



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Diverging Tones or Complementing Narratives: Covid-19 and the Chinese English-language media channels

Vons, Helia

Citation

Vons, H. (2022). *Diverging Tones or Complementing Narratives: Covid-19 and the Chinese English-language media channels*.

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/1887/3731269>

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

Diverging Tones or Complementing Narratives:

Covid-19 and the Chinese English-language media channels

Helia Vons

Word count: 14.933

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Rogier Creemers

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SOFT POWER AND CHINA	7
SOFT POWER	7
CHINESE VIEWS ON AND PRACTICES OF SOFT POWER	10
MEDIA DISCOURSE AND CHINA	13
MEDIA DISCOURSE AND DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES	13
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS METHOD	16
DIFFERENT CHINESE MEDIA CHANNELS	18
COVID-19 AND CHINA	20
DATA COLLECTION OF THE FIRST TIME PERIOD FROM NEWSPAPERS	20
DATA COLLECTION OF THE FIRST TIME PERIOD FROM TWEETS	26
DATA COLLECTION OF THE SECOND TIME PERIOD FROM NEWSPAPERS	31
DATA COLLECTION OF THE SECOND TIME PERIOD FROM TWEETS	38
ANALYSIS	42
CONCLUSION	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48
APPENDIX	50

Introduction

The use and creation of soft power have increased with the emergence of news media and the internet. According to Joseph S. Nye, through the use of soft power, nations are able to co-opt rather than coerce other nations to get the outcome they want. Nye made this concept popular in 1990. Since 1990, the concept has been used by many governments and in many academic works of literature. China has a different view compared to most academics in the Western academic field. The Chinese government has a more different stance in believing that soft power can be generated and created, similar to hard power being created with the use of greater military force and economic power. Another example of this different stance is China views economic resources as part of soft power, which is a direct contrast to Nye's view, who points out that economic resources are part of hard power. Nye, on the other hand, points out that soft power relies on three attractive aspects that a country possesses: culture, political values, and foreign policies (Nye 2011, 84). Soft power, in Nye's view, is a by-product of other things, not something you can "create" in and of itself. Soft power has become increasingly important in the use of the Internet. In the past year and a half, in particular, the world has been crucially dependent on the Internet, and soft power increased its presence on the Internet, due to an unexpected event, Covid-19.

During the beginning of the spread of Covid-19, the international community was highly dependent on news reports by Chinese media. On 31 December 2019, the first news articles surfaced about pneumonia cases in China. It was proven that these cases belonged to a newly discovered virus that was spreading through Wuhan, a major city in Hubei province. The disease was classified as Covid-19, a form of the SARS-virus that was previously found in China in 2002 - 2004. On 13 January 2020, two weeks after the first reports of the virus, the first case outside of China was confirmed. From this point onwards, the global audience nervously followed developments concerning the newly discovered virus and China's attempts to contain the virus. Notwithstanding, placing cities in lockdown and obligating citizens to wear face masks, the virus still spread. On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared Covid-19 to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). During this time, readers around the world, who were following the developments concerning this new disease, were highly dependent on the few Chinese media channels that reported in English and Twitter accounts of Chinese diplomats for daily updates on the situation. This

dependency was created by travel restrictions on foreign journalists in China and Wuhan because of the strict lockdowns to stop the spread of Covid-19. As the obstruction by Chinese police on a live broadcast of Sjoerd den Daas for the Dutch news channel, NOS showed, foreign journalists were actively censored in their reporting (NOS 2020). The reporters were not allowed to film inside hospitals and civilian journalists that had been actively reporting about the situation in Wuhan were censored and started to disappear (Griffiths and Gan 2020).

With the high dependency on Chinese news media due to the censorship of foreign journalists, the credibility of these media channels was in jeopardy. There were just a few sources, and only Chinese, that had access to the situation in Wuhan and that made the published news articles hard to verify for accurate information. Moreover, with the higher number of readers due to the exceptional situation, these news media had accumulated a monopoly on the global provision of information regarding the developments of the pandemic in China. As a result, many foreign news media questioned whether or not these media published the whole 'truth' because of the strict control of the Chinese government on the Chinese news outlets. During Covid-19 and the reporting of Chinese news media about the developments surrounding the epidemic and pandemic, Chinese media were a useful political tool in conducting public diplomacy and creating a better narrative online for China about the situation in Wuhan. The English-language media were used for the political act of 'creating' soft power. With many foreign readers following the disease spreading through China, the Chinese government was figuring out the best strategy for public diplomacy. In the beginning, CNN noticed a more relaxed and less censored stance from the Chinese government on civilian journalists in Wuhan and other forms of news reporting about the situation in Wuhan. However, on 3 February 2020, the Chinese government implemented a different strategy for public diplomacy concerning the spread of Covid-19. Xi Jinping emphasized in a meeting with top officials the importance of 'public opinion guidance' and the usage of propaganda to "tell the story of China's fight against the epidemic and show the Chinese people's spirit of unity and togetherness" (Griffiths and Gan 2020, and Xinhua net 2020). After a year of Covid-19 and the re-emergence of interest for China following the WHO investigation into the origin of the virus in Wuhan, Chinese media are still writing about the pandemic while the Chinese government is still trying to figure out the best public diplomacy

and foreign policy strategies to use in reporting about Covid-19. This leads to the research question: to what extent is China's attempt at soft power creation by its media coverage for foreign readers different at the beginning of Covid-19 compared to during the World Health Organization (WHO) investigation of the origin of Covid-19 in Wuhan?

To answer this research question, English news articles published by the Chinese media and tweets in English of Chinese diplomats are used. The English news articles published by the Chinese media provide an insight into how the reporting of these media is shaped by the Chinese government's view on soft power 'creation'. In addition, these articles also show what tactics the Chinese government are using in their public relations management. The tweets of Chinese diplomats are compared to the news articles and are used to research whether or not these media channels use the same tactics in dealing with the reporting of the origin of Covid-19. In addition, two different time periods are chosen to support the research on the development of the public diplomacy strategies directed by the Chinese government in one year. On 13 January 2020, Sixth Tone reports the first Covid-19 death in China. After this, the virus rapidly spreads through Wuhan and China. This date marks the beginning of the active online reporting by Chinese news outlets on Covid-19. For this reason, 13 January 2020 is chosen as the beginning of the first period used in this thesis. The following two weeks until 27 January 2020 are studied and news articles published by Sixth Tone and China Daily are analysed. Within this time period, tweets of Chinese ambassadors are also analysed. The second time period is from 1 February to 15 February 2021. This time period is chosen because the World Health Organization (WHO) started to investigate the origin of Covid-19 in Wuhan. A press conference concerning the findings of the ongoing investigation was given on 9 February 2021. This press conference returned global attention to Wuhan and the origin of Covid-19. With this returning attention, the time period is useful for a comparative analysis of China's public diplomacy and soft power 'creation' and may show differences or similarities between the public diplomacy strategies within the two timeframes.

The limitation that must be considered during the discourse analysis is that discourse analysis is a type of content analysis (Schneider 2013). This tool is not be used to study the impact of media on the media users, but it is used to discover how the media is used to deliver

news, and what type of techniques and tactics are used by the publishers and authors of the sources. In this case, the discourse analysis does not show how effective the soft power 'creation' of China is but shows how the source and argument fit into the wider perspective based on the social and historical context.

The thesis starts by placing the foremost important concept of this research, soft power, in the academic debate. Firstly, soft power is critically discussed and the literature of the concept is discussed. This part addresses the questions of what is soft power, how do you keep, generate and lose soft power and to what extent can you be in control over soft power? Secondly, soft power is discussed in relation to media and China. This part discusses the questions of what is the Chinese government's view on soft power, to what extent is China 'using' or 'generating' soft power and how is the media used for soft power? The second chapter discusses the method of discourse analysis that is used in this thesis. Subsequently, the different Chinese media channels and their relation to the Chinese government are discussed. The discussed questions are: what is the media landscape of China, what is media discourse and what techniques are used by news media to cover news events? Next, from the different media channels and different time periods mentioned earlier, data from 73 news articles and 161 tweets are collected and the collection process with Excel is explained. The analysis shows a comparison of the collected data. The discovered differences are highlighted and the research question is answered.

Soft power and China

Soft power

To research the development of China's soft power 'creation' during Covid-19, the most common definition of public diplomacy, soft power, and power in general, by Joseph S. Nye, and the concept of soft power in relation to public diplomacy needs to be understood. Public diplomacy is similar to nation branding. Nation branding is the portrayal of a country's image and how it is perceived by its target audiences. Public diplomacy is related to the engagement with foreign cultures "not only through image-related messages but also through cultural relations, policy communications, and relationship management" (Sevin and Ingenhoff 2018, 3665). With public diplomacy, a country tries to change or maintain the way the international audience perceives that country. These audiences create their perceptions of a country based on several of the country's aspects: through the communication campaigns of its government on various media platforms, through its international relations, and its historical, cultural, and natural landscape. Public diplomacy is used by the government to communicate and attract audiences with these aspects that contribute to a country's soft power (Nye Jr. 2008, 95). The messages by state or non-state actors can therefore influence the perception that a person has of a country (Sevin and Ingenhoff 2018, 3665). However, if a country does not possess attractive cultural values or other attractive aspects, public diplomacy may produce the opposite and not produce the soft power of attraction; "even the best advertising cannot sell an unpopular product" (Nye Jr. 2008, 102).

As the pandemic has shown, the person or country with all the information has the power over other countries or persons. This has become more relevant with modern information technology (Nye 2009, 1). The definition that is given by Joseph S. Nye on power is the following; "power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcome one wants" which means making other people do things that they would not have done in the first place, either through brute force, manipulating interests, or convincing them (Nye 2009, 2). There are three ways of obtaining such power: military threats, economic sanctions, and attractive power. The first two are examples of hard power. With hard power, an entity tries to influence the behaviour of others by using military threats, an example is provided in figure 1. The thought behind hard power is that countries with a relatively strong military

force are more likely to influence countries with a smaller and less strong military. This method is used primarily by authoritarian countries in their domestic politics, while democratic countries prefer to rely on a combination of hard power and soft power (Nye 2009, 6). Soft power is the ability to get others to want the outcome that you want, it co-opts rather than coerces (Nye 2009, 5). Soft power in international politics rests on three factors according to Nye: the attractive cultural elements, the policies and internal practices, and how the country deals with its relations with other countries (Nye 2009, 8). Cultural elements of a country can be presented in such a way that it becomes attractive to others. The political values of a country can reinforce or dampen its soft power because its domestic policies can be seen as arrogant or hypocritical. The third aspect, a country's way of dealing with interrelations, how foreign policies are perceived, is an important factor in the soft power of a country. Joseph S. Nye also points out some limitations to soft power. Soft power can be seen in countries imitating each other, this imitation is not always useful for every country, as demonstrated by the military. When a country imitates the military tactics of another country, this will make the military actions of their opponents less effective.

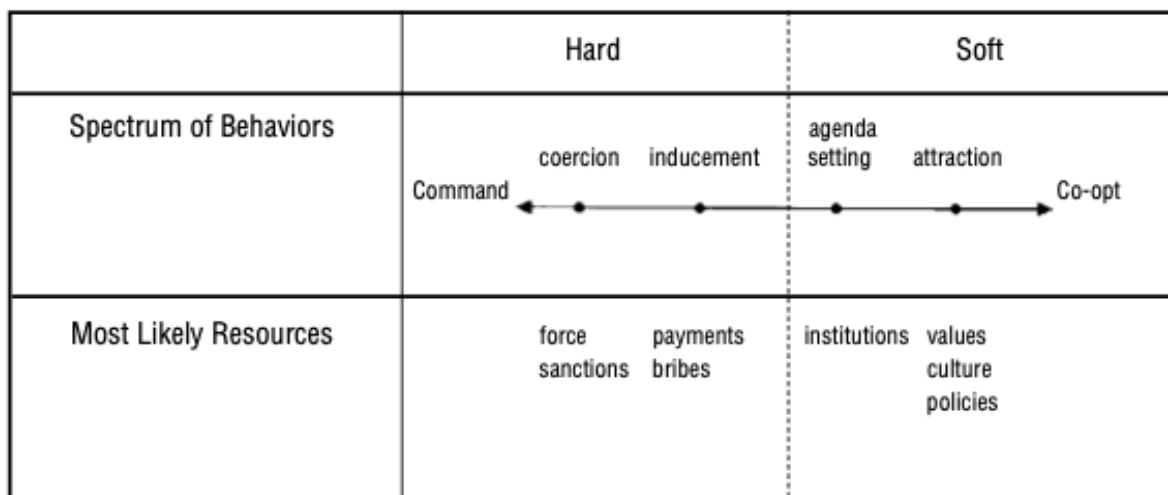


Figure 1 Hard and Soft Power and its Resources

The concept and definition of soft power defined by Joseph S. Nye have been debated widely in the academic world. Giulio M. Gallarotti argues that Nye's definition of soft power needs to be more elaborate and he argues that the definition of soft power has not evolved as much as it should in the contemporary world of politics. He claims that the changes in international politics have not been met by equal changes in the theory of soft and hard

power (Gallarotti 2011, 25). In addition, Gallarotti also emphasizes that the notions of soft and hard power are created through a realist approach and since the emergence of other lines of thought, such as neoliberalism, the framework of soft and hard power are challenged (Gallarotti 2011, 37). Challenges to Nye's vision of power are the acceleration of globalization, a rise in democratic powers in the world system, the change of societies moving away from 'warrior ethic' and becoming more economic sensitive, the rise of international organizations contributing to a state of interdependence among countries, and lastly, the costs of using nuclear weapons (Gallarotti 2011, 38 – 39). Finally, Gary D. Rawnsley emphasizes that soft power is "something that an actor possesses and exercises naturally, and in fact may not be something that can be deliberated and decided by cabinets and kings" (Rawnsley 2016, 24).

Chinese views on and practices of soft power

To research China's use of soft power 'creation' during Covid-19, China's view on soft power needs to be understood. Chinese academic reports and official documents show that China has a different view on soft power. Chinese academics, like Su Changhe, have incorporated the concept more elaborately into today's world politics. He argues that soft power has been more actively used in contemporary international relations and identifies three reasons why this change has taken place (Su 2013, 4). These reasons are the rise of countries that possess nuclear weapons, the rise in popularity of higher education, and the rise in power of information and knowledge (Su 2013, 4 – 5). Within the last reason, Su points out that television and the internet are the most important sources used by countries to exercise soft power (Su 2013, 5). Gong Tieying identifies not one dimension of soft power but three: institutional power, identifying power and assimilating power. Institutional power is the state's ability to create new international institutions or arrangements. Identifying power is the state's ability to influence other states through the recognition of the state's leadership, and assimilating power is the attractive cultural values, ideology and social system of the state (Li 2009, 27). In contrast, Yan Xuetong believes that soft power exclusively lies within the political realm, rather than cultural (Li 2009, 27). This is found in political institutions, norms and credibility. Zu Feng argues instead that the receiver of soft power is more important than the source of soft power. Soft power depends on the acceptance of the international community which is based on a nation's policies, interests and strategic choices (Li 2009, 27). On Nye's identification of the three elements of soft power, Men Honghua claims that soft power consists of five key elements: culture, values, development model, international institutions, and international image (Li 2009, 28).

The Chinese government sees soft power not only as a way to shape the preference of others, but it also includes "non-state organizations and individuals as practitioners and widens the scope of 'soft power' to encompass the nation's traditional culture, long history, education, economic development, technological and multi-industrial cooperation, and creation of 'international friends circle'" (Huang and Wang 2020, 120). They see soft power as a multifaceted tool, by which they are able to influence the governments of states and also

the international public. With this tool, the Chinese government wants to establish a positive and favourable Chinese national image abroad.

Another difference in the way soft power is perceived lies in the economic dimension. The Chinese consider the economic dimension to be a part of soft power, which is in direct contrast to the Western academics, who view it as an aspect of hard power. The Chinese view of soft power contains all attributes outside of the realm of military and security, including economic coercion such as aid and investment (Rawnsley 2016, 20). Li supports this view by showing that Chinese scholars argue that soft power and hard power complement each other and are more inseparable than is discussed by Nye (Li 2009, 27). Chinese scholars believe that soft power can support the growth of hard power and hard power can demonstrate the growth of soft power. For this reason, Li has argued that the Chinese use of soft power can better be described as the “soft use of power” (Li 2009, 22).

China’s practice of the ‘creation’ of soft power is reflected in its diplomacies on culture and multilateral relations, and its overseas assistance programs (Li 2009, 27). Several strategies and foreign policies have been implemented to support the increase of China’s soft power ‘creation’. Examples of such policies and strategies are ‘Going out, going global’, ‘Telling China Stories Well’, ‘Panda Engagement’, ‘China Model’, ‘Wolf-warrior’, and the good-neighbourly policy. These strategies are more elaborately discussed in the next part.

The importance for China to control their image and use soft power was described by Hu Jintao as having two main purposes. One purpose was to strengthen national cohesion. Another purpose was to “strengthen China’s competitiveness in the competition for comprehensive national power in the international arena” (Li 2009, 28). China felt the urgency to rebuild the image of its culture and develop new values to maintain national cohesion. In addition, China believed that its soft power was lacking compared to that of the US. The Chinese government and Chinese scholars pointed out that China failed to establish a link between their increasing national power and hard power with their constructive international influence and soft power. Some of them even believed that the gap between China and other developed countries, such as the US, was due to their weak soft power and not because of their military force or gross domestic product (Li 2009, 28). Another important reason for

China to be more focused on soft power is that with the rise of China's national power, China wants to avoid creating tension with other countries due to their growing military power. The goal of China's soft power is in this respect described "to shape international perceptions so that the world is more welcoming and less fearful of China" (Edney, Rosen, and Zhu 2020, 1). In response to softening China's image abroad, the Chinese media launched the strategy 'Going out, going global' in 2001, as a response to Western media becoming increasingly popular in China (Edney, Rosen, and Zhu 2020, 2).

As stated above, China's definition of soft power has moved past the established lines of Joseph S. Nye concerning the three defined aspects: attractive cultural elements, policies and internal practices, and international relations. As Li pointed out, China is aware of its lack of attractive politics and policies for foreign people (Li 2009, 22). As a consequence, China has shifted its focus to attractive cultural and historical values, rather than policies and internal practices (Rawnsley 2016, 20). Chinese scholars and government officials tend to focus on anything that would help boost China's national image, such as traditional Chinese medicine, China's economic success, and educational exchange programs (Li 2009, 28). Yu Keping, a renowned political analyst from China has argued that soft power also includes: "education, the psychological and physical condition of the people, technological advancement, superiority of national culture, human resources and strategy, social cohesion and unity, and the sustainability of socio-economic development" (Li 2009, 28). Edney, Rosen, and Zhu underline that China's focus is not solely focussed on increasing their soft power to get others to do what they want, but hard power has also taken an essential seat within China's power realm (Edney, Rosen, and Zhu 2020, 7).

To conclude, China's view on soft power not only includes attractive cultural elements, policies, internal practices, and international relations, it also includes aspects of hard power, such as economic incentives. China also believes that soft power can be created, instead of it being something a country possesses or not. This different take on soft power contributes to understanding the different strategies of soft power 'creation' and why this 'creation' has become an important instrument in China's public diplomacy during Covid-19.

Media discourse and China

Media discourse and different techniques

Media plays an important role in the image creation of society and understanding of society. With this important role and power, helping media users create an understanding of contemporary affairs and how the world works (Talbot 2007, 3), the discourse of such media needs to be understood. Discourse is how we think and communicate about all aspects of society and media discourse “refers to interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer” (O’Keeffe 2011, 441). Media channels are never fully objective and are connected to a specific culture to which most journalists are sensitive, resulting in them reflecting the norms and values within that culture. Media channels cannot be fully disconnected from all forms of discourse and narratives present within their society. Within democratic societies these influences create dialogues showing the views of different journalists and, thus, a diversity of voices and opinions, letting the reader decide which narrative or discourse to accept.

There are several techniques used by media channels to establish a bigger following and readers. Within the age of social media and news media becoming more active online. The technique of ‘Interactive Communication’ has become increasingly more popular. ‘Interactive Communication’ is a technique where accounts on Twitter or websites of news media actively respond to followers’ questions and comments, use various hashtags, and allow followers to post comments and send private messages (Zhao and Rui 2019, 2988). By increasing the interaction with the audience, they become an active part of the news writing process. In addition, this technique helps to build and maintain a diverse network for Twitter users. Interaction is also part of the media discourse process, with retweets, hashtags and replies, which helps to distribute the discourse into its network, and the followers then help co-create a discourse network with senders and receivers.

The second technique is ‘Timid Polyphony’. Concerning China, this is described as “the proactive attempt by Chinese public institutions to include various voices and opinions in news writing and storytelling” (Zhao and Rui 2019, 2985). The goal of this technique is to write

about specific events using multiple different opinions without violating the government's censorship rules. Timid polyphony is used by Chinese Twitter users to create political harmony and represent China favourably. With the use of Twitter's retweets, replies, and mentions, the content can be grown into a vast network with the help of polyphony and the previously mentioned technique; interactive communication.

The third technique is called 'Tell China Stories Well' (Zhao and Rui 2019, 2984). This strategy was first mentioned by Xi Jinping in 2003 and entails the necessity for China to create new concepts, categories, and expressions that would not only be accepted by China but also by other countries. This strategy is in active use by the Chinese government as 'external propaganda' (Zhao and Rui 2019, 2986).

The fourth technique is 'Panda Engagement'. This is used by Chinese media to try and soften China's image. This strategy is a combination of traditional panda diplomacy, which entails sending giant pandas from China to other countries; Twitter; and strategically positioned news and information in posts. By using a panda, with sweet and friendly characteristics, in Tweets, China tries to promote a peaceful and friendly image. This strategy uses the panda as a sign that is connected to friendship and a peaceful character to try to pass these characteristics onto the image of China. Other symbols of Chinese culture are also used by Chinese media to create a grand narrative, they try to appeal to universal values through aspects of China's culture or history (Zhao and Rui 2020, 122).

The fifth technique is 'Going Out, Going Global'. This strategy is not only focused on economic expansion but is also "the beginning of a public diplomacy initiative via state-owned Chinese media outlets" (Zhao and Rui 2020, 118). According to Zhao and Rui, China has launched this strategy to grow a global media presence to generate its soft power around the globe (Zhao and Rui 2020, 118).

The sixth technique is 'constructive journalism'. This is "a solution-based journalistic practice that brings positive content into conventional news writing" (Zhao and Rui 2020, 122). This technique uses "positive psychology" (Zhao and Rui 2020, 122) while still trying to

maintain accurate conventional reporting. By using this 'positive psychology' these media are trying to evoke positive emotions from the audience through an engaging narrative.

Discourse analysis method

The method that is used for the research conducted in this thesis is discourse analysis. This method is chosen because it is relevant for the research on news articles and tweets (Schneider 2013). A simplified version of the whole method is presented in figure 2.

The first step in the process of discourse analysis is the creation of social context of the source that is going to be used. This step is used to avoid certain perspectives and prejudices. The use of a social context also helps with fitting the source into a bigger picture and to see if the source was published during a bigger event or debate, which in this case is the pandemic of Covid-19 (Schneider 2013).

The second step is the production process. Within this research, the exploration of the production is key. Therefore, additional information on the production process is

acquired to understand the political context in which the production process took place (Schneider 2013).

The third step of discourse analysis is the preparation of material. The material is prepared by collecting all the news articles and tweets to avoid the chance of the data being deleted or adapted by the authors. To work systematically, Excel is used and these documents can be found in the appendix.

The fourth step in the discourse analysis is the coding of the material. This entails that categories are formed to assign to sentences or words before the process of coding is started.

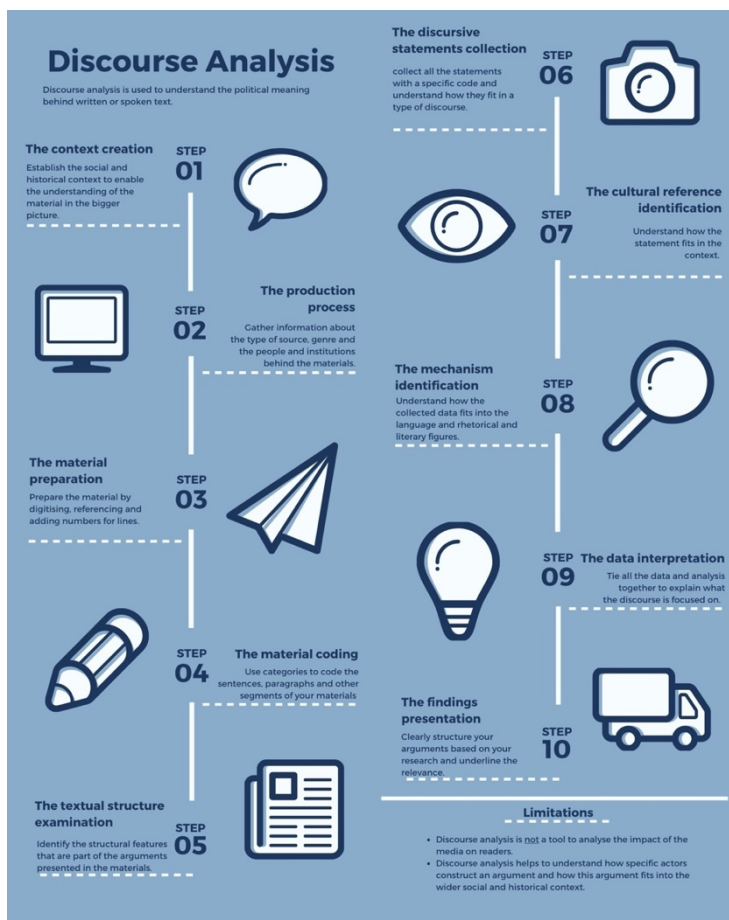


Figure 2 Simplified table of Florian Schneider's Discourse analysis method

During the process of coding the material, new categories are formed and after the process, categories that did not seem as relevant are removed from the list of categories. This type of coding is called evolutionary coding (Schneider 2013). To find categories that are relevant for the coding, sources on the topics of Covid-19 and various tactics used by the media are assessed.

The fifth step is the identification of cultural references. In this step, the first step is brought back to attention, because the social context is instrumental in how these cultural references are formed, and consequently, presented in the sources. The intertextuality of the argument is examined by searching within the texts for references to other sources, implications of knowledge on other subject matters, and how the text views other sources (Schneider 2013).

The sixth and seventh steps are data interpretation and presentation of the findings. These parts are discussed in the analysis, the conclusion and the appendix of this thesis. The data of the primary sources, the political and social context from the first step and the theory and literature from the secondary sources are combined, analysed and presented (Schneider 2013).

Different Chinese media channels

For this research, two newspapers have been chosen to be studied as case studies. As previously mentioned in the steps of the discourse analysis, it is important to create context and have background information on the production process of the sources. This part is going to discuss the background information of the two newspapers. The first newspaper is China Daily. China Daily is described as a newspaper that was “established in 1981 as the national English-language newspaper, has developed into a multi-media information platform combining newspapers, websites and apps with a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter, Sina Weibo and WeChat” (China Daily, n.d.). China Daily defines its role as follows: “the group plays an important role as a channel for information exchanges between China and the rest of the world” (China Daily, n.d.). The China Daily has the widest circulation of all Chinese English-language newspapers. The newspaper is owned by the Chinese Communist Party State Council Information Office and was founded on 1 June 1981.

The second newspaper that has been chosen is the self-claimed ‘fresh voice’ of China; Sixth Tone. The description of this newspaper reads: “When it comes to coverage of China, Sixth Tone believes there is room for other voices that go beyond buzzwords and headlines to tell the uncommon stories of common people” (Sixth Tone, n.d.). They claim to use fresh perspectives on trending topics, covering topics from the most closely involved perspective to “highlight the nuances and complexities of today’s China” (Sixth Tone, n.d.). This newspaper is also owned by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but through a state-media company called the Shanghai United Media Group, and was founded in 2016 as an online magazine.

These two different newspapers together provide both sides for foreign readers, readers that are interested in daily updates about China and readers that are interested in more in-depth and authentic articles about China. In addition, these newspapers are internationally the most popular English-language newspapers from China. The notable aspect is that even though Sixth Tone seems to be more progressive, both newspapers are controlled by the CCP.

After the implementation of the 'Going out, going global' strategy in 2001, the Chinese government invested in expanding its global media presence (Zhao and Rui 2020, 118). In 2019, along with this strategy, multiple diplomats started to go online and create accounts on Twitter. Twitter is blocked within China, therefore the only goal for Chinese diplomats and other Chinese governmental institutes to be on Twitter is to generate the attention of foreign readers (Wang 2016, 25). With these Twitter accounts, the Chinese government hopes to develop its public diplomacy network and post stories about China for an international audience (Zhao and Rui 2019, 2984). The Twitter accounts that have been chosen for this study are: the Chinese ambassador to the Netherlands Xu Hong and the Chinese embassy in the Netherlands; the Chinese ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai; the Chinese consulate to Chicago; the consul general in Los Angeles Zhang Ping; and the Chinese consulate general in San Francisco; the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom (UK) Liu Xiaoming and the Chinese embassy to the UK; the Chinese mission to the United Nations (UN); and lastly, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. These accounts have been chosen, additionally to being China's official government accounts, because they publish in English and are relatively active within the chosen time period.

Covid-19 and China

Data collection of the first time period from newspapers

Within the first time period, Sixth Tone and China Daily are analysed as part of the Chinese newspapers. Within this time period, thirteen articles of Sixth Tone, published between 13 January and 25 January, and 24 articles of China Daily, published between 20 January and 27 January, were studied. China Daily did not publish any articles regarding Covid-19 before 20 January, while Sixth Tone already published articles regarding Covid-19 on 13 January. This might indicate that some articles regarding Covid-19 from China Daily before 20 January have been deleted from the website.

The categories that have been used to analyse the articles are the following: *Covid-19*, *Help to other countries*, *Vaccines and masks*, *Research and experts*, *Work together in fighting Covid-19*, *Health institutions*, *Situation in other countries*, *Developing country status*, *Vaccines as a global public good*, *International praise for China's approach to Covid-19*, *Origin of Covid-19*, and *Positive view*. These categories have been chosen after reading multiple different news articles reporting about Covid-19. During the data collection, some categories have been discarded or replaced by other more suited categories. Other categories have been updated to better fit the research.

Within the China Daily articles, out of the twelve categories, *Covid-19* is the most mentioned and used category with 138 times. An example of a sentence from a China Daily article is: "I believe the outbreak will not have the impact on society and the economy that SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) did 17 years ago" (Wang 2020). An example of a sentence from Sixth Tone is: "As to why there have not been confirmed reports of coronavirus infections in other mainland cities besides Wuhan, Professor Wang says this is likely because tests for the virus aren't yet widely available" (Ni 2020). These 138 times are divided over all the articles, which is to be expected since the articles were chosen based on their topic, Covid-19. In contrast to the articles of China Daily, *Covid-19* and synonyms such as *the virus*, *the pandemic*, and *the Coronavirus*, were mentioned 110 times in articles published by Sixth Tone. China Daily publishes shorter articles than Sixth Tone. Thus, even though China Daily has more mentions of the category, on average Sixth Tone used this category more per article.

The second-biggest category is *Origin of Covid-19*. Concepts and phrases that were tracked in this category were *Wuhan, place of origin, the epicentre of the outbreaks, the source of the virus, the origin of the virus, and first reported in*. An example of this use of synonyms for Wuhan in China Daily is: “Wuhan in Central China’s Hubei province, where the first case of novel coronavirus infection was identified, has set up a prevention and control center” (Zhou and Zou 2020). An example in an article of Sixth Tone is: “A total of 41 people in Wuhan have reportedly been infected with the novel coronavirus ... that is believed to have originated in the city’s South China Seafood Wholesale market” (Zhang 2020). Within the China Daily articles, this category was found 94 times in 21 articles with an average for all the 24 articles of 3,9 times per article. For Sixth Tone, this category is the biggest of all the categories with 122 times in all the articles. The noteworthy aspect is that for Sixth Tone this category about *the origin of Covid-19* bigger is than the main category of *Covid-19*. This shows that Sixth Tone chose to put more focus on the fact that Covid-19 had originated in Wuhan, and covered more news stories about Wuhan than on Covid-19.

The third biggest category is *Health institutions* with 68 mentions divided over sixteen articles for China Daily and 82 mentions spread out over eleven articles for Sixth Tone. The mentions of *Health institutions* include *health authorities, health commission, health officials, World Health Organization (WHO), and hospital*. With Sixth Tone articles, *Health institutions* are not mentioned in the last two articles, while before these two, *Health institutions* are mentioned in every article indicating a shift of the attention for foreign readers towards other aspects within the topic of Covid-19. This category is also mainly used to showcase the effective work of China’s health institutions because the majority of the mentions are of Chinese health institutions. An example of this is: “He was confirmed as contracting the disease by the National Health Commission, China’s top health authority, on Sunday and is now in stable condition” (Wang 2020). The strategies ‘Panda Engagement’ and ‘Constructive Journalism’ are mostly used within this category. The use of these strategies is seen in this example from a Sixth Tone article, here the situation within a hospital is described to call for a more emotional response from the reader: “The hospital has staff on duty 24 hours a day, and each patient is allotted their own room, with couples receiving double rooms” (Yuan 2020). Another example of this is this sentence from another article of Sixth Tone: “A

recitation paying tribute to medical staff battling a deadly novel coronavirus outbreak became the most talked-about performance” (Fan 2020). The article continues by describing the performance as “a moving tribute to the frontline medical workers working to stop the spread of the coronavirus” (Fan 2020).

The fourth biggest category is *Situation in other countries* which is mentioned 46 times in only six articles in China Daily, while this category is mentioned 26 times in six articles of Sixth Tone. On 25 January 2020, China Daily wrote: “Overseas, Thailand has confirmed four cases, and Singapore has confirmed three. Japan, South Korea, the United States and Vietnam have each reported two, while Nepal has confirmed one, according to the commission” (Wang 2020). This article was written on 25 January 2020, while Sixth Tone published an article on 17 January 2020 more elaborately discussing the same cases of Nepal and Japan: “The 31-year-old Nepali national had flown in from Wuhan and was hospitalized for respiratory problems on Jan. 13” (Zhang 2020). The first difference that these two examples show is that Sixth Tone was quicker to shift their focus towards the situation in other countries than China Daily. However, in the second half of the time period, this category is only found six times. This suggests that Sixth Tone eventually becomes more inwardly focused than China Daily. China Daily prefers their foreign readers to shift their attention to the situation in other countries to showcase that China is not the only country having a hard time dealing with Covid-19. This approach might also appeal to foreign readers that have an interest in international topics in general and not only in China. These two aspects of this category cater to the strategies of ‘Going Out, Going Global’, by attempting to attract a more international audience, and ‘Constructive Journalism’, by adding a subtle and indirect positive tone to the conventional news-writing. The second difference is that even though Sixth Tone was quicker to publish about the new cases in Nepal and Japan, the article still explicitly mentioned that these cases were caused by someone who had visited Wuhan, while China Daily only mentions that there were new cases in these countries.

The fifth category for China Daily is *Work together in fighting Covid-19*, this category is found 30 times in articles of China Daily and 26 times in Sixth Tone articles. Both these newspapers published an article with this category mentioned more than 10 times around the same time, 24 and 25 January 2020, and about the same topic. At this time, Wuhan

decided to go in lockdown while the Chinese new year was approaching. This category may have been used to show that the Chinese people are worried about the citizens in Wuhan and encourage them to keep their spirits up. Other reasons for using this category so many times could be to justify the decision to go into lockdown, to encourage people to work together to end the spread of Covid-19, or to show foreign readers that even during national holidays the Chinese population is working hard to stop the virus. The use of this category also helped to show that the country was not falling apart when a decision, like introducing a lockdown the day before a national holiday, had been made. This is shown in the following sentences of a China Daily article: “Hoteliers in Wuhan city, the center of an outbreak of the novel coronavirus, have voluntarily provided free rooms for medical staff that need to rest in the battle to control the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak” and “Xiao (a four-star hotel owner in Wuhan) appealed to his peers from more than 40 hotels to offer rooms for doctors and nurses who are working day and night to save lives” (Chen 2020). In an article of Sixth Tone, a person is asked what he thinks of Wuhan being put in lockdown: “Of course it’s disappointing that we can’t go home,” Lin said. “But distance is not a problem as long as our hearts are together” (Fan 2020). Thus, it might be more likely that this category is used during Covid-19 when a national holiday or specific event is coming up. ‘Constructive Journalism’ is an important part of this category as this is used to subtly add positive news concerning the ‘strong’ national cohesion of China to the news-writing.

The sixth category is *Research and experts* with 28 hits in articles of China Daily and 42 times in articles of Sixth Tone. The notable difference between Sixth Tone and China Daily in this category is that when China Daily addresses a paraphrase or fact provided by an expert, the term *health expert* or *disease expert* is more likely to be used, while Sixth Tone prefers to use the specific title of the expert. For example, Sixth Tone writes the following: “Lü Zhi, a professor of conservation biology at Peking University” (Sixth Tone 25 January 2020) and China Daily writes: “Zhong Nanshan, head of a high-level expert team” (China Daily 21 January 2020). The latter is less specific, vague, and more focused on using fancy wording than the former. This difference highlights the more extensive use of the technique ‘Timid Polyphony’ by Sixth Tone. By using the specific titles and names of the experts, Sixth Tone increases the number of voices used to portray a favourable image of China’s approach to Covid-19.

The seventh category for China Daily is *Vaccines and masks* which was used 25 times, while Sixth Tone used this category 33 times. The data shows that Sixth Tone starts to focus on masks relatively late in comparison to China Daily. The first time masks were mentioned in a China Daily article was concerning the fact that masks were no longer available in stores due to shortages and over-demand: “Chinese customers are snapping up face masks to protect against pneumonia caused by a new coronavirus as the outbreak is spreading across the country” (Wang 2020). By using this category, the newspapers demonstrate to foreign readers that the Chinese population is dedicated to stopping the virus. In this instance, the use of the category *Masks* in that article can be seen as an attempt at ‘Panda Engagement’ by using the entity of masks as a broader sign for the Chinese population’s dedication to stopping the spread of Covid-19.

The eighth category is *International praise for China’s approach to Covid-19* and this category is mentioned four times in one article of China Daily and three times in one article of Sixth Tone. The reason for this low number could be caused by the fact that Covid-19 was still in an early stage and therefore China mostly did not receive praise. Both the articles about international praise show that the praise is coming from the WHO towards China. An example of a phrase from the China Daily article is: “ ‘What they are doing is a very, very strong measure and with full commitment. So based on the situation they are taking the action they deem is appropriate, is very important,’ WHO Director-General Tedros Ahanom Ghebreyesus said.” (China Daily 23 January 2020). This is a clear example of the strategy ‘Timid Polyphony’ because it is highlighted that the quotation is made by the WHO Director-General. The use of a quote from a foreigner and not a Chinese person helps to build the credibility of the quote, the newspaper, and China.

The last categories are discussed together because all four are mentioned zero times in Sixth Tone and one category is mentioned only once in an article of China Daily. The three categories that are mentioned zero times in both newspapers are *Positive view*, *Developing country status* and *Vaccines as a global public good*. For the last category, in particular, it was to be expected to have zero mentions because vaccines did not play an important role in this early phase of the corona crisis. The category that is mentioned one time in an article of China Daily is *Help to other countries*. The quotation that was found for this category is: “Zeng said

China has shared information about the virus with the World Health Organization since the outset, which has also helped other countries in identifying the virus” (China Daily 21 January 2020). This quotation is an example of the strategy of ‘Constructive Journalism’.

Data collection of the first time period from tweets

The data collection of the tweets are significantly different when compared to the data collection of the news articles. In general, tweets are substantially shorter with a smaller word count. As a consequence, it is most logical that within this data collection the overall number of mentions per category is at a lower level. In total, 99 tweets have been analysed with the first time period existing of 37 tweets, and the second time period of 62 tweets. The most striking part is that some tweets of the first time period from Twitter accounts, such as the account of the Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had been deleted. These tweets can still be found through retweets of other accounts but they are no longer visible on the page of the main account.

The most common category within the data collection of the tweets in the first time period is *Covid-19*. This category has been found 61 times in all of the 37 tweets. The most noteworthy aspect of these 37 tweets is that many of the accounts used retweets and, in particular, they retweeted articles and tweets by the following accounts: the World Health Organization (WHO); Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a WHO-researcher situated in China; and of Chinese English-language news-media such as China Global Television Network (CGTN), China Daily, Xinhua News, People's Daily, and China News. This use of retweets is found in two of the six strategies: 'Interactive Communication' and 'Timid Polyphony'. With the retweets of other tweets, the accounts are building their network and establishing a more active Twitter account, which is in coherence with the strategy of 'Interactive Communication'. The strategy of 'Timid Polyphony' is visible in the action of retweeting other accounts to enhance a discourse network supported by 'multiple voices'. Even though these 'multiple voices' are all directly or indirectly affiliated with the Chinese government or China, the discourse network is built through the use of hashtags and retweets between these accounts. An example of this is that Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the US, and the account of the Chinese mission to the UN, both retweeted the same tweet about a report published by the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) about the Coronavirus battle in China. This mechanism contributes to a bigger outreach and supports the notion of showing different voices supporting the same arguments.

The second category is *Work together in fighting Covid-19*. This category has been used 46 times. Examples of words or phrases used within the tweets are visible in a tweet by Chinese Ambassador Cui Tiankai to the US, who said: “We live in a shared community where all of us are interlinked and interdependent. We must join hands to cope with the difficulties” (Cui 2 February 2020). Another tweet by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reads: “We need solidarity not stigma; science not rumours” (Ghebreyesus 4 February 2020). The Twitter account of the Chinese Mission to UN wrote the following: “How to build a resilient, united & cooperative world?” (Chinese Mission to UN 10 February 2020). Another tweet of the account of the Chinese Mission to UN said: “Amb Dai Bing emphasized the international community should strengthen global cooperation and provide more support to LDCs in fighting Covid-19” (Chinese Mission to UN 9 February 2020). The choices in wording and phrases show that these tweets favour a more emotional approach to news writing. This approach is more in line with the ‘Panda Engagement’ and the ‘Constructive Journalism’ strategies, but these tweets focus more on evoking emotions rather than adding positive news to the conventional news writing or trying to soften the image of China by adding a friendly sign, such as the panda in the ‘Panda Engagement’ strategy.

The third category is *Health institutions*. This category has been mentioned 36 times. Within these tweets that contain this category, aspects of the strategy of ‘Constructive Journalism’ are visible. An example of this can be seen in the following tweet of the Chinese Consulate in Chicago: “China is taking more stringent measures in hospitals to safeguard healthcare workers amid the ongoing outbreak of pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus strain, and training for such employees will be enhanced nationwide” (China Consulate Chicago 25 January 2020). The developments within China are mentioned in combination with China’s approach in tackling the novel Coronavirus. This shows a positive image of China showing their willingness to tackle the virus, while also protecting their healthcare workers. This creates the narrative of a China that is taking care of its people while also handling a health crisis.

The fourth category is *Positive view* with 21 mentions in the tweets. Half of the mentions were found in tweets of the Chinese Ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai. An example of his use of this category is: “Now we are united to fight against #Novelcoronavirus and we

have full confidence to win this battle. GREAT PARTY and GREAT PEOPLE for A GREAT CAUSE!” (Cui Tiankai 30 January 2020). Another example from his tweets is: “#China is determined and capable of winning the battle against the #coronavirus” (Cui Tiankai 28 January 2020). This ambassador demonstrates his complete faith in China’s ability to tackle the coronavirus. This approach might seem similar to the ‘Constructive Journalism’ strategy, however, conventional news writing was not used in this tweet. The positive aspects were not added to a series of phrases discussing news events, the positive tone is visible and not carried along with a news article. This is the case for most of the tweets categorized in this category. Now and then, this category is used in combination with published quotes or information from the WHO. In these cases, the tweets do apply the ‘Constructive Journalism’ strategy.

The fifth category is *International praise for China*. Within the tweets, this category has been mentioned 20 times. Within the data, it is striking that the Twitter accounts of the Chinese mission to the UN and the Chinese ambassador to Los Angeles, Zhang Ping, did not use this category. In contrast, the Chinese consulate of Chicago and Cui Tiankai together used this category fifteen times. An example of the usage of this category is the retweet by Cui Tiankai of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus saying: “@WHO continues to have confidence in ‘emoji of China’s flag’ ’s capacity to control the outbreak. We would’ve seen many more #2019nCoV cases outside ‘emoji of China’s flag’ by now, & probably deaths, if it were not for the government’s efforts & the progress they’ve made to protect their own people & the world’ (Cui Tiankai 1 February 2020). Another example is from the account of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “Toshimitsu Motegi said, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government and people have taken positive and powerful measures to resolutely control the spread of the new coronavirus epidemic, and Japan pays tribute to this” (Spokesperson 26 January 2020). These tweets show two different approaches, the first used an approach more similar to the ‘Interactive Communication’, while the latter used an approach more similar to ‘Timid Polyphony’, without using a verification source or quotation marks. The goal was to stimulate rather than inform.

The sixth category is *Research and experts*. This category has been mentioned fifteen times in the tweets. Within this category one narrative is striking. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a researcher for the WHO, tweeted a message saying he is an advocate for

counting on science instead of rumours and facts instead of fear. Eventually, this narrative was retweeted or rewritten in a tweet by four of the six Chinese Twitter accounts, ranging from the Chinese ambassador to the Netherlands, Xu Hong, to the Chinese mission to UN. A creation of a narrative network was established through the use of retweets and the use of recurring concepts, such as 'science and facts'. These are all aspects of the strategies of 'Interactive Communication' and 'Going out, Going global'.

The seventh category is *Origin of Covid-19*, which has been used eleven times in the tweets. With this category, it is most noteworthy that only two out of the six accounts have used this category in their tweets. Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the US, has also not used this category in his tweets, this is notable because he has been the most vocal individual of the accounts. The tweets that do include *Origin of Covid-19*, mainly use hashtags such as #Wuhan and #Hubei within a positive message about how hard the medical workers are fighting against Covid-19 or that the city of Wuhan is going to build a 1.800-bed hospital to receive corona-patients. The use of these hashtags is a way of including a different and positive narrative within the already-existing stream of tweets containing this hashtag.

The eighth category is *Help to other countries* and has been mentioned five times. The narrative that has returned within all four tweets containing words or phrases related to *Help to other countries* is that China is committed to being open to the WHO and other countries concerning its approach to Covid-19. This is visible in sentences such as: "To fight #Coronavirus, Chinese government is working hard in a transparent and efficient way, and in close cooperation with WHO and other countries" (Ambassador Xu Hong 25 January 2020). By being transparent and open, the tweets highlight that China is helping other countries.

The ninth category is *Situation in other countries* and was used three times. This category is used with the narrative of the full cooperation between China and the WHO regarding sharing information. Xu Hong, the Chinese ambassador to the Netherlands, and Cui Tiankai believed that without the right reaction of China to Covid-19 and their cooperation with the WHO, there would have been many more Covid-19 cases outside of China at that point in time. An example of this by Xu hong is: "To fight #Coronavirus, Chinese government is working hard in a transparent and efficient way, and in close cooperation with WHO and

other countries. Full confidence in winning this battle. No Coronavirus case in the Netherlands till now, hope there will be none in the future” (Ambassador Xu Hong 25 January 2020).

The last three categories are *Vaccines and masks*, *Developing country status* and *Vaccines as a global public good*. These categories have not been used in the tweets of the first time period. The data of the categories *Vaccines and masks* and *Vaccines as global public good* were the expected outcome because vaccines had not yet been developed within this time frame. An explanation for the category *Developing country status* can be that this category had not yet been placed within a narrative. The data of the second time period does show that this category has become present within the narrative, as it shows a significant growth in numbers.

Data collection of the second time period from newspapers

In contrast to the first time period, where *Covid-19* is the biggest category, the second time period for China Daily's articles has *Vaccines and masks* as the biggest category. Here, the *Vaccines and masks* are mentioned 126 times and in the Sixth Tone articles, this category is mentioned 83 times. The biggest reason for this difference is that the creation and use of vaccines happened after the first time period and before the second. Therefore, the concept had already been in use before the second period. The concept of *Vaccines and masks* is often used in combination with the categories *Help to other countries* and *International praise*. For example, in the article of China Daily, published on 2 February 2021, titled 'Pakistan receives China-donated vaccines', China is portrayed as the generous friend helping out another friend, Pakistan (China Daily 2 February 2021). Phrases like: "More and more countries, including Indonesia, Turkey and Brazil, have cast votes of trust in China by having ordered or received Chinese vaccines or given a green light to their emergency use." (China Daily 2 February 2021) are used to show that countries approve of what China is doing during the Corona crisis. Vaccines are used as an element in China's international relations that showcases trust, which is similar to how the 'panda' is used in the strategy of 'Panda Engagement'. This points to the creation of a soft power element of a trustworthy and safe China by highlighting that other countries trust China enough to order their vaccines, thus a narrative is created of a trustworthy China.

The second-biggest category for China Daily is *Covid-19* with 119 times, for Sixth Tone this category is mentioned 122 times. With both newspapers, this category has been equally distributed throughout the time period. This category was used differently, instead of using 'Coronavirus' to write about the virus, the articles used 'COVID-19'. Where previously sentences were written like this: "... to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus" (China Daily 26 January 2021), in the second time period they were written like this: "The prevention of COVID-19 will be a normal practice..." (China Daily 9 February 2021). The shift shows a newly adopted term for the virus.

The third biggest category for China Daily is *Situation in other countries*, which is used 118 times. This is a considerable difference from the first time period when this category was

mentioned 46 times. One explanation for this change is that Covid-19 has spread to many more countries since the first time period when only a few countries had Covid-19 cases. However, this does not explain the drop in numbers for this category in Sixth Tone articles. For Sixth Tone, this category has been mentioned only 13 times, in contrast to the 26 times of the first time period. This difference is also seen in the titles of the articles. Ten out of the nineteen titles of China Daily articles contain other countries, while zero of the Sixth Tone articles contain other countries. Examples of these titles from the China Daily articles are: “US sees drop in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, deaths” (China Daily 8 February 2021) and “European countries eyeing Chinese COVID-19 vaccines amid delivery crisis” (China Daily 15 February 2021). The category is mentioned in only four Sixth Tone articles and most of the time in combination with the categories of *Vaccines and masks*, *Research and experts*, and most noteworthy *International praise*. The only two articles in which this last category, *International praise*, is used is in combination with *Situation in other countries*. This combination shows that when the newspaper decided to write about the approach of other countries against Covid-19 and, in particular, with vaccines, it was in comparison with China’s approach.

The fourth category for both newspapers is *Research and experts*. Again, Sixth Tone and China Daily experience opposite changes. For China Daily, the category doubled from 28 to 57, while for Sixth Tone the category shrank by half from 42 to 20. The data shows that within articles of China Daily and Sixth Tone the category *Research and experts* is mostly mentioned in combination with the category *Health institutions* and seldom in combination with the categories *Work together in fighting the pandemic* and *Help to other countries*. This could be the case because articles that used those last two categories were more focused on sensational and emotional aspects, while when *Health institutions* was used, the articles attempted to have a rational and objective approach. The following sentence is an example of the rational and objective approach: “Embarek heads a 17-member international team of experts convened by the WHO for origin tracing of the novel coronavirus ...” (China Daily 10 February 2021). By using the concept of *Research and experts* the factuality and seriousness of the article are underscored. Thus, the category of *Research and experts* in combination

with *Health institutions* is used by the newspapers as part of the strategy of ‘Constructive Journalism’.

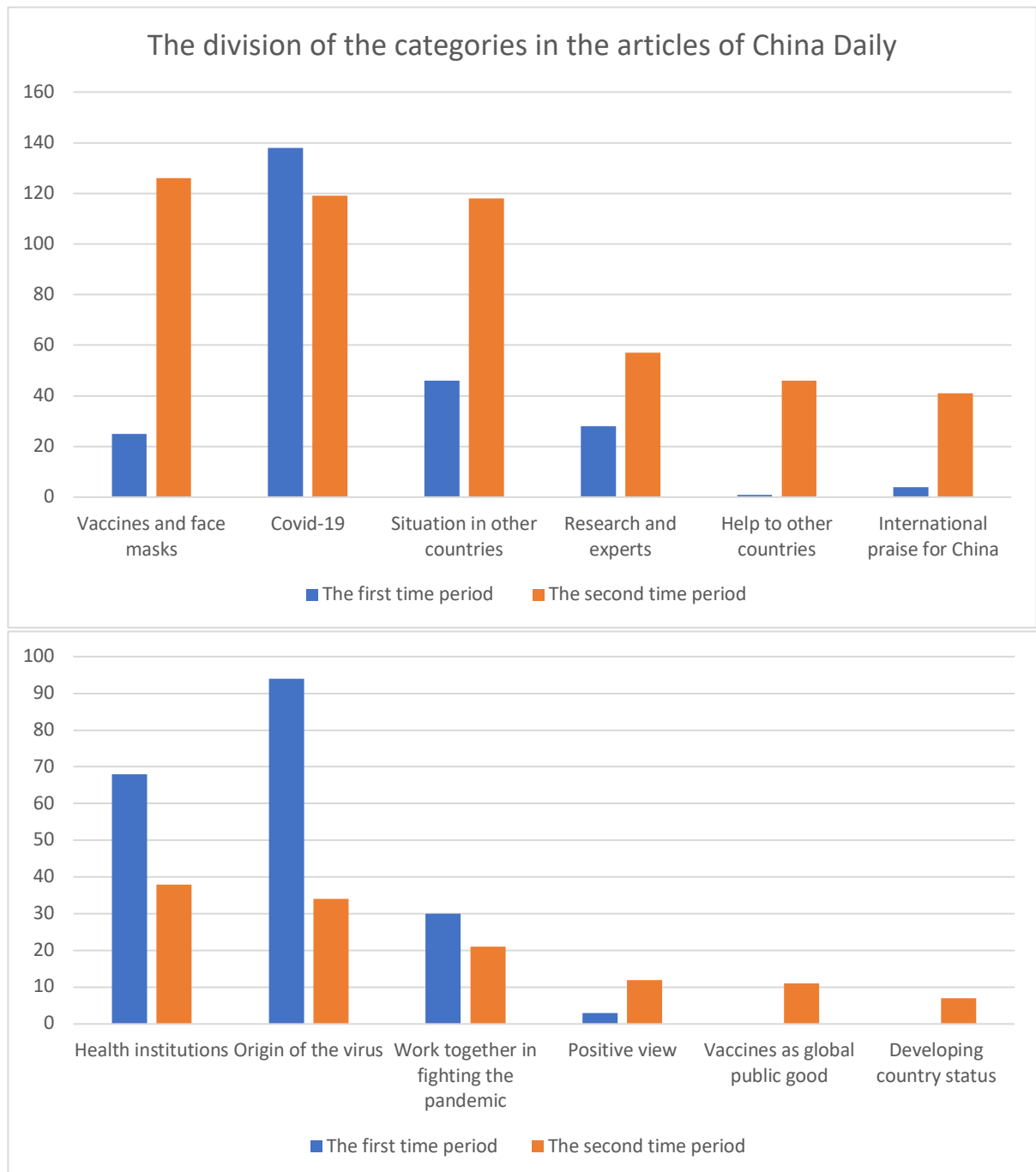


Figure 3 Two tables of the collected data of China Daily.

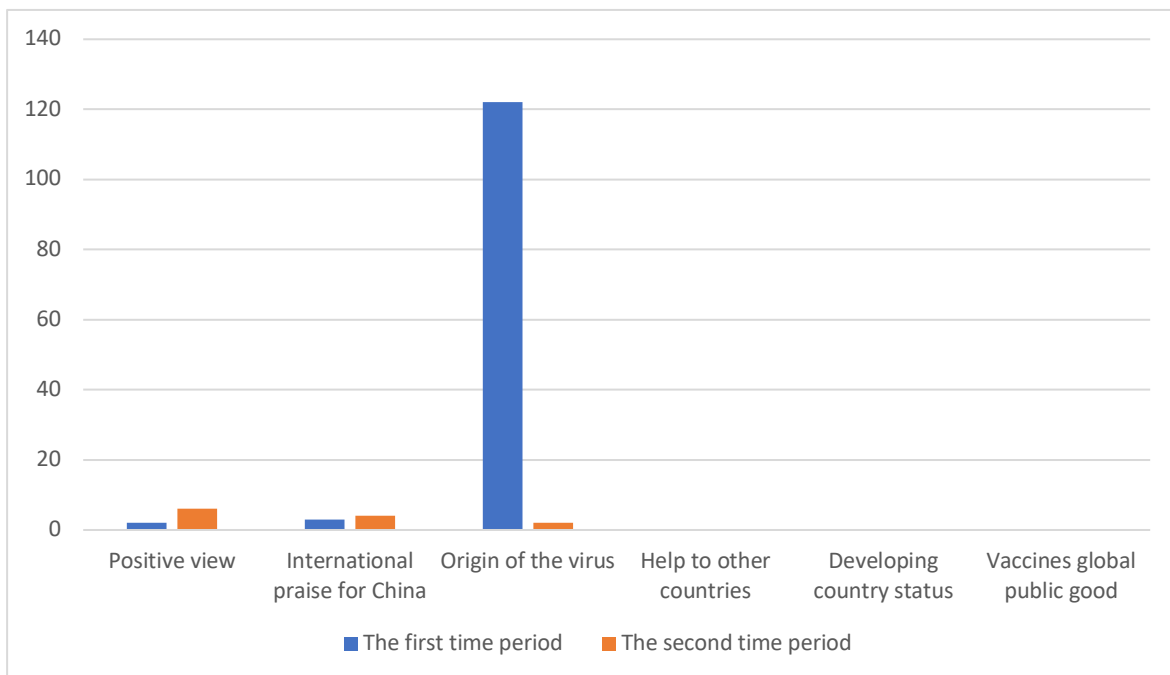
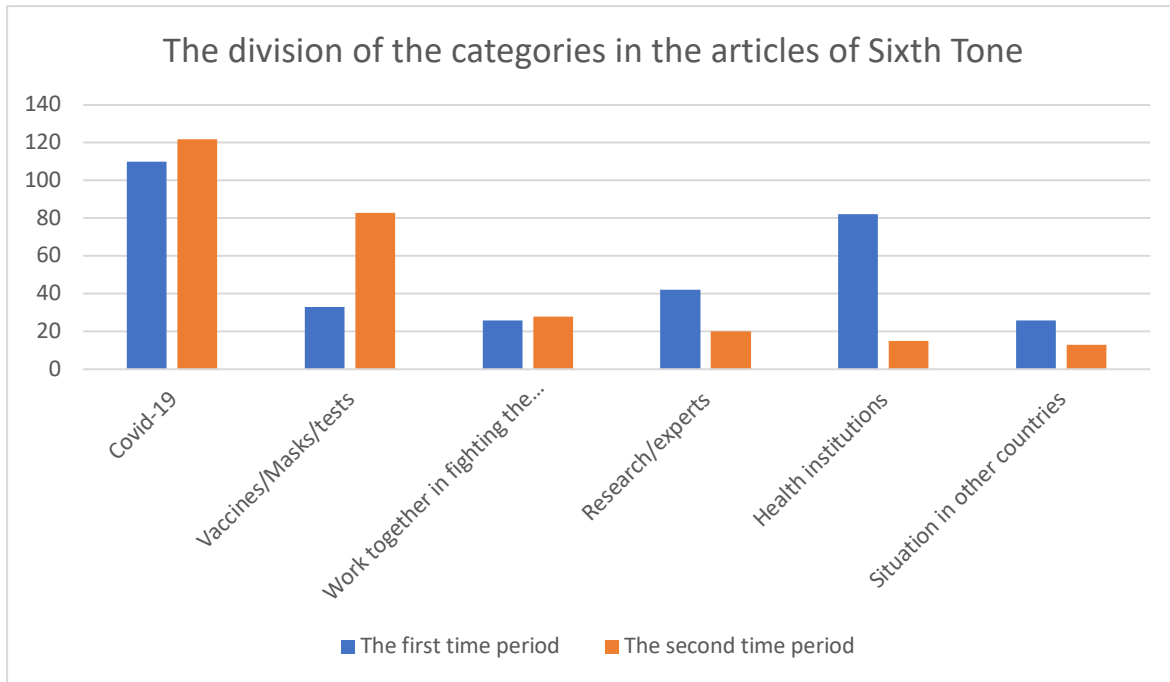


Figure 4 Two tables of the collected data of Sixth Tone.

The fifth category for China Daily is *Help to other countries*. In contrast to Sixth Tone where this category was found zero times, *Help to other countries* was mentioned 46 times in China Daily articles. An explanation for the change within the category of *Vaccines and masks* also applies here. Within the first time period, China could not help other countries by donating vaccines because other countries were not yet in need of help and vaccines were not yet developed. While in the second time period, other countries were dealing with higher Covid-19 cases than China and China was able to aid them in their battle against Covid-19. It

is noteworthy that Sixth Tone does not use this category and only acknowledges the situation in other countries and does not highlight how China has helped these other countries in dealing with Covid-19. China Daily wrote the following title: “Pakistan receives China-donated vaccines” (China Daily 2 February 2021). Within this article the Pakistan-China relation is highlighted and also this article focuses on the fact that China is committed to helping many other developing countries. In addition, the article also writes about China’s mission of advocating for a WHO programme, COVAX, which is focused on making vaccines a public good. This, in turn, also contributes to helping developing countries. China Daily is, thus, pursuing the narrative of China as an advocate for developing countries and their right to vaccines. ‘Constructive Journalism’ is still deployed as the strategy within the articles using this category.

The sixth category for China Daily is *International praise for China*. This category has been mentioned 41 times in contrast to four times in the first time period. This change is similar to the change of the *Help to other countries* – category. However, the explanation that was used to explain the change for that category cannot be applied to the *International praise for China* – category. During the first time period, China could have also been praised for their approach to dealing with Covid-19, this shows a difference in approach and a change of narrative. In the second time period, China Daily decided to focus more on this category because it contributes to a positive image of China: “In Serbia, the Sinopharm’s vaccine is welcomed with full trust ... according to Ivona Ladjevac, head of the center for the Belt and Road Initiative” (China Daily 15 February 2021). By highlighting what other countries say about China, China Daily uses the tactic of timid polyphony because not China, but other countries praise China. In this way, China Daily can indirectly write in a positive tone about China’s approach without seeming subjective. Sixth Tone, in contrast, does not show a significant difference between the time periods. The second time period shows a small growth of one, from three to four times. This shows that Sixth Tone does not follow the same path as China Daily with a focus on the international community. Not only does this category show little change, the previously mentioned category *Help to other countries* which also focusses on the international community also did not show a significant increase. This shows that Sixth Tone is more concerned with domestic issues than that it focuses on Covid-19 on the international stage.

The seventh category for China Daily is *Health institutions* with 38 mentions. This is a shrinkage in comparison to the first time period when this category was mentioned 68 times. Sixth Tone, for a change, shows the same development, with the number shrinking from 82 to 15 times. For China Daily, this change could be explained with their adaptation of a focus on international developments instead of domestic which could be observed in the categories of *International praise*, *Situation in other countries* and *Help to other countries*. This explains that most of the time when *Health institutions* were mentioned, it was about the WHO. This can be seen in the following examples: “According to the WHO chief, earlier this week the WHO held a global meeting of patients” and “Dr. Janet Diaz, an expert with the WHO’s Health Care Readiness team” (China Daily March 15 2021). By shifting the focus away from domestic developments, *Health institutions* are much likely to be mentioned less. The reason for this is that in the first time period the health institutions that were mentioned were Chinese health institutions. Sixth Tone might be adopting a similar approach, but their focus cannot be seen moving towards an international focus as can be seen in the following examples: “A worker at a hospital in downtown Shanghai had tested positive for COVID-19” (Sixth Tone 4 February 2021) and “... Mi Feng, a spokesperson with the National Health Commission” (Sixth Tone 7 February 2021).

The eighth category within the China Daily data is notable; *Origin of the virus*. This category is striking because in the first time period this category was the second biggest category with an amount of 94, while in the second time period this number is reduced to 34. This change is even more significant in the data of Sixth Tone. In the first time period, this category was the biggest category for Sixth Tone with 122 times. In the second time period, this number was radically smaller, the category was mentioned only two times. This development shows that even though a heightened international interest was present during the second time period when the WHO was investigating the origin of Covid-19 in Wuhan, the data of this category shows that the newspapers were not willing to use this interest to attract more attention by writing about the investigation. As data of China Daily in the previous categories showed, the newspaper actively focuses more on developments surrounding Covid-19 in other countries than the domestic situation surrounding the WHO investigation.

The ninth category for China Daily is *Work together in fighting Covid-19*. This category shrank from 30 to 21, while Sixth Tone's data show that this category grew a little from 26 to 28. With this small growth, the category is the third-biggest category for Sixth Tone, in contrast to being the ninth category for China Daily. The data of China Daily shows that this category was mostly used in combination with the category of *Positive news, Vaccines and masks, and Health institutions*. As previously mentioned, these combinations are more likely to call on the emotional side of the reader and mostly focus on the domestic situation of China's fight against Covid-19. This also explains why China Daily's data shows a decrease because China Daily's focus has shifted from domestic to international in the second time period.

The tenth category for China Daily is *Positive view*. This category was mentioned twelve times in contrast to the first time period when this category was mentioned three times. This shows a small growth for the data of China Daily in the second time period and this development is also present in the data of Sixth Tone. In the first time period, *Positive view* was found twice, while in the second time period this category was found six times. Within China Daily, this category was mostly used in combination with *International praise, Work together in fighting the pandemic, and Origin of the virus*.

The eleventh and twelfth categories are *Developing country status* and *Vaccines as a global public good*. Within the data of Sixth Tone, these categories are not mentioned. Within the data of China Daily, these categories were not used in the first time period, but in the second time period, these two were mentioned. *Vaccines as global public good* experienced the biggest growth to eleven and *Developing country status* grew to seven. These categories are in connection to one another because when China Daily advocates for *Vaccines as global public good* they often include China's developing country status and other developing countries as an argument supporting that claim. China Daily debates that vaccines are not equally distributed around the globe and therefore the vaccines should become global public good to create equal chances for developing countries.

Data collection of the second time period from tweets

The biggest category within the data collection of the tweets in the first time period is *Vaccines and masks* with 62 hits. This is significantly more than was observed in the first time period where the category had zero hits. This change is caused by the development of vaccines, which previously had not yet been developed and therefore this category was not used in the tweets of the first time period. After the development of vaccines, various narratives were created with this new category. These narratives and, thus, this category are all created and used in combination with other categories from this research; *Help to other countries*, *Vaccines as a global public good*, and *Developing country status*.

The second category is *Help to other countries* with 49 mentions in the tweets. The majority of the tweets using *Help to other countries* also cover the category of *Vaccines and masks*. This combination is used to show how good China is at helping other countries by providing them with or donating vaccines. The start of the vaccinations and with that the emergence of the category *Vaccines and masks*, this category has been strengthened and, as shown by the grown number from five to 49, it has been used far more times than before. Thus, the narrative created with the categories *Help to other countries* and *Vaccines and masks* is that China is a helpful neighbour. This narrative is similar to the 'Panda Engagement' strategy, but here the 'panda' is replaced by vaccines. With the donation of vaccines to other countries, the diplomatic Twitter accounts are trying to portray China as a friendly neighbour helping out its friends, which is similar to the friendly characteristics of the panda in the 'Panda Engagement'. The vaccines are in this instance, thus used to soften China's image.

The third category is *Vaccines as a global public good*. This category has been used 46 times, which is significantly different to the first time period when this category was not in use. This category is a narrative on its own because it shows China's advocacy for vaccines to become a global public good. This category and narrative is sometimes strengthened by the category of *Developing country status*. The argument that is advocated through these diplomatic Twitter accounts is that China believes that all countries, developing countries in particular, deserve an equal chance to secure vaccines. An example of a tweet with this narrative is: "China has decided to provide 10 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to COVAX,

mainly to meet the urgent need of developing countries. We hope capable countries will all take concrete actions to support COVAX & help developing countries obtain vaccines in a timely manner” (Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3 February 2021). With this narrative, China is portrayed as an advocate for developing countries by calling for vaccines to become a global public good.

The fourth-biggest categories are *Work together in fighting Covid-19* and *Covid-19*. Both of these categories shrunk since the first time period, *Covid-19* was first used 61 times and now 36 times. *Work together in fighting Covid-19* has shrunk from 46 to 36 times. The latter category shows the same narrative as was deployed in the first time period when it is discussed along with WHO and its investigation to the origin of Covid-19. An example of this is: “The #WHO mission’s visit to #China is part of global science cooperation on #origin_tracing. Relevant parties should follow China’s example and act in a positive, science-based and cooperative manner to shoulder their responsibilities & obligations for int’l cooperation #Covid19” (Chinese Embassy in UK 5 February 2021). This is similar to the previous time period because the cooperative and open approach of China is highlighted. In addition, this narrative is also in light of cooperation with the WHO and uses ‘Interactive Communication’ and ‘Tell China Stories Well’.

The fifth category is *Research and experts* and has been used 25 times. This category was mostly found in tweets that were discussing the WHO investigation into the origin of Covid-19 in Wuhan. A narrative from the first time period that was also found in this time period was the call for science-based cooperation and again phrases that resembled the expression used in the first time period ‘science, not rumours, facts not fear’. An example of such a phrase is: “WHO’s findings show science, not politics, key to understanding COVID-19” (Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco 11 February 2021). With the revelation of the outcomes of the investigation of WHO into the origins of Covid-19, the narrative of the importance of scientific facts has re-emerged within the tweets by the diplomatic Twitter accounts. This narrative is part of the strategy ‘Constructive Journalism’ where the positive outcome of the WHO investigation for China is conventionally written.

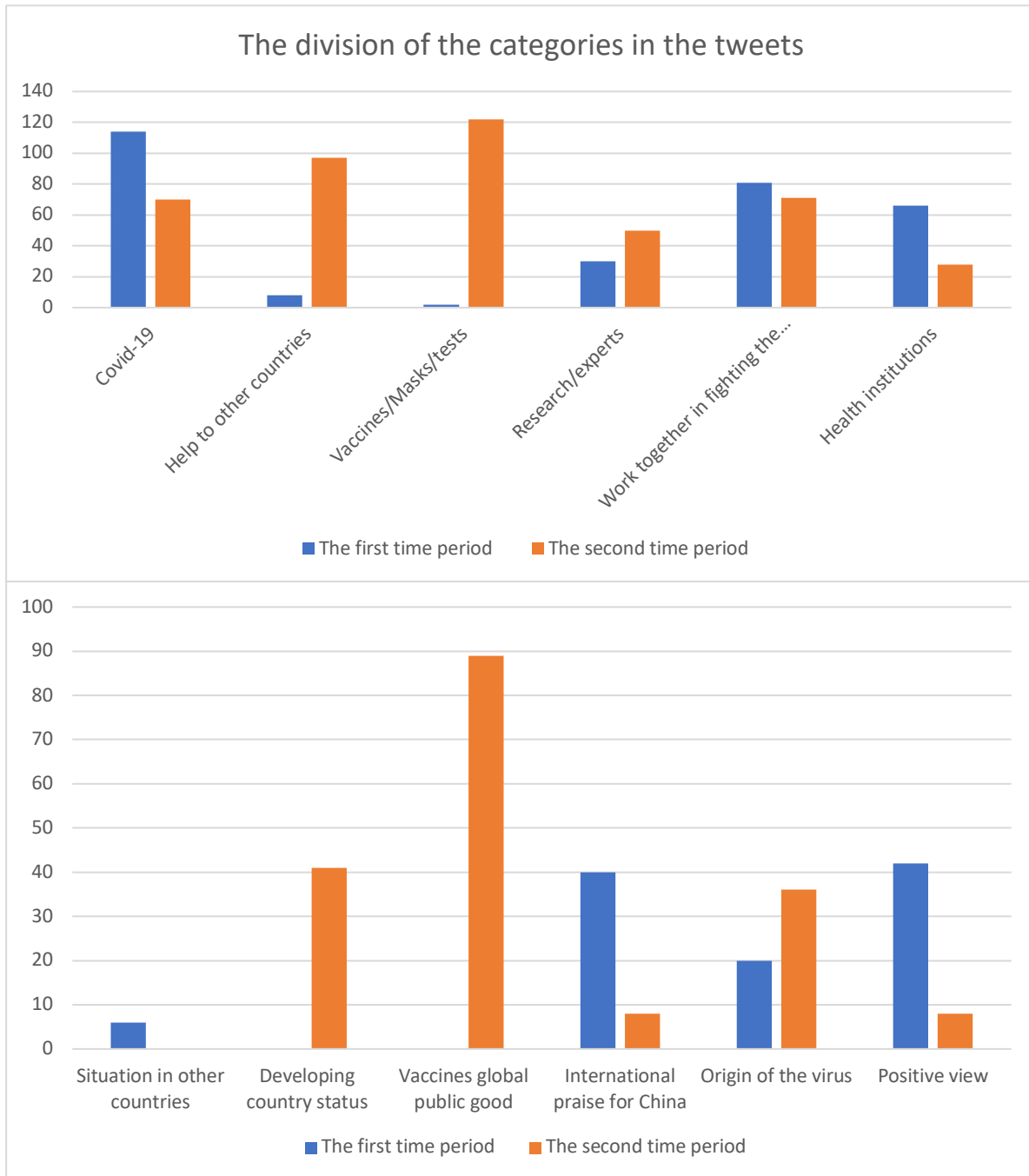


Figure 5 Two tables of the collected data of the tweets.

The sixth category is *Developing country status* which has been used 21 times. This category is mentioned, in particular, in combination with the category of *Vaccines as a global public good*. The narrative that is created with this category is China as the leader of the developing countries. To grow the network of this narrative, the strategy ‘Interactive Communication’ and ‘Going out, going global’ is used which is shown by the tweets using the hashtag #developing to attract more attention to China being a helpful leader. An example of the use of the hashtag #developing is: “China will continue to provide COVID-19 #vaccines to

other countries, especially the #developing ones, in a timely manner within its capacity” (retweet by Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco 2 February 2021).

The seventh category is *Origin of Covid-19* and this has been used eighteen times. This number has grown since the first time period and this is striking because this development was not visible in the data of the news articles. The tweets focused significantly more on the outcome of the WHO investigation, for example: “Wuhan’s Hunan seafood market may not have been the site of the earliest #COVID19 outbreak, said the #WHO-China joint team” (retweet by Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco 9 February 2021). This category is also part of the strategy ‘Constructive Journalism’ used by the category *Research and experts*.

The eighth category is *Health institutions*. This category shows a considerable decrease from 36 to fourteen times. In addition, the times that this category was used were mostly to mention the WHO. Tweets about developments in hospitals were significantly less. An explanation for this development might be that the situation in China had much improved since the first time period and therefore the situation in Chinese hospitals are much less discussed.

The ninth categories are *International praise for China* and *Positive view*. Both categories have been used four times. The low number of these two categories is in contrast to the relatively higher number that was found in the first time period, 20 for *International praise* and 21 for *Positive view*. The lower number of *International praise* resembles a more direct approach of the diplomatic Twitter accounts by focusing more on China in a direct way. This is in coherence with the low number of the category of *Situation in other countries*.

The last category is *Situation in other countries* and this category has not been observed within the collected data. This is a notable difference because, with the increase of Covid-19 cases in other countries, one would expect tweets about this development. This shows that the tweets in the second time period are more concerned with developments that directly affect China’s image, for example how China is helping other countries by donating vaccines or China’s advocacy for developing countries and vaccines as a global public good.

Analysis

The data collection shows that China's view on soft power and Covid-19 narrative building are connected. China's belief in being able to actively 'create' soft power is visible in their approach to the discourse on Covid-19. The two time periods from this research show a noticeable shift that supports this view on soft power. With this active discourse adaptation, China's media are used for soft power 'creation'. The most noticeable shift that is visible in the data of China Daily and Sixth Tone is the reduced use of the category of *Origin of Covid-19* in the second time period. This shows that even though the WHO started an investigation in Wuhan, the newspapers did not increase their focus in this category and attempted to draw attention away from Wuhan and the origin of the virus. This shift is supported by an increase in attention towards international developments within articles of China Daily. By shifting the focus to international developments China Daily is moving the narrative away from Wuhan being the city where Covid-19 originated. This shift is coherent with the increase in the international relevance of Covid-19. The articles of Sixth Tone show a slightly different change. Instead of a shift towards international developments, the newspaper shows a shift from Wuhan to other domestic topics in China. Sixth Tone uses the increased interest in China to "tell China stories well". Thus, by avoiding writing about Wuhan, China's news media try to change the narrative about Covid-19 in China and they attempt to disconnect Covid-19 from Wuhan, and therefore China as a whole. This attempt to actively steer the narrative away from any Chinese connection to the origin of the virus is a clear attempt at 'creating' soft power by changing their policies of public diplomacy accordingly to developments worldwide. To put it the other way around, China's determination to 'create' its soft power has actively shaped the discourse of the Chinese media outlets.

The second visible change from the first to the second time period is the increased use of the technique 'Constructive Journalism'. The extensive use of this strategy by China Daily shows that it is more actively trying to 'create' soft power by using 'Constructive Journalism' to add favourable aspects of China in conventional news-writing about Covid-19. With the use of favourable aspects of China in conventional news-writing, the news magazine is using persuasion to increase readers' positive perception of China while also portraying themselves as an official newspaper. The shift from the first to the second time period indicates that China

has increased its attempt at creating soft power and urged the newspapers to follow suit. The data of the tweets do not show this change and this is visible in the use of a more emotional and subjective tone. With this tone, the Twitter accounts can have a more interactive connection with its' followers. The tweets are focused on activating the reader, while the newspapers are more focused on informing the reader. This difference also supports the extensive use of 'Constructive Journalism' by newspapers, because this is a more indirect approach to change the narrative of a topic such as *Origin of Covid-19*. While the Twitter accounts want their audience to actively contribute to the narrative building by sharing, liking, commenting, tagging, hash-tagging and retweeting the tweets to create a more interconnected network around the desired narrative. Thus, not only is there a clear shift between the first and the second period regarding Chinese attempts at 'creating' soft power, but the attempts also intensify in the second period, as the pandemic progresses. While the international focus on Wuhan in the first period forced Chinese media narratives on the defence, the second period allowed the Chinese media to be more assertive with their narratives. Consequently, Chinese attempts at 'creating' soft power can be seen as fluid, and perhaps even reactionary, for different national and international circumstances will take part in shaping Chinese soft power 'creation'.

The third visible change between the first and the second time period is that the data of the tweets show a decrease in the use of the category *International praise*. The lower number of mentions in the category *International praise* in the second time period shows that the Chinese diplomatic Twitter accounts are bolder and more confident about China's approach to Covid-19 in that time period. In addition, the Twitter accounts are more focused on "telling China stories well" and defending the portrayal of China against negative portrayals by other tweets. The tweets show to follow a more direct line of 'propaganda' and soft power 'creation' than the news articles. The news articles are more concerned with persuasion and creating soft power characteristics, while the tweets are more directly promoting China and Chinese values. By becoming more active on Twitter, China attempted to broaden their soft power 'creation' on other media channels. Even though this can be seen as an active attempt at soft power 'creation', the tweets are not in line with the same strategies of the news articles. This shows that China does not have a strongly coordinated soft power 'creation' throughout all its media platforms. Although China sees the Internet and television as their

most important platforms for soft power 'creation', China has not yet reached a coherent and fully developed strategy. This explains the discrepancy between China's implementation of the strategy 'Going out, Going global' in 2001 and China's diplomats starting to join Twitter in 2019. It took China almost twenty years to incorporate Twitter to help build its global presence and soft power, while Chinese scholars already identified in 2009 that Television and the Internet are the most important actors for 'creating' soft power. With this relatively late timing of the engagement of China's diplomats on Twitter, China's soft power 'creation' still must be understood as being in an early and experimental phase.

Conclusion

Even though there are two newspapers used for this research, one has to be aware that the findings cannot be applied to all Chinese news media. In addition, this research focuses on how China is attempting to 'create' soft power during the Covid-19 pandemic and does not look at the effectiveness of this soft power 'creation'. Regarding the debate surrounding the possibility of 'creating' soft power, the effectiveness of supposed Chinese soft power is of great interest. If in the end, it would turn out that these kinds of Chinese media campaigns towards foreigners indeed do have a positive effect on the international image of China, then it must be concluded that soft power can in fact be created. Thus, any study attempting this would be of great interest to the soft power debate. Furthermore, other newspapers may be included to create a clearer overview of the general trend in the Chinese news media and foreign readers may be interviewed on the effectiveness of China's soft power 'creation' during Covid-19. Nonetheless, this research has shown significant changes in Chinese narrative building on Covid-19 that supports China's view on soft power.

The Chinese government has a different view of the definition of soft power than most Western countries. The Chinese view is visible in the narrative building of Chinese media around Covid-19. China is actively using the Chinese media to 'create' soft power. China's public diplomacy also reflects this with the implementation of strategies such as 'Going Out, Going Global' and 'Telling China Stories Well'. These strategies encourage Chinese media to become more active on the global stage and show China's view of soft power being a multifaceted tool that influences foreign governments and public opinion. These strategies are shown to be flexible and reactionary to any situation affecting China's image internationally. The data of the second time period has shown that China used the narrative of the pandemic to their advantage. For example, with the promotion of donating Chinese vaccines to Pakistan, China shows to foreign readers that it is a 'good friend' and helps other countries in need.

A general shift was identified between the two time periods, primarily within China Daily. The media channel shifted from an inward focus to an outward focus after the first time period. This shift is in line with China's view on soft power 'creation' and it shows that this view is actively shaping the discourse of Chinese media. China Daily stayed focused on

international developments in the second time period, even with the start of the investigation of the WHO in Wuhan. Only when the outcome of the WHO investigation proved to be positive, the newspaper decided to dedicate a few articles to this favourable outcome for China. The diplomatic Twitter accounts increased their focus on the origin of Covid-19 and dedicated many tweets to the investigation of the WHO. While Sixth Tone dedicated only a few articles to the origin of Covid-19, it did not shift its focus outward. Instead, Sixth Tone dedicated even more articles to domestic topics rather than international developments. Thus, the main general shift that is visible is that the newspapers moved their focus away from where Covid-19 originated. Overall, these shifts in media narrative can be seen as China's attempt to 'create' their soft power accordingly to the developments of the pandemic and their view on soft power 'creation'.

The Twitter accounts developed a narrative around China's status as a developing country which also contributed to the 'creation' of soft power. China was portrayed as the leader of the developing world and as an advocate for vaccines as a global public good. The data of the tweets show that the categories *Vaccines as a global public good* and *Developing country status* have increased in the second time period. Where in the first time period these categories were not used, these categories had become new narratives within the soft power discourse of China. These narratives are both part of the good neighbourly – policy and are an attempt to support the main narrative of China's 'harmonious and peaceful rise'. *Vaccines as a global public good*, *Developing country status*, and *Help to other countries* showcase the clearest attempt at softening China's national image. The data shows that in general, these categories have also increased the most since the first time period. Thus, China's attempt at softening its national image during Covid-19 on Twitter is mostly done by portraying China as a helpful and supportive country that is willing to fight for developing countries. Again, China's active creation of a common narrative on Twitter can be seen as a Chinese attempt to 'create' soft power. Nevertheless, this attempt shows to be more direct and less actively engaged in 'creating' soft power. With China's diplomats being relatively new to Twitter, this soft power 'creation' is, in comparison to the newspapers, in an early and experimental stage.

To conclude, the research question of this thesis can be answered. A notable shift in narrative can be identified between the two periods selected for this thesis. Consequently,

China's attempt at creating soft power is made visible by this shift in narrative. Regarding academic debates about soft power, this thesis does not provide additional arguments for the debate of whether soft power can be 'created'. Instead, the point of this thesis has been that, nonetheless, China believes it can be created. Thus, their belief in 'creating' soft power will actively shape their attempts to create international and public media narratives, as shown in this thesis, making their belief something academics should always keep in mind in future studies.

Bibliography

China Daily. n.d. "About China Daily Group." Accessed 10 May 2021.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/e/static_e/about

Edney, Kingsley, Stanley Rosen and Ying Zhu. 2020. "Introduction." In *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China's Campaign for Hearts and Minds*, edited by Kingsley Edney, Stanley Rosen and Ying Zhu, 1 – 22. New York: Routledge.

Gallarotti, Giulio M. 2011. "Soft Power: What it is, Why it's Important, and the Conditions for its Effective Use." In *Journal of Political Power*, vol. 4 (April): 25 – 47.

Griffiths, James and Nectar Gan. 2020. "China's Massive Security State is Being Used to Crack Down on the Wuhan Virus." *CNN*, 11 February 2020.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/10/asia/china-security-police-wuhan-virus-intl-hnk/index.html>

Li, Mingjiang. 2009. "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse." In *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, edited by Mingjiang Li, 21 – 43. Lanham: Lexington.

NOS. 2020. "China Correspondent Sjoerd den Daas Wordt Tegengehouden Door Beveiligers." *NOS*, 28 January 2020. <https://nos.nl/video/2320621-china-correspondent-sjoerd-den-daas-wordt-tegengehouden-door-beveiligers>

Nye, Joseph S. 2009. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.

Nye, Joseph S. 2011. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

O'Keeffe, Anne. 2011. "Media and Discourse Analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by J. Gee and M. Handford, 441 – 454. London: Routledge.

Rawnsley, Gary D. 2016. "Reflections of a soft power agnostic." In *China's Media and Soft Power in Africa*, edited by X. Zhang et al., 19 – 31. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schneider, Florian. 2013. "How to Do a Discourse Analysis." Accessed 19 May 2020. <http://www.politicseastasia.com/studying/how-to-do-a-discourse-analysis/>

Sevin, Effe and Diana Ingenhoff. 2018. "Public Diplomacy on Social Media: Analyzing Networks and Content." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 12: 3663 – 3685.

Sixth Tone. n.d. "About Us." Accessed 10 May 2021. <http://www.sixthtone.com/about-us>

Su, Changhe. 2013. "Soft Power." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, no. 1: 1 – 16.

Talbot, Mary. 2007. "Introduction: Media and Discourse." In *Media Discourse: Representation and Interaction*, edited by Mary Talbot, 3 – 17. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wang, Xinyuan. 2016. "The Social Media Landscape in China." In *Social Media in Industrial China*, edited by Xinyuan Wang, 25 – 56. London: UCL Press.

Xinhua Net. 2020. "The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee Held a Meeting to Study and Strengthen the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia Caused by the New Coronavirus Infection. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chaired the Meeting." *Xinhua Net*, 3 February 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2020-02/03/c_1125527334.htm

Zhao, Alexandre Huang and Rui Wang. 2019. "Building a Network to "Tell China Stories Well": Chinese Diplomatic Communication Strategies on Twitter." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 13: 2984 – 3007.

Zhao, Alexandre Huang and Rui Wang. 2020. "'Panda Engagement' in China's Digital Public Diplomacy." *Asian Journal of Communication*, vol. 30: 118 – 140.

Appendix

Sixth Tone:

First period: 13 – 27 January 2020 (Accessed and downloaded on 8 March 2021)

Articles:

- First Covid-19 death in China: [January 13th 2020](#)
- Human Transmission of Wuhan Pneumonia: [January 15th 2020](#)
- Coronavirus: Latest Updates: [January 16th 2020](#)
- Second Covid-19 death in China: [January 17th 2020](#)
- 17 more Covid-19 cases: [January 19th 2020](#)
- First Covid-19 infections outside Wuhan: [January 20th 2020](#)
- Fourth Covid-19 death: [January 21st 2020](#)
- Wuhan lockdown: [January 23rd 2020](#)
- Shanghai Level 1 emergency: [January 24th 2020](#)
- Hubei Residents worry about Medical supply: [January 24th 2020](#)
- Wuhan residents prepare to step solemnly into the new year: [January 24th 2020](#)
- Tribute to medical staff steals the show: [January 25th 2020](#)
- Coronavirus highlights perils of China's illegal wildlife trade: [January 25th 2020](#)

Chinadaily.com:

First period: 13 – 27 January 2020 (Accessed and downloaded on 15 March 2021)

Articles:

- Wuhan reports 136 new pneumonia cases: [January 20 2020](#)
- Zhejiang reports 5 cases of suspected coronavirus pneumonia: [January 20 2020](#)
- 136 new cases of corona virus-linked pneumonia reported in Wuhan: [January 20 2020](#)
- Wuhan sets up centre to combat pneumonia outbreak: [January 21 2020](#)
- Shanghai confirms second case of virus: [January 21 2020](#)
- Top expert: disease spread won't be on scale of SARS: [January 21 2020](#)
- Demand for face masks surges in China amid outbreak: [January 21 2020](#)
- Shanghai reports three new cases of virus: [January 22 2020](#)
- US confirms first case of coronavirus: [January 22 2020](#)

- New coronavirus cases rise to 571 in Chinese mainland: [January 23 2020](#)
- ‘SARS hero’ follows leads on illness: [January 23 2020](#)
- Virus-hit city temporarily shuts down local transportation: [January 23 2020](#)
- WHO: Wuhan taking ‘strong’ action on virus: [January 23 2020](#)
- UK government issues coronavirus measures: [January 23 2020](#)
- Virus-marred city to speed-build 1,000-bed hospital: [January 24 2020](#)
- Coronavirus outbreak: 444 new cases added on Friday: [January 25 2020](#)
- Reinforcements sent to virus-hit city on holiday eve: [January 25 2020](#)
- Wuhan hotels offer free lodging to outbreak medical workers: [January 25 2020](#)
- Authorities say no imminent lockdown of Beijing: [January 26 2020](#)
- Progress continues in coronavirus trace: [January 26 2020](#)
- Huangshan Mountain closed to tourists amid coronavirus outbreak: [January 26 2020](#)
- Gates foundation to assist coronavirus fight in China: [January 27 2020](#)
- Confirmed coronavirus cases rise to 2,744 on Chinese mainland: [January 27 2020](#)
- HK denies entry to people who have been in Hubei: [January 27 2020](#)

Sixth Tone:

Second period: 1 – 15 February 2021 (accessed and downloaded on 15 March 2021)

Articles:

- Criminal probe of man who spread Covid-19 to 82 sparks legal debate: [February 2 2021](#)
- China cracks down on fake Covid-19 vaccines: [February 2 2021](#)
- Spring Festival travel is tricky. For many, it’s still worth it: [February 3 2021](#)
- Time not ripe for cherries, say virus-fearing Chinese: [February 4 2021](#)
- On the trail of Covid-19 in Shanghai: [February 4 2021](#)
- Sinovac’s covid-19 vaccine second to secure approval in China: [February 7 2021](#)
- China’s post-pandemic internet market: in charts: [February 7 2021](#)
- China reports no new local Covid-19 cases for first time this year: [February 8 2021](#)
- Shandong prison officials jailed over Covid-19 cluster: [February 8 2021](#)
- China didn’t get a post-quarantine baby boom, data suggests: [February 9 2021](#)
- China’s long-suffering film industry eyes big holiday box office: [February 9 2021](#)

- The hidden costs of China's cancelled new year parties: [February 10 2021](#)
- Why China's elderly are still waiting to get vaccinated: [February 10 2021](#)
- Shanghai normally empties for spring festival. But no this year: [February 11 2021](#)
- Chinese scours megacities for peace and quiet as Covid-19 curbs travel: [February 13 2021](#)
- China's pandemic-disrupted holiday has couriers working overtime: [February 14 2021](#)

China confirms first local covid-19 infection of Lunar new year: [February 15 2021](#)

[Chinadaily.com](#):

Second period: 1 – 15 February 2021 (Accessed and downloaded on 15 March 2021)

Articles:

- Primary schools in Netherlands to reopen on Feb. 8: [February 1 2021](#)
- Pakistan receives China-donated vaccines: [February 2 2021](#)
- Shanghai quick to contain coronavirus outbreak: [February 3 2021](#)
- Everyday heroes key to Covid-19 fight in Shijiazhuang: [February 3 2021](#)
- Personal computers seeing second wind after Covid-19: [February 3 2021](#)
- WHO intl expert team visits key venues in Wuhan: [February 4 2021](#)
- New Covid-19 cases in US decline while variants spread draws concern: [February 4 2021](#)
- South Korea 'conditionally' approves 1st homegrown Covid-19 treatment: [February 5 2021](#)
- In prevention lies the cure: Thoughts on China's fight against Covid-19: [February 5 2021](#)
- Shipment from mainland spurs Macao virus relief: [February 8 2021](#)
- US sees drop in Covid-19 cases, hospitalizations, deaths: [February 8 2021](#)
- Medical expert calls for caution during upcoming spring festival: [February 9 2021](#)
- UAE follows Brazil's lead with plan to make Chinese vaccine: [February 10 2021](#)
- WHO team: Probe of virus' origin should not be 'geographically bound': [February 10 2021](#)
- Germany extends Covid-19 lockdown to March 7: [February 12 2021](#)
- WHO experts 'post-Covid condition' to affect many globally: [February 13 2021](#)

- European countries eyeing Chinese Covid-19 vaccines amid delivery crisis: [February 15 2021](#)
- The Lancet: Rich countries snap up 70% of Covid-19 vaccine doses: [February 15 2021](#)
- UK records another 10,972 coronavirus cases as 15 million vaccinated: [February 15 2021](#)

Ambassadors:

- To the Netherlands: [Ambassador Xu Hong](#) and [Embassy](#)
- To the US: [Ambassador Cui Tiankai](#), [China consulate Chicago](#), [Zhang Ping Consul general in LA](#), [Chinese consulate general in San Francisco](#)
- To the UK: [Ambassador Liu Xiaoming \(till 31 January 2021\)](#) and [the embassy](#)
- Chinese mission to UN: [twitter-account](#)
- [China State Council Information Office](#)

	A	B	C
1	Codes and categories:	Present:	How:
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Figure 3 Set-up of the excel sheet for coding the data

	A	B	C	D
1	Structural features:	Discourse fragments:	Cultural references:	Linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms:
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

Figure 4 Set-up of the excel sheet for coding the data

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Source:	Article title:	Date of access:	Author:	Publisher:	Date of publication:	Link:	Medium:	Genre:
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									

Figure 5 Set-up of the excel sheet for coding the data