

Assessing the media visibility of China's President Xi Jinping's first 3-year governance in *The New York Times*

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Abstract

This study assessed the media visibility, a composite measure of attention and prominence, of China's President Xi Jinping's first 3-year governance in *The New York Times*. The assessment was based on the content analysis of 317 news articles focusing on Chinese President. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify three major frames, 12 mid-level frames, and 18 sub-frames. Quantitative content analysis was used to measure the attention, prominence, and the combination of these two parameters of these frames. The findings showed that *The New York Times* employed multiple frames to report Chinese President, and the two frames with the highest media visibility are (Domestic) Campaigns and Strategies and China-United States (relations), rather than Human Rights.

Keywords

Attention, Chinese President, governance, media visibility, prominence

With the rapid economic growth, China has become the second largest economy in the world and exerted increasing influence on global affairs. Several studies showed that Western media paid more attention on China and employed a much broader range of frames to report China than before (e.g. Ching, 1998; Li & Cyr, 1998; Peng, 2004; Willnat & Luo, 2011; Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Meanwhile, scholars argued that much of the coverage about China had focused on a narrow range of frames: human rights abuses (Dai, 1997; Li & Cyr, 1998), anti-communist (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad,

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2000; Kobland, Du, & Kwon, 1992), and Chinese government's handling of crises (Luther & Zhou, 2004; Sparks, 2010; Wu, 2006), which lead to a predominance of negativity.

This study assessed the media visibility, a composite measure of attention (Golan & Wanta, 2001) and prominence (Kiousis, 2004), of Chinese President Xi Jinping in *The New York Times*. The Chinese President was selected as the subject of this research because political leaders become more centered than political groups in the political process, and correspondingly, there is a similar shift in focus from political groups to political leaders in media coverage (Balmas & Sheaffer, 2013; Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Van Aelst, Sheaffer, & Stanyer, 2012). As one of the flagship mainstream news outlets in the United States, *The New York Times* boasts a daily print circulation of 590,000, and 1.1 million on Sunday, plus close to 1.4 million digital-only subscriptions (Ember, 2016). Besides its huge audience, *The New York Times* could influence the audiences of other news outlets as evidence showed its inter-media agenda-setting power (Gans, 1979; Gilbert, Eyal, McCombs, & Nicholas, 1980; Reese & Danielian, 1989; Shaw & Sparrow, 1999).

In this study, the author used a mixed method with the combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis to identify the frames, and the attention and prominence of these frames pertaining to Chinese President in *The New York Times*. The author also utilized two measures (*Bowen index* and *Pollock index*) of media visibility to assess the coverage at the overall level and of each frame. The method and measures used in this study can also be employed in other studies on the assessment of media coverage of political leaders or other entities. The results of this study revealed the various extents of media visibility of the frames of Chinese President in *The New York Times*.

China's image in the Western media

With the rapid economic growth, China has exerted increasing influence on the international affairs and gained amounting attention around the world. Western media have also put more emphasis on China than ever before. This trend has been demonstrated by several empirical research projects. For example, Peng (2004) reported that coverage of China increased significantly in *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* between 1992 and 2001. Stone and Xiao (2007) found the increasing amount of news coverage of China in the major US news magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*) between 1984 and 1999. Zhang (2010) showed the same pattern existed in two major British news outlets (*Financial Times* and *The Economist*) and one major US newspaper (the *International Herald Tribune*) between 1989 and 2005. Likewise, Sparks (2010) found this pattern in three major British newspapers (*Financial Times*, *Sun*, and *Daily Express*).

Despite the growing number of news reports about China in the Western media, it was noticed that a majority of them were negative (Peng, 2004; Stone & Xiao, 2007; Bethany, 2016). Scholars found that much of the negative coverage about China had focused on two frames decades ago: human rights abuses (Dai, 1997; Li & Cyr, 1998) and anti-communist. And more recently studies found Western media also criticized Chinese government's handling of crises (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000; Kobland et al., 1992; Luther & Zhou, 2004; Sparks, 2010; Wu, 2006). Some scholars argued that the negative coverage of China was driven by the narrow topics (e.g. Dai, 1997; Goodman, 1999; Mann, 1999; Perlmutter, 1996). Meanwhile, others argued that this pattern has been changed. For example, Ching (1998) noted that Chinese lifestyle and social attitudes have begun to appear in the US media since 1989. Li and Cyr (1998) found that commercial trade between United States and China became a priority in the US media. Recent studies suggested that the frames about China in Western media are more diverse than decades ago. For example, Zhang

and Cameron (2003) found that the US media reported China using many topics, including domestic politics, Taiwan Straits, international politics, domestic economics, international economy, defense/nuclear weapons/war crisis, disasters/unrest/terrorism, culture, science/ecology/technology, religion, law/crimes/corruption, population, sports, social service, welfare, and education. Willnat and Luo (2011) noted that US television news used the following frames to cover the topics and actors of China: internal politics, international politics, internal order, human interest, communication, transportation, labor/industry/business, culture, religion, sports, citizens, and health/welfare. The broader choice of the topics about China would promote a more objective view of China (Ching, 1998).

Mediated political personalization

Scholars have noticed the increasing significance of political leaders in the political process and theorized it as *political personalization*, a shift in focus from political groups to political leaders (Downey & Stanyer, 2010; Kriesi, 2011; Oegema & Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001; Wattenberg, 1991). Although Radunski (1980) noted political personalization is as old as politics itself, it was argued that political leaders have become increasingly important for citizens in their vote choice and other political activities (Hayes & McAllister, 1997; McAllister, 2007; Stewart & Clarke, 1992; Wattenberg, 1998), whereas the weight of political groups, such as a party, has been decreased over years (Karvonen, 2010; Rahat & Sheafer, 2007). Inglehart (2007) argued that self-expression oriented values have been displacing traditional rational values as a basis for social and political life since the early 1970s. This shift makes people perceive themselves, as well as others, primarily as individuals rather than as representatives of groups (Karvonen, 2010). Therefore, people pay more attention on political actors rather than political groups.

Most people do not have personal or direct communication with the political leaders. They get much of the information of political leaders from mass media. In other words, mass media are the public's principle source of political information, and the public perceives political leader in a mediatized environment (Strömbäck, 2008). In alignment with the shift of *political personalization*, scholars found that the similar shift has also occurred in the media coverage of politics. That is, political leaders have become more central in media coverage, while parties and government institutions have been less covered (Van Aelst et al., 2012). Scholars coined a concept, *mediated political personalization*, to theorize this trend (Balmas & Sheafer, 2013; Downey & Stanyer, 2010). Balmas and Sheafer (2013) defined it as "a change in the presentation of politics in the media, as expressed in a heightened focus on individual politicians and a diminished focus on parties, organizations, and institutions" (p. 455).

One may conjecture that *political personalization* might be the cause of *mediated political personalization*, as media cater to the public's tastes. Scholars proposed the opposite argument. Mancini (2011) argued that media follow their discursive logic that lead to privileging and emphasizing individual figures, and turning them into characters of stories. Thus, the *political personalization* is the product of the symbolic nature of media. Scholars provided other explanations for the causes of *mediated political personalization*. For example, Norris (1995) noticed that media organizations usually dispatch journalists to foreign countries for short periods of time to cover a specific event. This *parachute journalism* makes foreign news often being focused on a political leader rather than other political aspects of the country that could provide sufficient context.

While most of the studies of *mediated political personalization* were conducted within the local or national context, Balmas and Sheafer (2013, 2014) revealed that this phenomenon also exists in

Table 1. Prominence measure used by Pollock (2014, 2015).

Dimension	Prominence score			
	4	3	2	1
Placement	Front page first section	Front page inside section	Inside page first section	Other
Headline size (no. of words)	10+	9–8	7–6	5 for fewer
Article length (no. of words)	1000+	750–999	500–749	250–499
Photos/graphics	2 or more	1		

Prominence score, @ John C. Pollock, 1994–2014.

the international communication arena. They found that the media coverage of foreign countries has been focused increasingly on foreign leaders at the expense of other aspects of their political process. For most people, mass media are the main source of information about global politics (Karvonen, 2010). Compared to the national leaders, the public has even less personal or direct contacts and relies more on media to get the information of foreign leaders.

Measures of media visibility

Scholars have explored the measures of media visibility. They argued that media visibility consists of two components: attention and prominence. Attention of the news media usually is akin to awareness and gauged by the sheer volume of stories or spaces dedicated to the objects or issues (Golan & Wanta, 2001). Prominence refers to the positioning of a story within a media text to indicate its importance (Kiouisis, 2004). Bowen, Davis, and Matsumoto (2005) developed a 3-point scale to measure prominence: the prominence score is 3 when the subject appears in the headline, the prominence score is 2 when the subject appears in the first paragraph, and the prominence score is 1 when the subject appears in other places. This measure was called *Bowen index* in this study. Pollock (2014, 2015) used a complex measure of prominence with the combination of placement, headline size, article length, and photos/graphs (See Table 1). This measure was called *Pollock index* in this study.

To improve China’s international image, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced “We should increase China’s soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China’s messages to the world” in 2014 (“Xi eyes more enabling int’l environment,” 2014). China launched its “external propaganda” project with astronomical annual budget (Shambaugh, 2015). With such tremendous support, Chinese media have gained rapid expansion overseas. As China has made huge efforts to enhance its soft power in the international arena during recent years, it is worthwhile to explore how the Western media portrayed Chinese President Xi Jinping. As *The New York Times* has been a benchmark for media agenda (Gans, 1979), and plays a significant role in the inter-media agenda-setting process (Gilbert et al., 1980; Reese & Danielian, 1989; Shaw & Sparrow, 1999), it is reasonable to use it as a representative of Western media. This study investigated the media visibility of the frames *The New York Times* employed to portray Chinese President Xi Jinping. The following research questions were proposed:

RQ1. What frames did *The New York Times* use to portray Chinese President Xi Jinping?

RQ2. What are the assessments of attention of Chinese President Xi Jinping in *The New York Times* at the overall level and of each frame?

RQ3. What are the assessments of prominence of Chinese President Xi Jinping in *The New York Times* at the overall level and of each frame?

Method

News sample selection

News articles published in *The New York Times* during the time period from 15 November 2012 (the first day President Xi Jinping assumed office) to 15 November 2015 constitute the sampling frame of news population. *LexisNexis Academic* was used as the database to obtain news articles. The author searched Chinese President's name "Xi Jinping" in the headline and lead paragraph and got 361 news articles in *The New York Times*. These news articles were downloaded. The primary coder read all of them and identified 31 irrelevant articles, which had more than half of the content irrelevant to President Xi Jinping and China. In all, 12 articles are corrections and one article is redundant. Thus, the total number of news articles of the news sample is 317.

Content analysis

The qualitative content analysis was employed to identify the frames about President Xi Jinping in *The New York Times* based on the grounded theory approach that involves open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Becker & Stamp, 2005). The coding work involved two-step coding process. In the first step, the author did open coding and axial coding on 35 randomly selected news articles (10.9% of news sample). In the open coding, the raw messages were broken into idea units. Each unit conveys a single idea. If the axial coding, the categories (sub-frames and mid-level frames) were identified around which the idea units grouped together based on the similar themes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Previous studies on the Western media coverage of China (Willnat & Luo, 2011; Zhang & Cameron, 2003) were used as the reference schemes for this axial coding. Then, the author and another coder independently coded other 35 randomly selected (10.9% of news sample) news articles using the categories (sub-frames and mid-level frames) developed by the primary coder to find the content that cannot be coded by these categories. The author coded this content using the open coding and axial coding approaches, and created more categories (sub-frames and mid-level frames). In the second step, the open coding and axial coding were repeated using other 70 random selected news articles. Altogether 18 sub-frame categories and 12 mid-level frame categories were identified through these two steps of coding. Finally, the author did the selective coding through which the 12 mid-level frame categories were grouped into three major frames. The following are the examples of some sub-frames:

At a time when China's Foreign Ministry is struggling to improve China's international image, Ms. Peng, 50, who has dazzled audiences at home and abroad with her bravura soprano voice, comes as a welcome gift. (Family members)

In a strong signal of support for greater market-oriented economic policies, Xi Jinping, the new head of the Communist Party, made a visit over the weekend to the special economic zone of Shenzhen in south China, which has stood as a symbol of the nation's embrace of a state-led form of capitalism since its

growth over the last three decades from a fishing enclave to an industrial metropolis. (Campaigns or strategies: Economy)

The summit meeting followed a historic accord reached in Beijing in November by Mr. Obama and President Xi Jinping, who pledged to enact policies to cut emissions significantly. Mr. Obama said the United States would reduce planet-warming carbon emissions up to 28 percent by 2025, while Mr. Xi vowed that China would halt its emissions growth by 2030. (China-United States: Greenhouse gas emissions)

Three months ago, Yiu Mantin, a retired engineer from Hong Kong, crossed into mainland China for a short visit, as he had done many times. But this time he disappeared into the hands of the police, and his family and friends believe he was singled out because of his second career—book publishing—and especially because he planned to distribute a withering denunciation of President Xi Jinping. (Freedom of speech)

The Xi government has also proposed regulations that could make it impossible for American technology companies to operate there. They would be forced to store data about Chinese customers in China and provide the Chinese government backdoor access to their systems and encrypted communications, making those services even more vulnerable to hacking. (China-United States: Commercial cooperation)

The feud over the islands, known as the Diaoyu in China and the Senkaku in Japan, reached a dangerous new level nearly two weeks ago, when both Japan and China scrambled jet fighters over the East China Sea. The United States is obligated under a security treaty with Japan to defend the islands, which were handed back to Japan by Washington in 1972 as part of the return of Okinawa. (China-Japan: Territorial dispute)

The quantitative content analysis approach was also employed to code each article in the news sample. The coding scheme was developed on the basis of qualitative content analysis. That is, the frames and sub-frames generated were used to create a coding sheet, which includes the position where the name of Chinese President appeared, the size of headline, the length of the article, and the number of photos/graphs. Some articles contained only one sub-frame, while others contained multiple sub-frames. The following rule was used to determine whether an article has one or more sub-frames: one sub-frame when the content related to it is more than half of the article, two sub-frames when the content related to each of them is more than one-third of the article, and three sub-frames when the content related to each of them is more than one quarter of the article. When the codes of multiple sub-frames appear in one article but none of them meet the criteria above, and when none of these sub-frames appear in one article, this article was coded as others, which were not counted in the analysis.

In the next stage, 35 news articles were randomly selected and coded independently by the two coders using the developed coding scheme and without any discussion or collaboration. The inter-coder reliability was computed for their coding work. As the coding sheet contains the variables for 18 sub-frames, of which only a few were identified and coded in one news article, the three frequently used inter-coder reliability test indexes—Scott's (1955) π , Cohen's (1960) κ , and Krippendorff's (2004) α —cannot be defined for every coding variable. Thus, two other inter-coder reliability indexes—Holsti's (1969) formula and Perreault, William and Leigh's (1989) I_r —were examined. These two indexes were higher than 0.94 for every sub-frames. After that, the two coders coded the rest of the articles in the news sample independently with the roughly equal amount of coding work.

Calculation of the measures of media visibility

The number of articles that contain a sub-frame, or a mid-level frame if it does not have sub-frame, was used to measure attention of that frame. The attention of a mid-level frame that contains multiple sub-frames was calculated by summing the attention value of all its sub-frames. The attention of a major frame that contains multiple mid-level frames was calculated by summing the attention values of all its mid-level frames. Two measures of media prominence, *Bowen index* and *Pollock index*, were used to calculate the media prominence of a sub-frame, or a mid-level frame if it does not have sub-frame. The prominence of a mid-level frame that contains multiple sub-frames was calculated by summing the prominence values of all its sub-frames. The prominence of a major frame that contains multiple mid-level frames was calculated by summing the prominence values of all its mid-level frames.

Results

The qualitative coding generated three major frames, 12 mid-level frames, and 18 sub-frames, which were shown in Table 2. The attention value, that is, the number of news articles that contain these frames, and the values of two prominence measures were also reported.

In particular, Domestic Issues and Campaigns/Strategies is the major frame that had the highest attention value. There were 130 articles (41% of the news sample) that contain this major frame. This frame has four mid-level frames: Campaigns or Strategies (81 articles, 25.6% of the news sample), Human Rights (35 articles, 11% of the news sample), Ethnic Conflict (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample), and Cross-strait Relations (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample). Under the umbrella of Campaigns or Strategies, there are five sub-frames: Anti-corruption (39 articles, 12.3% of the news sample), Economy (21 articles, 6.6% of the news sample), Politics (9 articles, 2.8% of the news sample), Culture (3 articles, 1% of the news sample), and Military (9 articles, 2.8% of the news sample). Under the umbrella of human right, there are two sub-frames: Freedom of Speech (18 articles, 5.7 of the news sample) and Social Activism (17 articles, 5.4 of the news sample). There is only one sub-frame under Ethnic Conflict: Riots in Xinjiang (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample). And there is only one sub-frame under Cross-strait Relations: Xi and Ma Meeting (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample).

Foreign Policies and International Relations is the major frame that had the middle attention value (82 articles, 25.9% of the news sample). There are six mid-level frames under it: China-United States (48 articles, 15.1% of the news sample), China-Britain (8 articles, 2.5% of the news sample), China-Japan (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample), China-Russia (8 articles, 2.5% of the news sample), China-South Korea (5 articles, 1.6% of the news sample), and China-North Korea (9 articles, 2.8% of the news sample). Under the China-United States frame, there are four sub-frames: Cyberattack (22 articles, 6.9% of the news sample), Commercial Cooperation (11 articles, 3.5% of the news sample), Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (5 articles, 1.6% of the news sample), and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (10 articles, 3.2% of the news sample). Under the China-Japan frame, there is only one sub-frame: Territorial Dispute (7 articles, 2.2% of the news sample). Commercial cooperation is the only one sub-frame under the China-Britain (8 articles, 2.5% of the news sample) and China-Russia (8 articles, 2.5% of the news sample) frames. Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the only one sub-frame under China-South Korea (5 articles, 2.5% of the news sample) and China-North Korea (9 articles, 2.8% of the news sample).

Individual and Family is the third major frame that had lowest attention value (23 articles, 7.3% of the news sample). Under this major frame, two mid-level frames were identified: Personality

Table 2. Media visibility measures of the major frames, mid-level frames, and sub-frames in the coverage of Chinese President Xi Jinping in *The New York Times*.

Major frames	Mid-level frames	Sub-frames
Individual and Family (23, 39, 238)	Personality and leadership style (17, 29, 179) Family members (6, 10, 59)	
Domestic Issues and Campaigns/Strategies (130, 207, 1259)	Campaigns or strategies (81, 135, 812) Human rights (35, 61, 304) Ethnic conflict (7, 11, 72) Cross-strait relations (7, 14, 71) China-United States (48, 81, 463)	Anti-corruption (39, 66, 395) Economy (21, 36, 220) Politics (9, 12, 72) Culture (3, 7, 37) Military (9, 14, 88) Freedom of speech (18, 28, 142) Social activism (17, 22, 162) Riots in Xinjiang (7, 11, 72) Xi and Ma meeting (7, 14, 71) Cyberattack (22, 41, 206) Commercial cooperation (11, 14, 119) Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (5, 6, 45) Greenhouse gas emissions (10, 20, 93)
Foreign Policies and International Relations (85, 129, 835)	China-Britain (8, 15, 107) China-Japan (7, 12, 63) China-Russia (8, 9, 76) China-South Korea (5, 7, 40) China-North Korea (9, 14, 86)	Commercial cooperation (8, 15, 107) Territorial dispute (7, 12, 63) Commercial cooperation (8, 9, 76) Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (5, 7, 40) Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (9, 14, 86)

The first number in the parentheses is the number of articles that contain the frame. The second number is the prominence value of *Bowen index*. The third number is the prominence value of *Pollock index*.

and Leadership Style (17 articles, 5.4% of the news sample), and Family Members (6 articles, 1.9% of the news sample). There are no sub-frames under these two mid-level frames.

For the prominence assessment, Domestic Issues and Campaigns/Strategies had the highest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 207; *Pollock index*: 1259) than those of Foreign Policies and International Relations (*Bowen index*: 129; *Pollock index*: 835), and those of Individual and Family (*Bowen index*: 39; *Pollock index*: 239). Under the umbrella of Domestic Issues and Campaigns/Strategies, Campaigns or Strategies had the highest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 135; *Pollock index*: 812) than those of Human Rights (*Bowen index*: 61; *Pollock index*: 304), those of Ethnic Conflict (*Bowen index*: 11; *Pollock index*: 72), and those of Cross-strait Relations (*Bowen index*: 14; *Pollock index*: 71). Under the umbrella of Campaigns or Strategies, Anti-corruption had the highest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 66; *Pollock index*: 395) than those of Economy (*Bowen index*: 36; *Pollock index*: 220), those of Politics (*Bowen index*: 12; *Pollock index*: 72), those of Culture (*Bowen index*: 7; *Pollock index*: 37), and those of Military (*Bowen index*: 14; *Pollock index*: 88). Under the umbrella of Human Rights, Freedom of Speech had higher *Bowen index* value but lower *Pollock index* value (*Bowen index*: 28; *Pollock index*: 142) than those of Social Activism (*Bowen index*: 22; *Pollock index*: 162).

Foreign Policies and International Relations had the middle prominence values (*Bowen index*: 129; *Pollock index*: 835). Among its six mid-level frames, China-United States had the highest

prominence values (*Bowen index*: 81; *Pollock index*: 463). China-Britain had the second highest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 15; *Pollock index*: 107), which are far below those of China-United States frame. China-North Korea had a bit higher prominence values (*Bowen index*: 14; *Pollock index*: 86) than those of other three frames including China-Japan (*Bowen index*: 12; *Pollock index*: 63), China-Russia (*Bowen index*: 9; *Pollock index*: 76), and China-South Korea (*Bowen index*: 7; *Pollock index*: 40). Under the umbrella of China-United States frame, Cyberattack had the highest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 41; *Pollock index*: 206). Commercial Cooperation had lower *Bowen index* value but higher *Pollock index* value (*Bowen index*: 14; *Pollock index*: 119) than those of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (*Bowen index*: 20; *Pollock index*: 93). Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons had the lowest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 6; *Pollock index*: 45).

Individual and Family had the lowest prominence values (*Bowen index*: 39; *Pollock index*: 238) among the three major frames. Among its two mid-level frames, Personality and Leadership Style had higher prominence values (*Bowen index*: 29; *Pollock index*: 179) than those of Family Members (*Bowen index*: 10; *Pollock index*: 59).

Discussion

This study assessed the media visibility of Chinese President and his first 3-year governance in *The New York Times*. Based on the qualitative content analysis which created multiple frames, quantitative content analysis was conducted to quantify attention and prominence, the two parameters of media visibility. Two measures of prominence proposed by previous studies were used in the assessment. The results revealed different extents of media visibility of multiple frames identified in this study.

Most previous studies on media coverage of China used the term frame to categorize news (e.g. Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000; Goodman, 1999; Willnat & Luo, 2011), while some others used the other terms such as theme (e.g. Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Entman (1993) defined: “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 518). McCombs (2005) defined “a frame is an attribute of the object under consideration because it describes the object” (p. 546). “In other words, attributes defining a central theme are frames” (McCombs, 2005, p. 547). He further defined “central themes are a delimited category of attributes because they are the attributes defining a dominant perspective on an object” (p. 546). Thus, frame and theme are the same when they describe a dominant attribute/perspective on an object. Following most previous studies, this study also used the term “frame” to conceptualize the dominant aspects/attributes of the media coverage of Chinese President and his governance. The frames were identified through the qualitative content analysis. As the themes obtained from the qualitative content analysis are the dominant attributes/perspectives of the media coverage, frame and themes were used interchangeably in this study.

This study found that *The New York Times* used three major frames, 12 mid-level frames, and 18 sub-frames to report Chinese President and his governance. It confirmed the conclusion of several previous studies that Western media employed a broad range of frames to cover China (e.g. Ching, 1998; Li & Cyr, 1998; Willnat & Luo, 2011; Zhang & Cameron, 2003), and contradicted other studies that concluded Western media only focused on a narrow range of frames (e.g. Dai, 1997; Goodman, 1999; Mann, 1999; Perlmutter, 1996). In particular, Human Rights and its sub-frames including Freedom of Speech and Social Activism were still highly reported frames in *The New York Times*. But they were not dominant frames any more. Among 12 mid-level frames, Campaigns or Strategies had highest attention value and prominence values; China-United States

also had higher attention value and prominence values than those of Human Rights. Among 18 sub-frames, Anti-corruption had highest attention value and prominence values; Cyberattack and Economy also had higher attention value and prominence values than those of Freedom of Speech and Social Activism.

Moreover, two frames emphasized by previous studies (e.g. Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000; Kobland et al., 1992; Luther & Zhou, 2004; Sparks, 2010; Wu, 2006), anti-communist frame and government's handling of crises, were not found in the news sample of this study. Instead, two sub-frames that had highest attention and prominence values were Anti-corruption and Cyberattack. These were the two significant issues in China and China-United States relations. President Xi's anti-corruption campaign was one of the largest efforts of overhauling the bureaucracy of Communist Party in the history of China, through which over 120 high-ranking officials—including about a dozen high-ranking military officers, several senior executives of state-owned companies, and five national leaders—were investigated for corruption and removed from office (Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d.). This campaign attracted wide attention of Chinese people and American news media. The highest media visibility of Anti-corruption frame demonstrated that *The New York Times* focused on the high-profile domestic issues in China. Cyberattack was an important issue in China-United States relations during the past few years. China was accused of conducting cyberattack on American companies and government agencies, which may lead to the theft of 22 million personal security files (Sanger, 2015). Cyberattacks have become America's top threat (Clapper, 2013). And this issue became one of the major topics in the dialogues between President Obama and President Xi. Correspondingly, *The New York Times* had a large amount of coverage on it. This finding echoed Li and Cyr's (1998) argument that the frames of the coverage of China in US media changed according to the bilateral relations.

It should be noted that the two measures of prominence assess different aspects of media visibility. *Bowen index* only quantifies the placement of the subject—Chinese President in this study—in news coverage, whereas *Pollock index* is a more comprehensive measure of the information regarding placement of the article, headline size, article length, and photos/graphs. The values of these two measures reported in Table 2 were the sum of the values of these two measures of each article. These total values already counted the attention value (number of the articles). Therefore, for most frames, when they had high *Bowen index* values, they also had high *Pollock index* values. But there were also some exceptions. For example, Freedom of Speech had higher *Bowen index* value but lower *Pollock index* value than Social Activism. These exceptions demonstrated that the two measures of prominence are not substitutes. Instead, they should be regarded as complementary, and a composite measure of prominence could be developed by combining these two measures.

Media visibility is a key parameter of media coverage, and a key variable in the research of agenda-building and agenda-setting. The assessment of media visibility of various frames of Chinese President in *The New York Times* would help us understand how this prestigious US newspaper portrayed him. News media, including both traditional media and new media, are the major sources from which most people get relevant information about foreign countries. Therefore, they have huge influence on the public's perceptions of foreign countries and their leaders. *The New York Times* has a large number of readers, and affects the news agendas of other news outlets. Its coverage of Chinese President would have impacts on Americans' views of him and China. The findings of this study showed that *The New York Times* employed multiple frames to report Chinese President, and the two frames with the highest media visibility are (Domestic) Campaigns and

Strategies and China-United States (relations), rather than Human Rights. These findings suggest that *The New York Times* would lead Americans to have a comprehensive view of Chinese President and his governance, and pay more attention to the current significant domestic issues of China and bilateral issues between China and the United States.

This study contained several limitations. Although *The New York Times* is a good representative of US media, it does not equal the whole US media or Western media. Whether other mainstream news media in the United States and other Western countries used the same frames and had the same media visibility of the various frames as the *The New York Times* does deserve further exploration. This study only assessed media visibility. Another important parameter of media coverage—media favorability—should also be measured, as the tone of media coverage would affect people's emotional perceptions. The overall evaluation of media coverage should combine the assessments of media visibility and media favorability. Thus, a composite measure of these two parameters should be developed to advance agenda-building and agenda-setting studies of Chinese President, as well as other political leaders.

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