international community that Tibet is an inseparable part of China's territory.	Tibet part of China
拉萨发生的打砸抢烧严重暴力犯罪事件，就是达赖集团精心策划和煽动的，再次暴露了达赖集团的分裂本质，也暴露了达赖集团所宣称的“和平”、“非暴力”的虚伪性和欺骗性。	The serious violent crimes of vandalism and looting that took place in Lhasa were carefully planned and instigated by the Dalai clique, once again exposing the divisive nature of the Dalai clique and the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of the Dalai clique's claims of "peace" and "non-violence".	Violence Blaming Dalai group Dalai group deceivers

Figure 4. Example: sentence analysis according to themes

When attributing themes to every sentence you need to examine the content of the material. A content analysis can be defined as a research method for studying and/or retrieving meaningful information from documents by determining the occurrence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts (Pediaa 2016). For this kind of analysis, newspaper headlines and articles can be used as a tool for research (Pediaa 2016). With a content analysis, the researchers can quantify and analyse the presence of meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts to evaluate language used within a news article to search

for bias or partiality (Public Health Colombia 2021). A content analysis can be divided between a conceptual or relational analysis. The conceptual analysis corresponds most closely to the analysis that I applied in my research. When doing a conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination and the analysis involves quantifying and counting its presence (Public Health Colombia 2021). Terms can be explicit or implicit. Explicit terms are easier to identify than implicit terms as you need to decide the level of implication and base your judgements on subjectivity (Public Health Colombia 2021). Except for choosing a concept first and then examining your data, this kind of analysis is suitable in the way it quantifies and counts the presence of concepts, which in this study I will refer to as themes. By counting themes and then examining to what kind of frame it fits, results in which frames have been applied, but also which frames are used most frequently. I used the five predetermined frames for deciding which theme goes with which frame and looked at the content of the theme in examining this.

Besides attributing themes to the content, I identified linguistic mechanisms. According to Schneider (2013), you can analyse and identify those linguistic mechanism through different features. The ones I will focus on are word groups, modalities and evidentialities. For the word groups, I analysed how many times certain words were mentioned. When for instance certain words or word groups are frequently used, then the text wants you to remember these. They will be stored in your cognitive structure to interpret the news article. When finding modalities, I went to see if the text included any statements on what "should" or "could" be, because such phrases may create a sense of urgency or serve as a call for action (Schneider 2013). And lastly, for the evidentialities, I searched for phrases in the text that suggest factuality, so does the text report actively and demonstrate it, or merely suggested it as self-evident (Schneider 2013)? According to Schneider (2013), one of the strongest features of discourse is how it "naturalizes" certain statements as "common sense" or "fact", even if this is controversial. Identifying these linguistic mechanisms are essential to framing because it shows what the text want to convey, and they are part of framing effects.

There are limitations with the method I applied in this research. The risk is that the method I use is quite subjective. Subjectivity comes into play when it comes to interpreting the material and results, in other words, what kind of themes can be found in the sentences, to what frame do they belong, what does it mean and what conclusions can be drawn from them. Although this method gives me freedom in analysing texts, it shows that reliability and

validity are issues that play a big role in this research. I, as the researcher, am the one who evaluates, quantifies, and analyses every sentence. I am searching for themes and certain words, and I make choices which I believe are right, so I will need to interpret carefully. However, this way of analysing and interpreting can also lead to new insights and an expansion of knowledge which you will not be able to find otherwise. And lastly, I am not a native Mandarin speaker. I have knowledge about the Chinese language and conduct this research with the understanding of the language that I have learned through the years. Nevertheless, I may not translate or interpret certain words correctly and this may affect this research.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the themes that were found in the news articles of the *People's Daily* about Tibet, and it shows which frames are applied. First, the themes from the 2008 news articles are discussed, followed by those from 2021. I have put all the themes I found together and looked at how often they occurred. Lastly, there is a discussion on the themes and frames.

### 4.1 The themes found in the news articles about the Tibetan Unrest

I have found 25 themes in the analysed news articles from 2008 (figure 5). The most discussed theme is “violence”. The news articles talk about the rioters in Lhasa and how they violently attacked police stations and government offices, robbed banks, shops, gas stations, and markets. They also state that rioters have burned buildings including primary and secondary schools. The articles did not mention the police using any sort of violence against the rioters. The violence was all linked to the rioters. Trying to keep “social stability” and “maintain order” are two themes that are also often mentioned. To contain the riot and end it, the articles talk about how social stability and order is needed to handle the incident. “Sabotaging the Olympics” is also a discussion that was mentioned and is linked to the riots in 2008. It is said the Dalai Lama asked its supporters to hold demonstrations during the Beijing Olympics.

Furthermore, the theme “support” is the third most occurring topic. The articles mentioned how countries support China in handling the incident in their way:

巴基斯坦反对任何破坏北京奥运会或将其政治化的企图，谴责某些政治势力在中国西藏鼓动暴力的罪恶行径，坚决反对任何有损中国主权和领土完整的图谋。

[Pakistan opposes any attempt to disrupt or politicize the Beijing Olympics, condemns the critical acts of certain political forces for instigating violence in China's Tibet and firmly opposes any attempt to undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.]

使节们强调，阿拉伯国家坚定奉行一个中国原则，反对任何企图分裂中国的行为。

[The ambassadors stressed that the Arab countries firmly adhere to the one-China principle and oppose any attempt to split China.]

With other countries showing their support, China also needs its own support, and they try to strengthen this through “party-building”. Articles state that you must stand with the Party through thick and thin and take action to defend the Party’s leadership, the socialist system, and the system of regional ethnic autonomy.

The theme “law” also frequently occurred in the news articles. The articles state that any responsible government has the right to deal with an incident in accordance with the constitution and the law to safeguard the fundamental interests of the broad masses. Besides, it was stressed that China dealt with the incident in accordance with the law, nothing was done illegal. So, if we look at who caused the riot, then four groups are mentioned. The Dalai group got mentioned the most and are seen as the big threat. The Tibet independence force and overseas Dalai separatist are mentioned less. Interestingly, monks were also seen as the instigators. The articles say that they ignored the national laws and rushed into the urban area of Lhasa to cause trouble. Moreover, according to the articles, the Dalai group has a divisive nature, and the hypocrisy and deceit of the peaceful and non-violent claims are not true. They stress that the “Dalai group are deceivers”.

The theme “restored order” talks about how the situation in Lhasa has become calm and that the social order has returned. The articles mentioned how more vehicles and pedestrians are on the streets and that the lives of the people returned to normal. Another theme that was also often mentioned is that “Tibet belongs to China”. The same can be said about “development” and “unity”. Tibet is in the best period of development and stability in history. And when it comes to unity, the Party committee and government of the Tibet Autonomous Region will lead the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to unite and thoroughly fight together against the Dalai group.

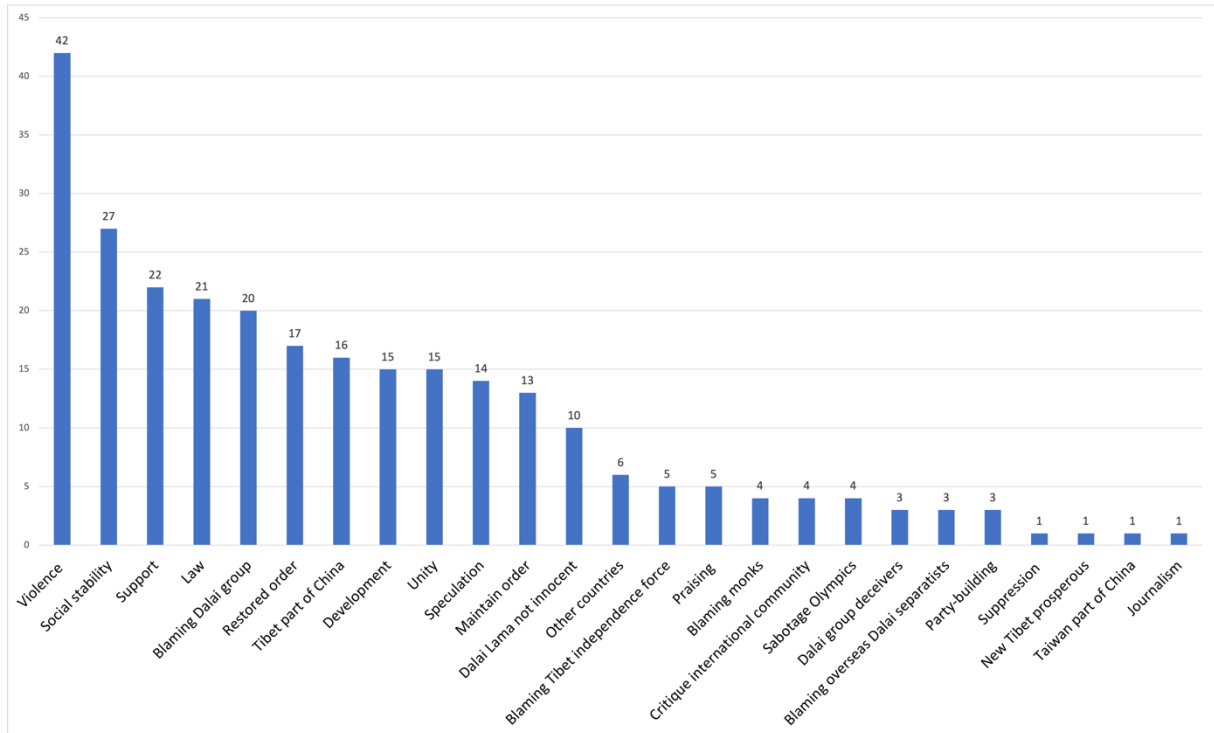


Figure 5. The themes found in the analysed news articles from 2008

The news articles also contained “speculation” and said that the attempts to undermine the stability and harmony of Tibet do not enjoy popular support and are doomed to fail. We do not know whether this statement is true for everyone, so it is a conjecture without firm evidence. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama is discussed as a person that is not innocent and therefore does not need support. He is a political exile who has long been engaged in splitting the motherland and undermining the national unity internationally under the guise of religion. The articles state that he has never really given up his separatist ideas and activities.

The themes “other countries” and “critique international community” talk about how Western countries have been making a lot of noise, saying that they hope the Chinese government will not violently suppress the peaceful demonstration, but respect human rights. About this is being said:

某些国家要求中国政府尊重公民和平示威的权利，呼吁通过对话解决问题。

[Certain countries demanded that the Chinese government respect the right of its citizens to demonstrate peacefully and called for a solution through dialogue.]

China criticizes the international community for this and for not recognizing the separatism of the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, the theme “praising” talks about how the Chinese government unswervingly safeguards national sovereignty and territorial integrity, promotes the development and stability of Tibet, and how they protect the lives and properties of all the people in the Tibet. Another example states:

帕巴拉·格列朗杰说，作为与党多年合作共事的党外人士，作为经历过新旧社会的历史见证人，作为爱国爱教的宗教界人士，我坚决拥护党中央的英明决定，坚决拥护自治区党委、政府的决策部署，对达赖集团有组织、有预谋、精心策划的打砸抢烧破坏活动，对否定中国共产党的领导，颠覆社会主义制度，破坏民族区域自治制度，妄图把西藏从祖国分裂出去的罪恶行径和政治图谋，表示强烈的愤慨和严厉的谴责。

[As a non-party member who has worked with the Party for many years, as a witness to history who has experienced the old and new societies, and as a patriotic and religious person, I firmly support the wise decision of the Party Central Committee and the decision and deployment of the Party committee and government of the autonomous region, and express my strong indignation and severe condemnation of the Dalai clique's organized, premeditated and well-planned vandalism and destruction, its criminal acts and political designs to deny the leadership of the CPC, subvert the socialist system, undermine the ethnic regional autonomy system and attempt to split Tibet from the motherland.]

That the Tibetan people are dissatisfied with the Chinese government’s long-term suppression of Tibetans was mentioned once. The same goes for how “new Tibet” is prosperous and growing. Interestingly, Taiwan was also mentioned. In this context, it is said that the Dalai Lama must stop all activities to split the motherland and recognize that Tibet is part of China just as Taiwan is also part of China.

Lastly, the theme “journalism” can be seen once. The news article that discussed this talks about the response of the foreign media on this incident. Some are relatively objective, and some are inconsistent with the facts. They hope that the media can take a responsible

attitude. Respect facts and follow the standards of journalism to report objectively and impartially.

## 4.2 The themes found in the news articles around the event of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet

I have found 17 themes in the analysed news articles from 2021 (figure 6). The most discussed theme is “development”. This theme talks about how Tibet has developed through the years with the help of China. Articles state:

西藏实现持续稳定和快速发展是对党和国家工作大局的重要贡献。

[The achievement of sustained stability and rapid development in Tibet is an important contribution to the overall work of the Party and the State.]

宣告西藏和平解放。70 年来，西藏从黑暗走向光明、从落后走向进步、从贫穷走向富裕、从专制走向民主、从封闭走向开放，实现了“短短几十年，跨越上千年”的沧桑巨变。

[In the past 70 years, Tibet has gone from darkness to light, from backwardness to progress, from poverty to prosperity, from autocracy to democracy, and from closedness to openness. It has undergone tremendous changes and achieved a transformation of "a few short decades spanning over a thousand years".]

西藏社会制度实现了历史性跨越；扎实推进改革开放和现代化建设，极大解放和发展了社会生产力，极大改善了西藏各族人民生活生产条件。

The establishment of the socialist system and the introduction of regional ethnic autonomy have made a historic leap forward in the Tibetan social system; the solid promotion of reform, opening up and modernization has greatly liberated and developed the social productive forces and greatly improved the production and living conditions of the Tibetan people.



Another aspect found by the theme “development” is the development of Tibet not through the means of China, but development done by Tibet itself. This article states that to consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty eradication, and actively strengthen the protection of livelihood, Tibet has recently issued several measure on reforming and improving the social assistance system. Apart from the discussion about development, “human rights” is also discussed. The cause of human rights in Tibet has made all-round progress and historic achievements because of the developments.

The second most discussed theme is “party-building”. Here the implementation of the Party’s strategy for governing Tibet is a focus. Only by upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, and the system of regional ethnic autonomy, can Tibet be prosperous and progressive today and see a better tomorrow. Another example shows:

不断加强党的建设特别是政治建设，深入开展“政治标准要更高、党性要求要更严、组织纪律性要更强”专题教育，扎实推动 74 个县（区）、600 多个乡（镇）、5500 多个村（居）基层政权建设，巩固党在西藏的执政基础。

[Continuously strengthen party-building, especially political building, carry out in-depth special education on "higher political standards, stricter party spirit requirements, and stronger organizational discipline", and we are firmly promoting the construction of grassroots power in 74 counties (districts), more than 600 townships (towns) and 5,500 villages (dwellings) to consolidate the Party's ruling base in Tibet.]

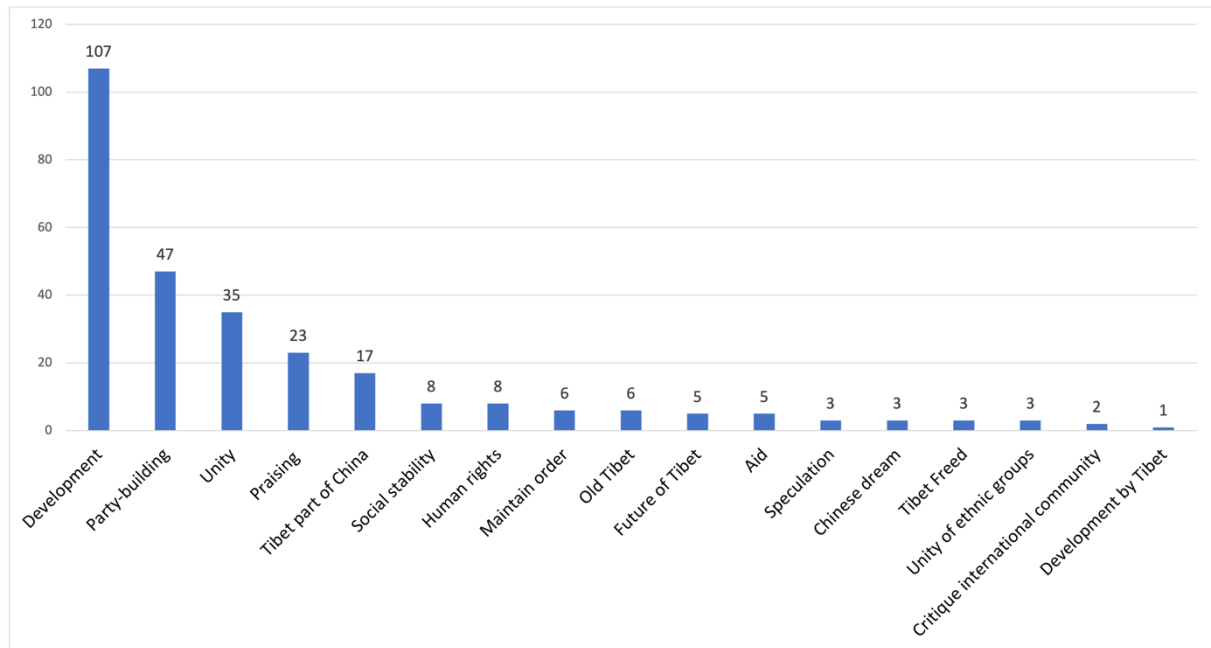


Figure 6. The themes found in the analysed news articles from 2021

The third most discussed theme is “unity”. The articles discuss how over the past 70 years, the Communist Party of China has united and led the Tibetan people of all ethnic groups to create historical achievements that are unprecedented in history, benefiting thousands of generations. It was mentioned three times that the Tibetans really had united. In 1888 and 1904 the British army invaded Tibet. Tibetans, Han, Menba, Lhoba, and other ethnic groups fought battles against foreign aggression. So, for thousands of years, the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between Tibetans and other ethnic groups have run through the history of Tibet. Therefore, they have jointly forged a great spirit of patriotism.

The theme “praising” is also often seen. Through the strong leadership of the Party and with the strong support of the people of the whole country, could Tibet achieve an overall victory in poverty alleviation. The social situation has become more stable, the economy and culture have become more prosperous, and the ecological environment has become better. This could all be done by the Party. A newspaper article said about this:

白皮书指出，以和平解放为起点，西藏各族人民在中国共产党的坚强领导下团结奋进，贯彻执行《十七条协议》，有力维护了国家主权、祖国统一和领土完整；进行民主改革，彻底废除了政教合一的封建农奴制，

百万农奴翻身解放、当家作主，各族人民的根本利益得到保障；建立社会主义制度，实行民族区域自治。

[The white paper points out that, starting with the peaceful liberation, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have united under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China to carry out the implementation of the Seventeen Agreements, which has vigorously safeguarded national sovereignty, the unity of the motherland and territorial integrity; carried out democratic reforms, completely abolished the feudal serf system of secularism, turned over millions of serfs to become emancipated and masters of their own house, and safeguarded the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups; established a socialist system and Regional ethnic autonomy was introduced.]

How Tibet is part of China was also seen quite often, but on the other hand, the articles also mentioned how they freed and liberated Tibet. China expelled the imperialist forces and implemented democratic reforms together with the establishment of a socialist system. Interestingly, “social stability” and “maintain order” did not talk about the riots, but about the future. Even though these two themes do not refer to the riots in 2008, they are still being mentioned, because according to the news articles, it is something you need to contain.

Another aspect we can see is that “old Tibet” has built an image for itself. A contradiction is made between “old” and “new” Tibet. Tibet went from darkness to light where old Tibet was under the rule of feudal serfdom. The political system was based on the unity of church and state and the supremacy of theocracy. The regime sheltered theocracy and theocracy controlled the regime. The rule has formed a social structure with strict hierarchy and great disparity between the rich and the poor, and fundamentally hindered the development of Tibetan society. So, the articles state that the “old Tibet” had nothing and simply “backward” is not enough to describe its barrenness. On the other hand, the future of Tibet is discussed positively:

西藏的明天必将更加辉煌灿烂，西藏人民的生活必将更加幸福美好。

[The future of Tibet will certainly be more glorious and brilliant, and the life of the Tibetan people will be happier and better.]

Another theme is “aid” and this talks about how China has given aid to Tibet in different fields, such as in the medical and health services and in education and construction. Also, the theme “speculation” was not mentioned that often, but an article stated that the happiness index of the Tibetan people has risen significantly, but this statement is not supported by firm evidence.

Moreover, the Chinese dream is also discussed. About this is said that the people in Tibet are working hard to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. And lastly, there was some critique on the international community’s correct understanding of Tibet, but this discussion did not occur that often.

### 4.3 Discussion on the themes from 2008 and 2021

The analysis shows that there were a lot of different themes found in the newspaper articles. The discussed themes show similarities, but also differences.

In the analysed newspaper articles from 2008 the theme “violence” was seen the most, while in the newspaper articles from 2021, this theme is not on the list. This is not strange, because the time period is different and the events that happened influenced the discussion in the newspaper articles. It is interesting that “party-building” is not higher on the list in 2008. You would expect that strengthening the influence of the Party after the protests is a top priority. However, this theme was only mentioned three times. It indicates that the discussion on the violence that occurred and restoring social stability and maintaining order were the focus point in the news articles from this period. These themes, together with the theme of “support” and conveying who caused the incidents were discussed the most.

Another difference can be seen in how often “unity” is mentioned. In the newspaper articles from 2021, there was a broader discussion about this theme. Also, the content was different. In 2008 the discussion about unity was about striving for unity, while in 2021 it was mainly about how China united the Tibetans through their efforts.

The discussion by Kehoe (2020) about Tibet being backward and dark, can be seen in the articles from 2021. “Old Tibet” was mentioned, and the discussion talks about the backward and dark aspect from this period. On the other side, “new Tibet” is developed and free. He also mentioned that between 1987 and 1989, state media claimed that Tibetans were part of the Chinese nation and emphasized that only through following the path to socialism can Tibet have a bright future (Kehoe 2020). The *People’s Daily* still used this claim in the news

articles from 2008 and 2021. The discussion about whether Tibet is part of China is not over and it shows in the way state media still use this to validate their rule in Tibet.

One of the themes in 2008 is "suppression". It was only mentioned once, but Smith (2010) argued that the riots show how Tibetans reject the Chinese rule and want to retain their own culture. It corresponds to the content of this theme in the way how the *People's Daily* said that Tibetans were dissatisfied with the Chinese government's long-term suppression of the Tibetans.

Furthermore, Lee (2009) showed the different topics the Chinese media presents in the portrayal of Tibet. In this study there were a few themes that are in line with the topics he found. These topics are unity, stability, poverty alleviation, raising the standard of living, uniting the diverse Chinese people as one nation, China liberated Tibet, Tibetans enjoy an increasing standard of living, and the Dalai Lama speaks only for a very small elite minority who are trying to hurt China. I analysed the news articles without setting a standard for the themes and in the end eight of the topics are in line with the themes in this study. There were, however, also a few topics I did not come across. Whether Tibetans hold key positions of political and decision-making power in Tibet is something I have not encountered. Also, it was not mentioned that Tibetan culture is one of the most highly treasured cultures in all of China and that preserving the traditional Tibetan language, religion, food, dance, and lifestyle is a high priority. Besides, Buddhism was not mentioned once, it did not say that it thrives in Tibet as it does in all of China. In the articles from 2008 it was mentioned that the monks were to blame for causing the riots, so whether Buddhism really thrives is a question mark.

Lee (2009) also shows that there is journalistic freedom. Objective, fair-minded journalists have never been denied entry and report constantly from Tibet. When they write positive stories about Tibet, then they do not have their material reported in Western news. There was one time that journalism was mentioned in my analysis. This was in one of the news articles from 2008, but the content was different. It was said that China hoped foreign media can take a responsible attitude and that they should report objectively.

In discussing the themes, the theme "praising" and "speculation" are two themes that were not mentioned in former research. It shows that this research demonstrates new insights on the debate. These two themes also have a big influence on framing which I will discuss next.

## 4.4 Discussion on the frames

This study uses five main frames. These frames are: (1) the human-interest frame, (2) the responsibility frame, (3) the economic consequences frame, (4) the victim versus villain frame, and (5) the Party-State frame. Before discussing these frames with the themes, I will first discuss the linguistic mechanisms.

### *Linguistic mechanisms*

Besides analysing the content on themes, I have also identified linguistic mechanisms. These linguistic mechanisms show what the text wants to convey, and they are part of framing effects. I focused on word groups, modalities and evidentialities. In the news articles from 2008 I wanted to examine what the rioters and therefore also the Tibetans were associated with. I found three terms: (1) thugs 暴徒, (2) barbaric acts 野蛮行径, and (3) lawbreakers 不法分子. These do not have a positive connotation. In the news articles from 2021, the *People's Daily* did not use specific words when addressing the Tibetans. They mentioned "people of all ethnic groups" or "Tibetan" the most. The second term is neutral, but the first term shows that the people of all ethnic groups are addressed. It demonstrates equality and shows that China is there for all the ethnic groups. The articles also stressed how Tibet is now a "new socialist Tibet" and a "wealthy, civilized, harmonious and beautiful socialist modernized new Tibet". This shows that framing went from negative to positive over the years.

Both the modalities in 2008 and 2021 talked about how you must listen to the Party. You must set a good example everywhere, play an exemplary leading role, unite people from all walks of life and fight the enemy together. Also, you must hold high the great banner of patriotism and socialism and should adhere to the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. These modalities correspond with the "Party-State" frame in how it tries to raise support for the ruling party.

Lastly, the evidentialities. The evidentialities in the news articles from 2008 and 2021 talk about how the community views something. The articles state that the protests aroused strong indignation and severe condemnation from all sectors of Tibetan society. Furthermore, it is stated that the series of farce and sabotage created by the Dalai group have been firmly opposed by the international community. Also, the people's lives are happier. These statements are all speculations because they do not come with clear evidence in the text. It is seen as a true statement, but because of the lack of evidence, you cannot be sure of this. The

evidentialities create views that may not be right. It influences the mind of the people and are part of framing. You could say that they fit with the “human-interest frame”, because it tries to dramatize and emotionalize the news.

### Themes

When looking at the themes of the news articles from 2008, then the “responsibility frame”, the “victim versus villain frame” and “Party-State frame” is applied the most (figure 7). Here the themes that fit with the “responsibility frame” were mentioned 32 times. It presents an issue in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause to and individual or group. According to the articles, the responsibility of the Tibetan Unrest lies by the Dalai group, the Dalai Lama, the monks, the Tibet independence force, and the overseas Dalai separatists. They were mentioned as the cause for the Tibetan Unrest and need to take responsibility for that.

The themes from the “victim versus villain frame” were seen 45 times. This frame generates a confrontation between the persons being subjected to brutality and the ones who use violence toward them. The theme “violence” was the most discussed theme in the news articles from 2008. It showed the violence of the protesters against the Chinese regime. Lastly, the themes from the “Party-State frame” could be seen 66 times. This frame shows the control and support of the CCP and the central government, and how it raises support for the ruling party. The other two frames, the “economic consequence frame” and the “human-interest frame” were also seen in the themes, but they were used less.

Human-Interest frame	Responsibility frame	Economic consequence frame	Victim versus villain frame	Party-State frame	No frame
Dalai lama not innocent (10)	Blaming Dalai group (20)	New Tibet prosperous (1)	Violence (42)	Party-building (3)	Tibet part of China (16)
Suppression (1)	Blaming overseas Dalai separatist (3)	Development (15)	Dalai group deceivers (3)	Support (22)	Taiwan part of China (1)
Sabotage Olympics (4)	Blaming Tibet Independence force (5)			Praising (5)	Social stability (27)
Speculation (14)	Blaming monks (4)			Unity (15)	Maintain order (13)
				Law (21)	Restored order (17)
					Journalism (1)
					Critique international community (4)
					Other countries (6)
29	32	16	45	66	

Figure 7. The themes found in the newspaper articles from 2008 categorised in the frames

The themes from the news articles from 2021 show that the “economic consequence frame” and “Party-State frame” is utilized the most (figure 8). The theme “development” was discussed a lot and mentioned 107 times. The “Party-State frame” came in second, because the themes “Party-building”, “Unity”, “Praising” and the “Chinese dream” were mentioned together 108 times. The other two frames, “the human-interest frame” and “the responsibility frame” can also be seen in the content of the themes. However, the “victim versus villain frame” could not be identified. The content of the newspaper articles from 2021 do not focus on how protesters use violence against the Chinese regime. The newspaper articles from 2021 show that there is peace and therefore, such a frame is not needed in this context.

Human-Interest frame	Responsibility frame	Economic consequence frame	Victim versus villain frame	Party-State frame	No frame
Old Tibet (6)	Tibet freed (3)	Development (107)		Party-building (47)	Tibet part of China (17)
Speculation (3)	Tibet future (5)	Development by Tibet (1)		Praising (23)	Unity of ethnic groups (3)
	Aid (5)	Human rights (8)		Unity (35)	Maintain order (6)
				Chinese dream (3)	Social stability (8)
					Critique international community (2)
9	13	116	x	108	

Figure 8. The themes found in the newspaper articles from 2021 categorised in the frames

If we want to see which frame was used the most in the newspaper articles from 2008 and 2021, then the “Party-State frame” is the winner in this category.

*The themes without a frame*

There are themes that do not fit with any of the predetermined frames. For those themes, new frames are made. The first new frame is the “history-legitimacy frame”. This frame matches with “Tibet part of China”, “Taiwan part of China”, and “unity of ethnic groups”. The claim that Tibet and Taiwan are part of China has to do with the history of the respective countries and the legitimacy part has to do with the right to rule. If China states that Tibet and Taiwan are part of China because of their historical connection, then legitimacy is also part of this. The theme “unity of ethnic groups” belongs to this frame because it was stated in one of



the newspaper articles from 2021 that the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between Tibetans and other ethnic groups have run through the history of Tibet.

The second new frame is the “restoring order frame”. The themes “social stability”, “maintain order” and “restored order” belong to this frame. These themes discuss how social stability and order is needed to restore the order in Tibet.

The third and last frame is the “defamation frame”. This frame reports on how an action tries to damage the reputation of something. Or it could also report on how someone speaks ill of another person. The themes “critique international community” and “other countries” belong to this frame. Those themes discuss how Western countries hope the Chinese government will not violently suppress the peaceful demonstrations, but China criticizes the international community for this and for not recognizing the separatism of the Dalai Lama. And this shows how the newspaper articles speak ill of the international community.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study gave different typologies of framing. It also discussed China's media system and the five frames it will use. In this study twenty newspaper articles from the *People's Daily* were researched. Ten newspaper articles were chosen around the event of the Tibetan Unrest in 2008, and ten newspaper articles were analysed around the event of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. During the analysis, I looked at the content of each sentence and examined what kind of theme or themes could be attributed to these sentences. I used an inductive approach in determining the themes, but I had predetermined frames when analysing which theme corresponds to what frame. This study and its results contribute to the discussion on how Tibet is framed. In this context it gives a closer look on how a Chinese state medium frames Tibet. Besides this, it also sheds light on what is being discussed outside the frames, new frames and if the framing of Tibet by the *People's Daily* have changed over the years.

### 5.1 Framing Tibet

My answer to the research question "how is Tibet being framed by news articles from the *People's Daily* during the Tibetan Unrest (2008) and the year of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (2021)?" is that Tibet was framed negatively during the Tibetan Unrest, but it changed to positive in the year of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. In 2008 they were associated with violence and the supporters of the Dalai Lama were accused of having caused the protests. In 2021 we see a whole different view. Thirteen years later this negative view that had been prevalent all those previous years has changed. Tibet is spoken of neutrally. There are no clear negative aspects, but there are also no positive. The positive discussion on Tibet is about the development and growth it has seen after it signed the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. However, the development and growth are attributed to China. The Chinese government is the main factor that Tibet could go from a "backward and dark Tibet" to a "prosperous and socialist Tibet". "Old Tibet" has changed into "new Tibet" where the latter form owes its growth to a country who claims that it has belonged to them since ancient times.

This study used five frames to determine what kind of frames the *People's Daily* used to frame the news articles used in this research. The frames are: (1) the human-interest frame,

(2) the responsibility frame, (3) the economic consequences frame, (4) the victim versus villain frame, and (5) the Party-State frame. All the five frames have been applied in the newspaper articles. For the articles from 2008, the “responsibility frame”, the “victim versus villain frame” and the “Party-State frame” was used the most. These frames are not remarkable as this period is about a fight between Tibet and China. The “responsibility frame” and the “victim versus villain frame” both report on the influence of an individual or group who caused something. And the “Party-State frame” tries to consolidate Chinese rule. We can see that in this period China frames Tibet negatively. It blames them for instigating the riots. And it presents China as the one who has to deal with the violence while they also need to maintain order and social stability. The frame that was used the most for both events is the “Party-State frame”. For both periods the Party and the State had a significant influence in the newspaper articles. They were mentioned often. Whether it was for raising support for the ruling party or consolidating their rule, the Party, and the State show their authority.

For the articles from 2021, the “economic consequence frame” and the “Party-State frame” was seen the most. In the aftermath of the Tibetan Unrest, Tibet shows an enormous growth in all different sectors of society. Education, health services, the law, and the infrastructure have developed. The Chinese influence has become much larger, and the Chinese see this as a positive aspect for Tibet. Without China, Tibet could not have developed into a harmonious and united new Tibet.

This study has also developed four new frames. These are the “Party-State frame”, “history-legitimacy frame”, the “restoring order frame”, and the “defamation frame”. The “Party-State frame” is developed according to the literature of studies on the representation of Tibet in Chinese state media. The other three frames were made through the themes that did not match with one of the five predetermined frames.

This study has also shown that the Chinese media system is different compared to that of a Western country. The freedom that is seen by journalist, cannot be felt in China. The state has much more influence on what is being published and it intensively controls how everything is implemented. For China, framing is a tool that helps them keep their legitimacy. Whether positive or negative, framing is applied.

## 5.2 Limits and further research

This research has its limits and problems. The big problem lies in its objectivity. This study is very objective in the sense that the results are all based on the interpretation of the researcher. Subsequently, how I measured the frames is also a limit. To what extent does a theme belong to a certain frame and what is the indicator? Also, this study did not research all the newspaper articles that were published about the Tibetan Unrest and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. Important information for the analysis might have been left out. Another problem is that two very different time periods with a very different context were chosen for analysis. The year 2008 was a period of fighting, meanwhile 2021 can be seen as a calm period. There was a high chance that Tibet was framed negatively during the Tibetan Unrest, and unexpectedly Tibet was discussed rather positive in 2021. The negative sentiment that lasted in the previous years were not seen; it gave room for a positive representation of Tibet.

Further studies could focus on a different time period or periods. Studies could do a bigger research or a smaller analysis where you really focus on every word that is being written. Another research method can also be used for analysing the frames. I used a combination of two analyses to give myself more flexibility in the researching process, but how the results would have turned out without this flexibility is another kind of research. Furthermore, it would be an interesting research if the journalists of the texts were also examined. How do they influence the framing process and develop the frames? Is this done unconsciously or do they attribute specific frames intentionally. This kind of research could be done on all kinds of discourses and different contexts.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BBC. 2016. *Tibet Profile*. April 26. Accessed June 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16689779>.
- Cacciatore, Michael A., Dietram A. Scheufele, en Shanto Iyengar. 2016. „The End of Framing as we Know it ... and the Future of Media Effects.” *Mass communication & society* 7-23.
- Cho, Sookyung, en Ziyi Wang. 2021. „Towards media systems framework in Asia Chinese and Korean media on framing the initial COVID-19 pandemic.” *The international communication gazette* 474-496.
- Chong, Dennis, en James N. Druckman. 2007. „Framing Theory.” *Annual review of political science* 103-126.
- Clarke, Victoria, en Virginia Braun. 2017. „Thematic analysis.” *The journal of positive psychology* 297-298.
- Department of Information and International Relations. 2010. *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Report, Dharamsala, India: Un, EU & Human Rights Desk.
- Entman, Robert M. 1993. „Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.” *Journal of Communication* 51-58.
- Gamson, William A. 1989. „News as Framing.” *The American behavioral scientist (Beverly Hills)* 157-161.
- Giles, David, en Rachel L Shaw. 2009. „The Psychology of News Influence and the Development of Media Framing Analysis.” *Social and personality psychology compass* 375-393.
- Guo, Jing. 2008. „2008 TIBET RIOTS THROUGH A WESTERN LENS: A FRAME ANALYSIS OF NEWS COVERAGE OF 2008 TIBET RIOTS ON BBC AND CNN NETWORKS.” 1-82.
- Kehoe, Séagh. 2020. „Regimes of temporality: China, Tibet and the politics of time in the post-2008 era.” *Media, Culture & Society* 1133-1152.
- Lee, Andrew Wei-Min. 2009. „Tibet and the Media: Perspectives from Beijing.” *Marquette University Law School* 209-229.
- Luo, Austin Jun. 2015. „Media system in China: a Chinese perspective.” *International communication of Chinese culture* 49-67.
- Moy, Patricia, David Tewksbury, en Eike Mark Rinke. 2016. „Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing.” *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* 1-13.
- OriProbe. n.d. *People's Daily - Renmin Ribao (1946 - Present)*. Accessed June 22, 2022. <https://www.oriprobe.com/peoplesdaily.shtml>.
- Pediaa. 2016. *Difference Between Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis*. 20 August. Geopend June 24, 2022. <https://pediaa.com/difference-between-content-analysis-and-discourse-analysis/>.
- People's Daily Online. n.d. *Introduction to People's Daily*. Accessed June 22, 2022. <http://en.people.cn/other/about.shtml>.
- Public Health Colombia. 2021. *Content Analysis*. 7 June. Geopend June 24, 2022. <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/population-health-methods/content-analysis>.
- Sautman, Barry, en June Teufel Dreyer. 2006. In *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region*. M.E. Sharpe.
- Scheufele, Dietram A. 1999. „Framing as a theory of media effects .” *Journal of communication* 103-122.

- Schneider, Frank. 2013. "How to Do a Discourse Analysis." *Politics East Asia*. May 13. Accessed April 28, 2021. <http://www.politicseastasia.com/studying/how-to-do-a-discourse-analysis/>.
- Semetko, Holli A., en Patti M. Valkenburg. 2000. „Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news." *Journal of communication* 93-109.
- Shambaugh, David. 2007. „China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy." *The China journal* 25-58.
- Shou, Xiangyi. 2012. „Framing Tibet: A comparative study of Chinese and American newspapers, 2008-2011." 1-64.
- Smith, Warren W. 2010. In *Tibet's last stand?: the Tibetan uprising of 2008 and China's response* . Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Sparks, Colin. 2008. „Media systems in transition: Poland, Russia, China." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 7-24.
- Sperling, Elliot. 2009. „Tibet and China: The Interpretation of History Since 1950." *China Perspectives* 25-38.
- van Hulst, M.J, en Dvora Yanow. 2016. „From Policy "Frames" to "Framing": Theorizing a More Dynamic, Political Approach." *American review of public administration* 92-112.
- Vreese, Claes H. 2005. „News Framing: Theory and Typology." *Information design journal* 51-62.
- Xinhuanet. 2021. *Tibet an inseparable part of China since ancient times: white paper*. May 21. Accessed June 24, 2022. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c\\_139960289.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c_139960289.htm).