REPRESENTATIONS OF CHINA ACROSS THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

By
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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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This study is a computer-aided content analysis of six news sources: CNN, FOX News Channel, MSNBC, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and Politico. Agenda Setting, Framing, and Niche Theory are used as theoretical lenses to study whether liberal, moderate, and conservative outlets engage the audience differently in terms of their coverage of foreign policy issues related to China. The results of this study indicate that the five key issues at the forefront of US-China geopolitical and diplomatic relations (military, trade, finance, technology, and human rights) are given varied treatment depending upon the media outlet. The findings of this study reveal substantial variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to China and variation between how media outlets cover China-related foreign policy issues. In addition, there is significant variation in what the diverse media outlets covered between the Trump and Biden administration on foreign policy issues relating to China. Finally, across different media channels, the central issue of human rights is articulated in relation to various diplomatic stressors in disparate ways.

INTRODUCTION

American mainstream media are devoting increased attention to China. In fact, some would argue that since the implementation of the opening and reform policy, China's national image has been at the hands of the mainstream media (Jia & Lu, 2021; Peng, 2004). The American public is dependent on the media for news shaping their understanding of American foreign affairs. In recent history, China has been framed at varied points in time by U.S. media outlets as the 'Red' China, the 'Tiananmen Square' China, or 'a developing and threatening' China. While the American media claim impartiality and balance in their reporting, Chinese official media have accused the American media of demonizing China's international image, spreading anti-China notions, and depicting demoralizing and fictitious versions of the China threat theory. (Johnson, & Johnson, 2021).

The image of China as portrayed in U.S. media has always been a point of contention, and the relationship between Beijing and Washington became more antagonistic during the Trump administration. A noticeable division in media coverage along political and ideological lines became more evident in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Some argue these increased tensions are due to trade disputes, the treatment of the Uighur minority in the Xinjiang province (which only served to further deteriorate human rights) or the attempt to abolish Hong Kong's political autonomy (Blumenthal, 2021). Others maintain the division stems from a lack of objective coverage of the coronavirus pandemic. A recent study found the media framed China using the following phrases: "the real sick man of Asia", "the Wuhan virus-," "the Belt & Road Initiative pandemic," and "the China virus." (Jia & Lu 2021).

Some scholars contend that the media are believed to be a fourth branch of the government, or a cooperating part of the total national establishment, and an instrument expressing and fostering national perspectives in international relationships (Jia & Lu, 2021). Countless studies have uncovered that shifts in foreign policy are in direct correlation to how the mainstream media in the US report international news. Peng (2004) opines that for average American citizens, foreign affairs are often beyond direct experience and involvement, and hence their involvement and perception of the world outside depend heavily on how the issues and consequences are framed by the policy makers and the news media.

This study conducted a computer-aided content analysis of six news sources (*CNN, FOX News Channel, MSNBC, The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Politico*) to assess American media coverage of China. Agenda Setting, Framing, and Niche Theory are used as theoretical lenses to study whether liberal, moderate, and conservative outlets engage the audience differently in terms of their coverage of one of America's key geo-political competitors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agenda-Setting Theory

To explain the variation in media coverage of China within the media landscape this study draws from several communication theories including agenda-setting theory, framing theory, and niche theory. McCombs and Shaw (1972) formally developed agenda-setting theory when they conducted a study on the 1968 presidential election. They compared the salience of issues in news content with the public's perceptions of the most imperative election issue and were able to ascertain the degree to which the media sway's public opinion (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda-setting theory is built upon two critical postulations: 1) media filters and shapes what we see rather than just reflecting stories to the audience and 2) the more attention the media gives to an issue, the more likely the public will consider that issue to be important (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).

The media plays an integral role in shaping political reality. The theory argues the agenda of the media will eventually become the public agenda through salience transfer. What is top-of-the-head for the media industry will become top-of-the-head for its audience. Not only will the public ascertain information on the issue from the media, but they will also learn how much importance they should attach to a particular issue (McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis, et al., 2011). The question then becomes, what is the media agenda relevant to China? A wide range of topics and issues as objects are of potential interest to the public, but the news hole is finite and only some of these objects can be given attention by the media. The objects that make it into the news reflect the news agenda. A key question is whether the news hole (i.e., the media agenda) varies by outlet. Therefore, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1: Is there variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to China?

RQ2: Is there variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to specific policy issues as they relate to China?

Framing Theory

According to *The Handbook of Mass Media and Communication Theory*, "framing theory focuses on both how the media present news stories and how people make sense of the stories they find in the media" (Fortner & Fackler, n.d.). Framing theory is related to agenda-setting theory but while agenda setting is focused on particular objects (e.g., China), framing theory focuses on the attributes of those objects that shape or give meaning to the topic of a piece of news. Framing theory implies that the choices people make about how to process information are influenced by how an object in the news is presented to them (i.e., the frame). Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. Most framing research has focused on journalism and how the media influences experiences of the social world. Often, news stories are framed in ways "that eliminate much of their ambiguity and instead reinforce socially accepted and expected ways of seeing the world" (Naveed, 2021).

Therefore, this paper seeks to not only address how the media sets the agenda but to also explore how the media frames certain objects. In this case policy issues as they relate to China. It is important to look at what attributes are being attached to certain issues for both media and policy professionals. For that reason, the following research question is offered:

RQ3: Is there a variation between how media outlets cover China-related foreign policy issues?

Niche Theory

Niche theory implies that different media outlets are in competition with one another so that they can remain viable and profitable. Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984 established that an ecological theory (the theory of niche) could be used to describe rivalry and coexistence among media industries. In essence, niche theory "examines the breadth, or the degree of niche overlap among different media, and superiority of a medium in relation to other media on gratification opportunities" (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

Niche theory assumes there are market forces at work in the media and that the media is an 'ecological system.' If we apply the niche theory to the media, then we see that media outlets must work constantly to re-establish their audience due to external changes that effect their niche. For example, a government may impose a new piece of legislation that affects the news marketplace (e.g., an equal-time rule) that will have an effect on how any one news outlet seeks to maintain its unique audience. For this study, the external event is the 'change' in the administration' due to the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The research question of interest is as follows:

RQ4: Did U.S. media outlets coverage of China-related foreign policy issues vary between the Trump and Biden administration?

Undoubtedly, the United States and China have what is widely regarded as one of the world's most important bilateral relationships. The issue of human rights has been a

long-standing point of contention between the United States and China. Some would argue that since the 1989 suppression of the Tiananmen Square movement, the United States and China have held contrasting positions opinions on human rights issues (Dalpino, 1999). Therefore, the following research question is offered:

RQ5: What is the frequency that human rights is articulated in relation to various diplomatic stressors across different media channels?

METHOD

To address this study's research questions, a computer-aided content analysis was conducted of broadcast transcripts from three of the top 24-hour US television networks and articles from two national newspapers, and a highly rated political on-line news outlet. The term "transcript" for the purpose of this paper signifies all content in print form from the six media sources (e.g., transcripts of broadcast content, newspaper print). Once a final corpus of data was amassed, an analysis of content related to China was conducted (*Please see Appendix A).*

Newspaper selection

Specifically, *The New York Times* was chosen because of its demonstrated powerful agenda-setting function among political elites and smaller news outlets (Domke et al. 1999). Many scholars who have employed *The New York Times* in their research have written about its reputation as part of the prestige press, or national media opinion leaders who are respected for their political coverage (Entman 2004; Stemple & Windhauser 1984; Halbertstam 1979). Entman (2004) also selected *The New York Times* for its record of willingness to challenge the positions of governmental and political elites.

The Washington Post was chosen for analysis because it is a major national paper, it is also widely considered to be the newspaper of record for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. It has the largest circulation and reaches the largest percentage of the local D.C. community. This allows it to be a large agenda setting power among the powerful policy makers and influencers in our nation. Both *The New York Times* and *The*

Washington Post were also selected in this study for their perceived liberal orientation, which runs counter to the FOX News Network coverage.

Politico is an American political journalism that covers politics and policy in the United States and internationally. It distributes content primarily through its website but also via television, printed newspapers, radio, and podcasts ("Politico - Wikipedia", 2021). According to a 2020 Knight Foundation study, *Politico* is generally read by a moderate audience, leaning slightly toward the left (2021). Due to a massive amount of data from *The New York Times*, I chose to include only Section A, the World Section, and the US Politics Section from the *New York Times*. Opinion articles from these sections were also excluded from the corpus of data.

Network Selection

Three top 24-hour television networks were chosen for this study, including CNN, FOX News, and MSNBC. Specifically, one news broadcast and one opinion broadcast were chosen for each CNN and FOX News. One news broadcast and two opinion broadcasts were chosen for MSNBC. The television networks and respective broadcasts were chosen in conjunction with the client and advisor.

The three largest 24-hour news networks-CNN, FOX News, and MSNBC were chosen because of their perceived political differentiation. According to a 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center, FOX News and CNN were named by the largest segments of U.S. adults as their main political news source (Grieco, 2020). The major networks saw an increase in ratings during 2020. FOX News finished the year with an average of 3.6 million viewers, up 45% from the same period the previous year. MSNBC averaged

2.2 million, a boost of 24%. CNN saw an even greater increase, as it was up 85% to average 1.8 million (Johnson & Johnson, 2021).

Information on specific television network coverage:

- **CNN Broadcast:** *The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer* is a daily newscast on CNN hosted by Wolf Blitzer. The show currently airs on weekdays live from 5:00pm to 7:00pm EST. The daily newscast includes live discussion of current events, breaking news, and political headlines.

- **CNN Opinion:** *Anderson Cooper* 360 is a fast-paced nightly newscast hosted by Anderson Cooper. The show currently airs on weeknights from 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm EST.

- **FOX Broadcast:** *Special Report with Bret Baier* is a political commentary program hosted by Bret Baier. The show currently airs on weekdays live from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm EST.

- **FOX Opinion:** *Tucker Carlson Tonight* is a talk show and current affairs program hosted by Tucker Carlson.

- **MSNBC Broadcast:** *The Beat with Ari Melber* is a news and political program hosted by Ari Melber. The show currently airs weekdays from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm EST.   (6pm)

- **MSNBC Opinion 1**: *The Rachel Maddow Show* is a progressive news and opinion television program hosted by Rachel Maddow. The show currently airs on weekdays from 9:00 pm to 10:00 pm EST.

- **MSNBC Opinion 2**: *All in with Chris Hayes* is a news television program hosted by Chris Hayes. The show currently airs on weekdays from 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm EST.

Search Parameters

The search parameters were chosen to create a timely and relevant body of data. Broadcast transcripts and articles chosen for the study aired or were published between January 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021. The timeframe was chosen in part because of the unique political atmosphere in 2020 and the transition to a new administration.

- Data from the "Trump administration" included dates ranging from January 1, 2020 to November 30, 2020

- Data considered to be part of the "Biden administration" included dates ranging from December 1, 2021 through February 28, 2021.

- December 2020 dates were included as part of the "Biden administration" even though technically, President Trump was still in office.

The rationale behind dividing the dates this way was because the deadline to complete this project made it impossible to extend the dates beyond February 28, 2021. Additionally, news organizations are beginning to cover what the US-China relationship may be like in the future as a result of the 2020 election outcome. So, the change on coverage precedes actual Inauguration Day.

The Annenberg School of Communication Library was used to access Nexus Uni, an online database of information from over 17,000 news, legal, and business sources. Nexus Uni was used for all sources except for *The Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, which was only available through ProQuest, another information database. Full-

length transcripts and full-length articles were downloaded as Word documents and run through Provalis Research Suite programs QDA and Wordstat.

Data Topics

I chose five topics within US-China geopolitical and diplomatic relations: military, trade, finance, technology, and human rights in conjunction with CNAS and my advisor. Multiple terms within each topic were selected and then used to identify relevant news stories. To account for variance in term usage across sources, adjustments to several terms were made which ensured that all relevant data was captured. Several types of adjustments including adding terms, separating phrases into terms, and restricting the placement of terms in relation to each other were made. *Please see Appendix B for a description of the terms used for each category.*

Coding Tools

Content analysis, according to Kerlinger, is a "method of observation that allows researchers to gain leverage on communication-related phenomena" (1973, p. 525). Through content analysis, it is possible to distill words into fewer content-related categories. It is assumed that when classified into the same categories, words, phrases, and the like, the coded assertions share similar means (Cavanaugh 1997). This study conducted a computer-aided content analysis of six news sources: *CNN, FOX News Channel, MSNBC, The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Politico*.

For both the inductive and deductive coding processes, coders employed the Provalis Research Suite programs QDA and Wordstat. These programs offer several advantages for coding processes. Not only do they allow for inductive-quantitative

research, but they allow for codes to be easily merged, divided, and categorized as the coding process develops.

Overall, the benefit of coding articles in a program suite like the one from Provalis is that you can reference past codes, search for keywords and phrases, go back and check prior work, or even change particular codes if needed. Such content analysis programs are likely to increase reliability and eliminate error, if used to their full potential. Also, coders can see exactly where they differ and can easily check inter-coder reliability and reconcile differences (Matthews & Entman 2009).

Data Coding

Once the articles were extracted from Nexis Uni, with their policy categorizations, they were then uploaded into the QDA program. Here the articles were mined for the paragraphs that included "China or Chinese." Importantly, these paragraphs then became the corpus of data I used to produce the findings.

Primarily this choice was made to ensure the conclusions regarding the data are specifically about China. In the television transcripts there are many other topics covered in an hour show. Even in the newspapers and *Politico* it was found that most stories cover more than the specific China topics the research findings intend to reflect.

After this process, the coding unit/case (in Provalis language) became the individual paragraphs; no limit was placed on how many times a paragraph could be coded for each category.

Categories of Coding

Deductive coding involves applying predefined frames to the text to determine the extent to which they are present. A deductive approach is most often based on an earlier theory or model and moves from general theory to specific data (Burns & Grove 2005). The deductive coding in this research involved testing from framing categories. This structured analysis allowed for easier and more immediate comparisons across outlets, nations, and time.

The purpose of using *inductive coding* research was to examine specific differentiations in the media coverage and create more accurate categories than those based on the researcher's preconceived notions or past research models. In a sense, inductive content analysis lets media content speak for itself. This type of approach is particularly important because the research is designed to detect change over time. In writing about the dangers of coding, Mattes and Kohring (2008) warn researchers that "once the frames are defined, other frames are difficult to discover. This is because researchers or coders themselves develop an "audience" or "coder" frame (i.e., coder schemata) on how to perceive the issue" (p. 261), and deductive studies are limited to already-established frames.

Policy Categories

The Policy Category Codes were determined by the previously described Policy Categories that were employed to extract the data from Nexis Uni. The researcher used the QDA program to transform them from being Variables that labeled the individual cases to descriptive Codes that could be analyzed in relationship to predefined variables, such as ADMINISTRATION and OUTLET, as seen in the finding's charts.

Human Rights Policy Phrases

The inductive WordStat program was employed to create the Phrase Codes that are seen in the chart under RQ5.

Specifically, the Phrase Extraction tool was set to recognize phrases of 2-5 words and then sorted by CASE% (each paragraph) is counted as an individual case). Each phrase was then transformed into a CODE and placed on the appropriate case/paragraph. These codes were then transferred to the QDA program where they were used to create the chart that illustrates how varying media outlets were speaking about China in relation to human rights.

Proximity Chart

A semantic proximity chart using Jaccard coefficients allows the visualization of the relationships. According to the WordStat manual, "The proximity plot is the most accurate way to graphically represent the distance between objects by displaying the measured from one or several target objects to all other objects. It is not a data reduction technique but a visualization tool to help one extract information from the huge amount of data stored in the distance matrix at the origin of the dendrogram and the multidimensional scaling plots" (Entman, 2012). The higher the Jaccard coefficient, signifying a longer graph line, the closer relationship is between the Target term, in this study, CHINA and the terms listed on the left side of the graph.

In this case, rather than simply choosing the top ten words that were listed, as some were not as illuminating or relevant to this specific study, I chose what was considered the TOP TEN MOST RELEVANT terms. It is understood that this adds a personal perception factor into the findings, but it was a tradeoff I was willing to accept.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Is there variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to China?

Figure 1-2: This data was pulled from the total corpus of china paragraphs and shows comparative frequencies and shows the total coverage of China policy issues on both 24-hour TV networks and newspapers during both the Trump and Biden administration.
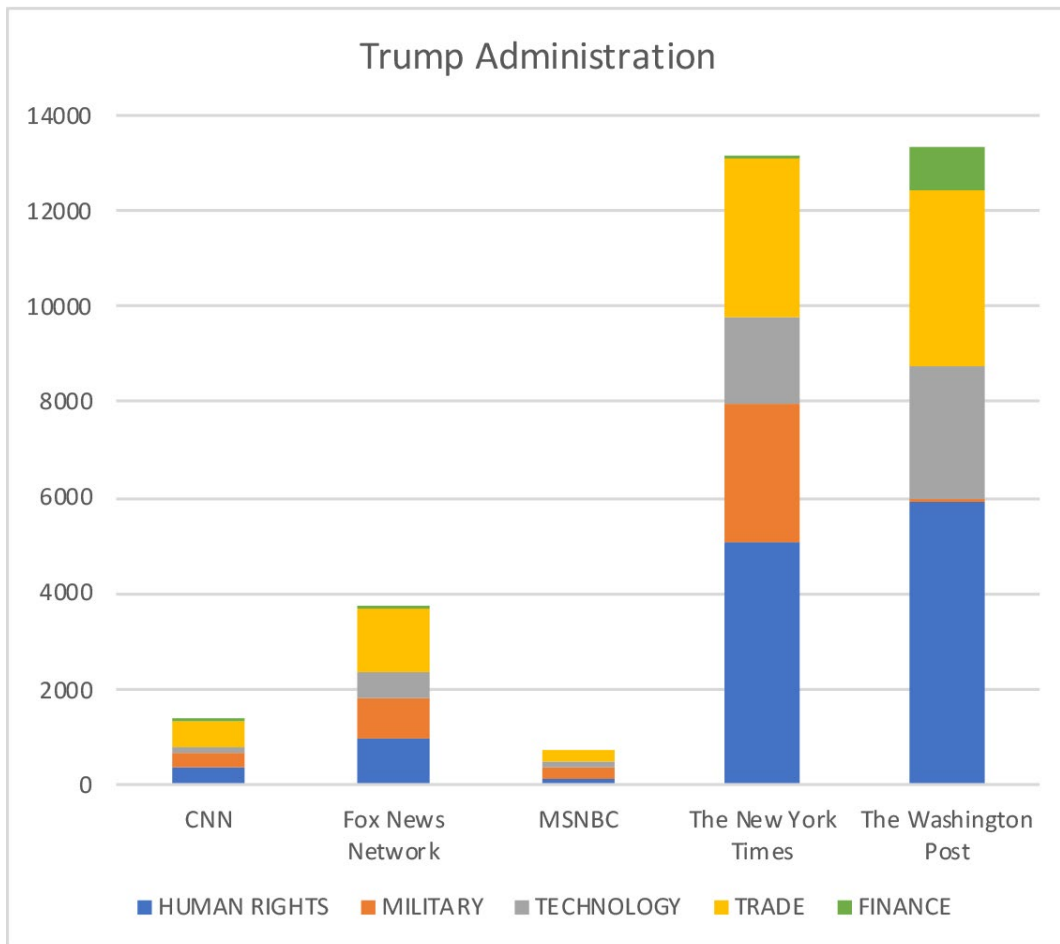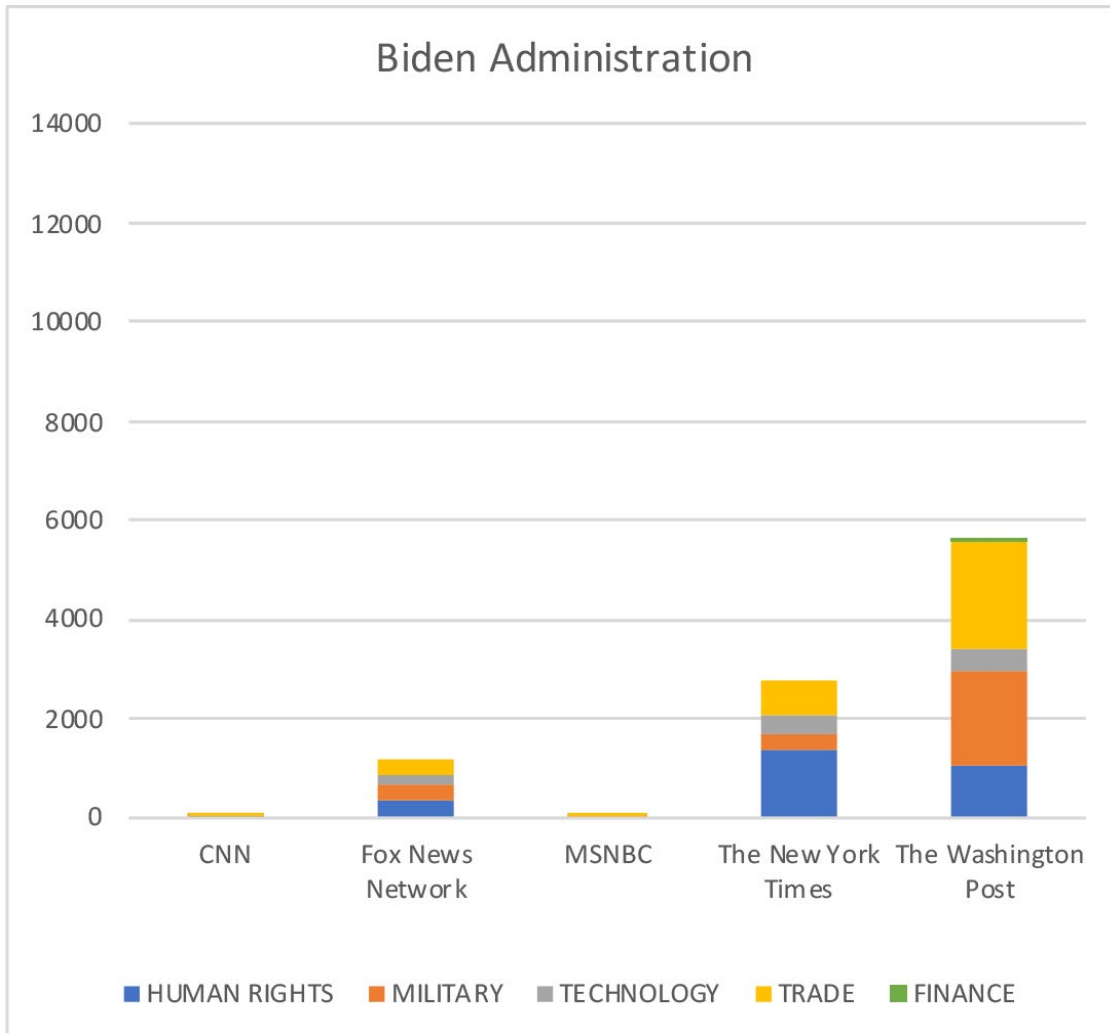

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that in the data there is variation in the amount of coverage television media outlets give to China. Interestingly though, we see that across both administrations the television media outlets themselves were constant in coverage. FOX News was consistently covering these policy issues in relation to China much more than the other outlets. Yet, when we look at the newspapers, there has been a shift. In the Trump administration, the two newspapers were fairly equal in their coverage but in the Biden administration there has been variation, with *The Washington Post* having a great deal more coverage of these China policy issues. This could be attributed to the

fact that *The Washington Post* is the newspaper of the "Beltway," and has overall given a great deal more coverage to the Biden administration as they settle in and pursue a huge shift in policy toward China.

Research Question 2: Is there variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to specific policy issues as they relate to China?
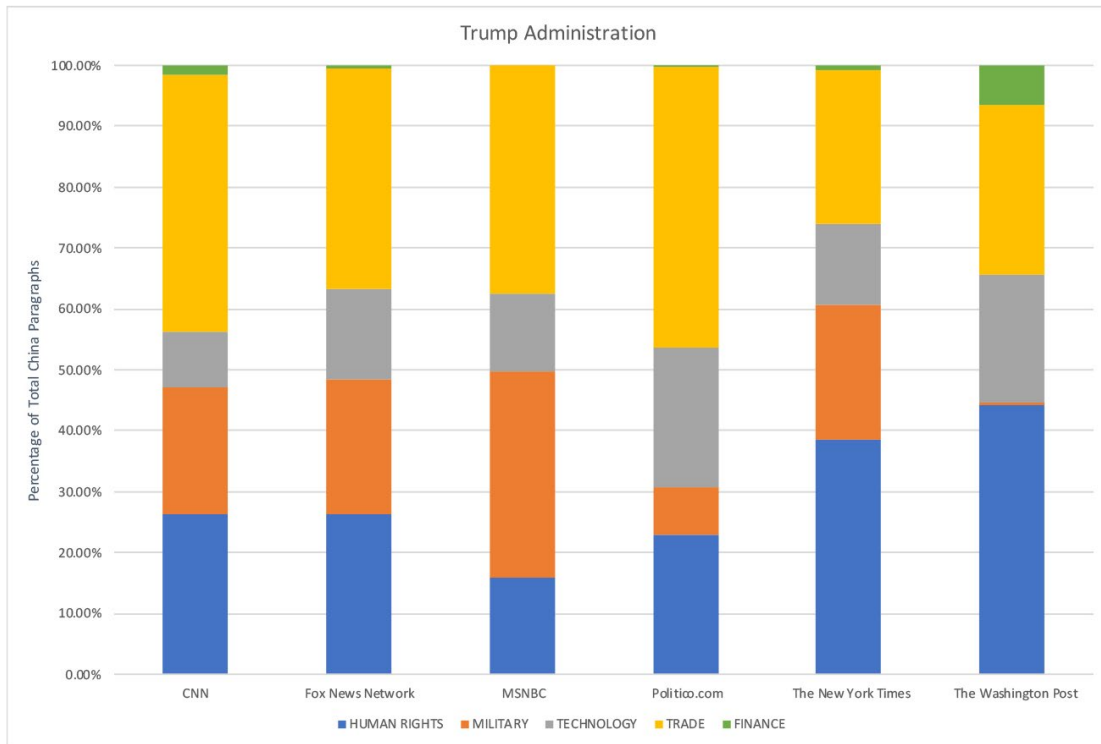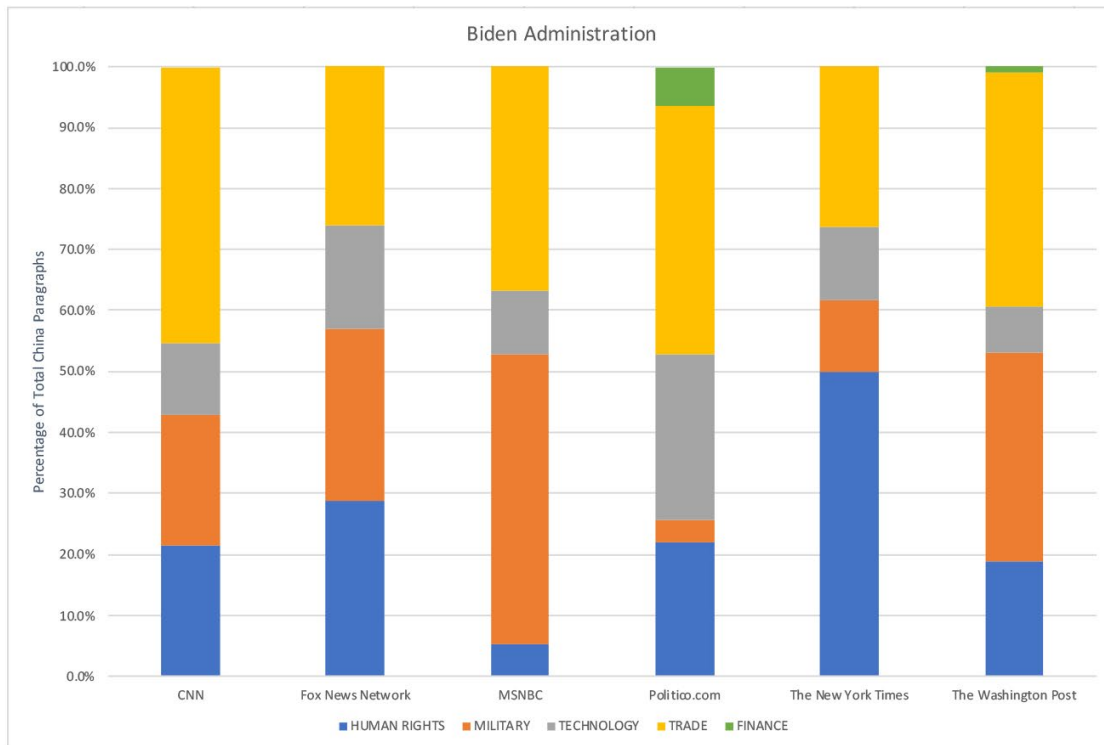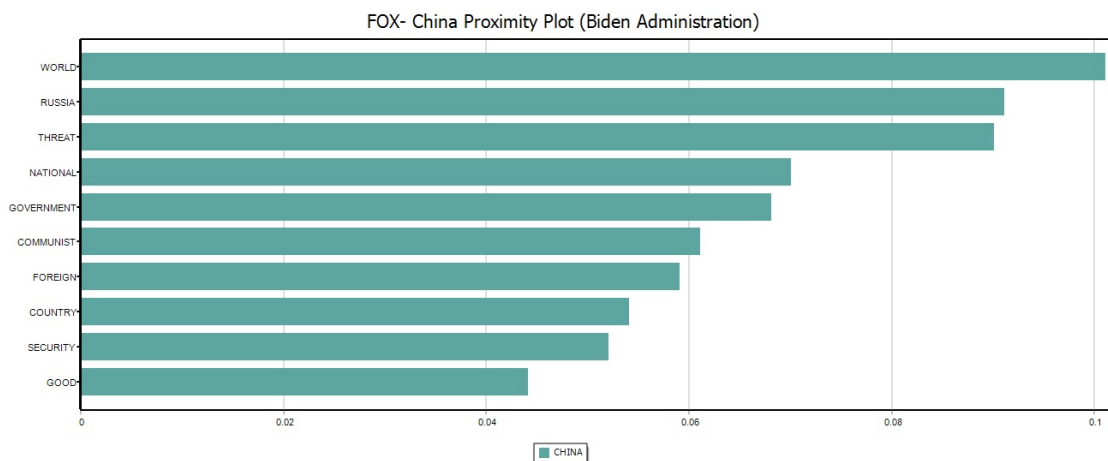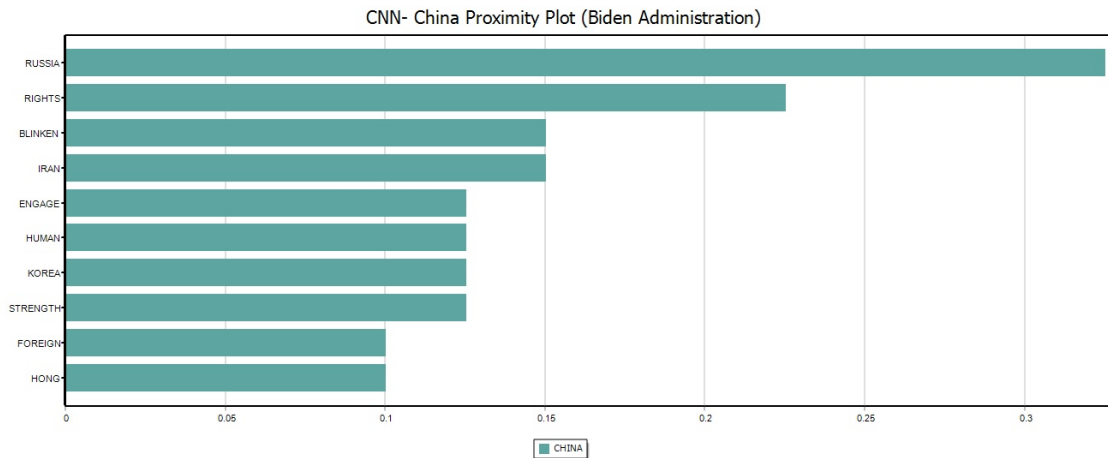

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that there is variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to specific policy issues as they relate to China. During the Trump administration, trade ranked first for all three print outlets and *Politico*. For both newspapers, human rights ranked first, followed by trade. It is not surprising to see that trade and human rights ranked higher than other policy issues given the connection of human rights issues to trade with the US and China. Another noteworthy finding is that during the Trump administration, *The Washington Post* did not cover military issues. Yet when we look at how military issues were covered in *The Washington Post* during the Biden administration, we see a significant increase in coverage.

During the Biden administration, trade ranked first or second across all news outlets. In looking at FOX News, it was a basically a tie for first, second, and third. Even in *The New York Times*, where human rights received 50% of the coverage on the

selected issues, trade ranked second with 26.3%. Future research might want to examine how the two issues are linked in the coverage. In both the MSNBC and *The Washington Post* coverage the military issue ranked first, this could be because of the heavy political slant of both outlets. It was somewhat surprising to see that human rights did receive so much coverage on the FOX news.

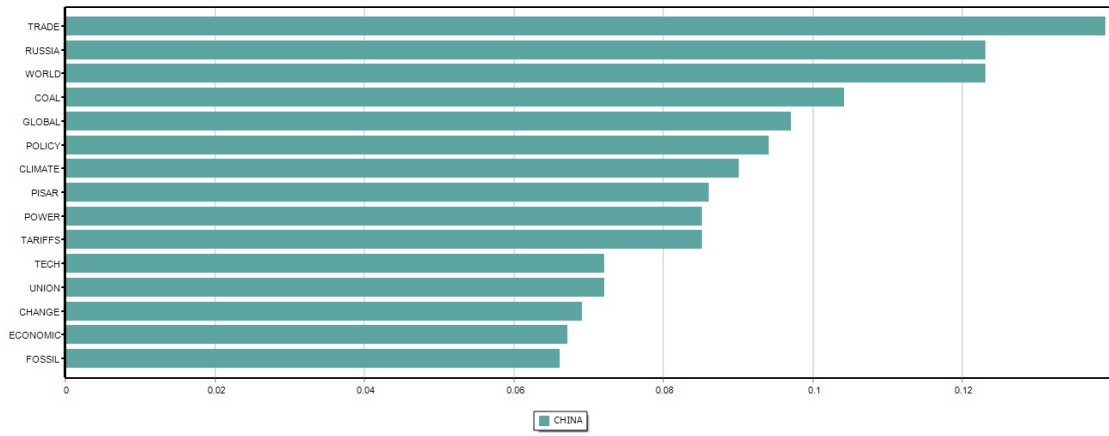## Research Question 3: Is there a variation between how media outlets cover China-related foreign policy issues?

CNN- China Proximity Plot (Biden Administration)
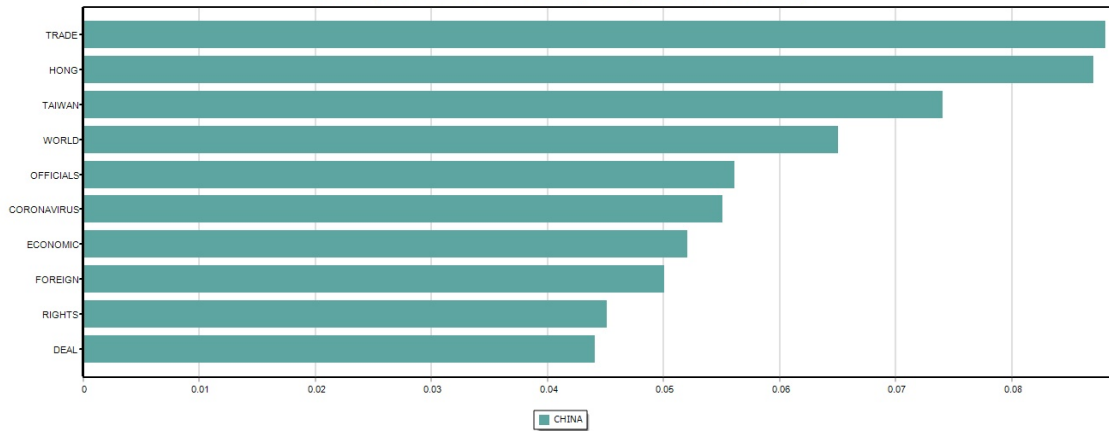
FOX- China Proximity Plot (Biden Administration)

NYT- China Proximity Plot (Biden Administration)
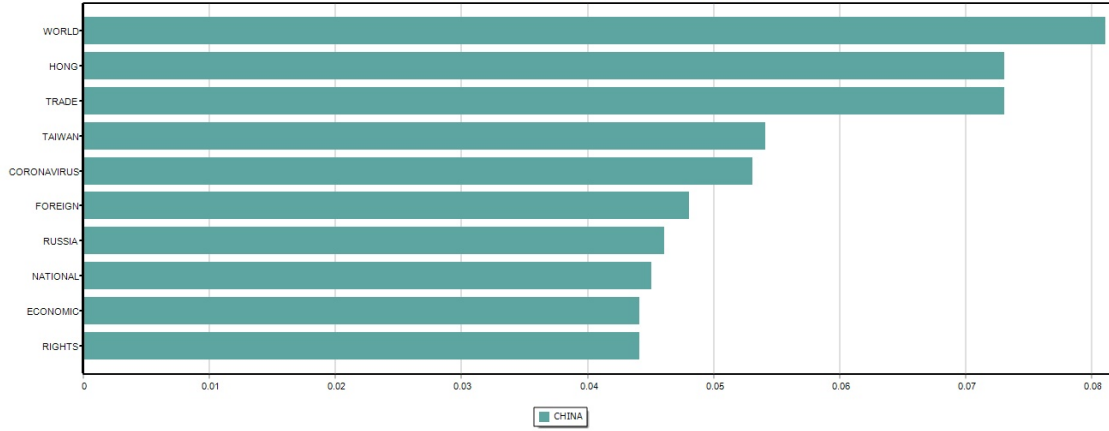
Politico- China Proximity Plot (Biden Administration)

Washington Post- China Proximity Plot (Biden Administration)

Figures 5-9

The proximity plots above, that capture the coverage of the Biden administration, illustrate that there is variation between how media outlets cover foreign policy issues in relation to China. Yet, overall, in examining the proximity charts, while we see these specific variations in the coverage, we also see some interesting trends.

For example, **Russia** ranked first or second in three of the outlets, while **world** ranked in the top three in three outlets. This gives us the idea that the China coverage is not only about the China-US relationship but a more global picture in the media landscape.

Similar to the data in figures three and four which answer our second research question, we see that both trade and human rights are primary focuses in the coverage. In *The New York Times* both Hong (Kong) and Taiwan ranked in the top four. In *The Washington Post* Hong (Kong) and Taiwan ranked in the top three. Interestingly, in the Fox News data "threat" ranked third. Again, this could be connected to their conservative leanings and favoring of the frames and quotes offered by the Trump administration (*Please see Appendix C)*.

Research Question 4: Is there variation in what foreign policy issues relating to China the media outlets covered between the Trump and Biden administration?
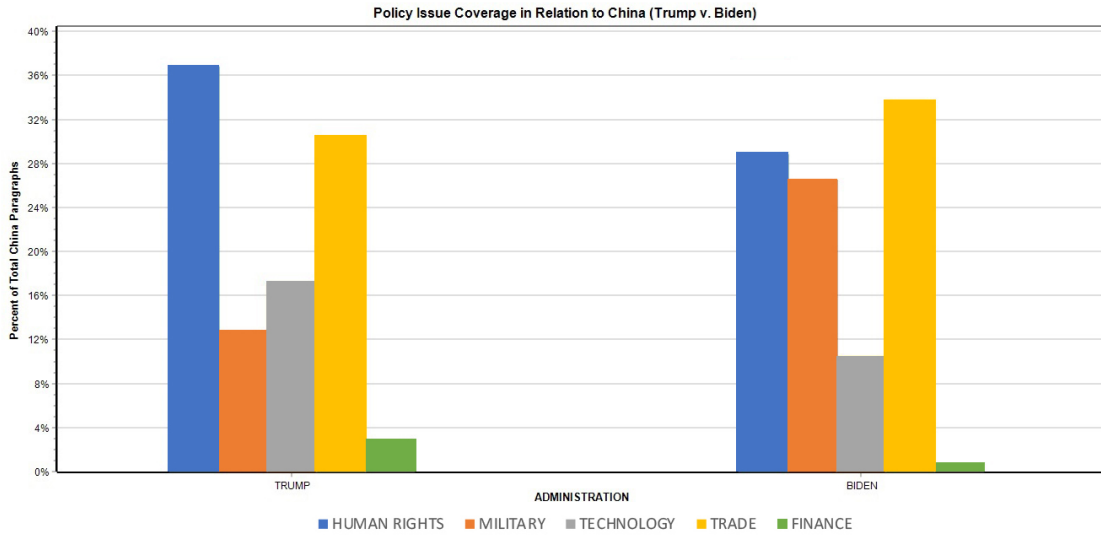
Figure 10

Figure 10 demonstrates that there is variation in what the media landscape looked like when comparing the time periods during the two administrations. During the Trump administration the focus was heavily on trade and human rights. Again, these could be connected, and trade was certainly a priority of the Trump administration. During the Biden administration, the focus in the media on trade grew, as it did with military issues. Interestingly, the interest in human rights diminished, but again this is only data from the very early days of the new administration. None of these were monumentally large shifts, but they do indicate a change in focus from administration to administration.

Research Question 5: **What is the frequency that human rights is articulated in relation to various diplomatic stressors across different media channels?**
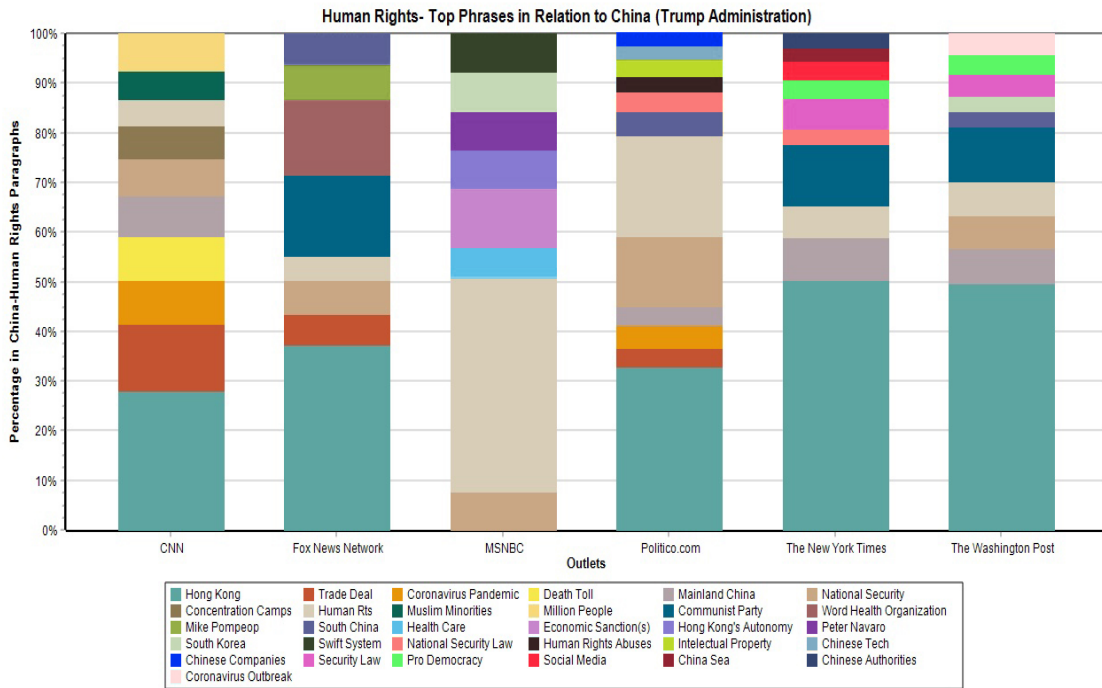
Figure 11

Figure 11 illustrates that in talking about human rights, all of the outlets, with the exception of MSNBC, focused a great deal on Hong Kong which is not surprising given that during the time President Trump was in office, the tensions over the erosion of freedoms in the city and rekindled anti-government protests in 2018 that only became more inflamed when China imposed the "National Security Law" on June 30, 2020.

Additionally, the largest finding is that there is not any consistency across the media landscape. Human rights was talked about in relation to many other issues/frames, including Chinese corporations, concentration camps, and the trade deal. So, while human rights as an issue is receiving a great deal of coverage as seen in the other figures, beyond talking about Hong Kong, there is not a consistent message or frame. However,

this figure demonstrates that human rights is part of the media agenda and is articulated

across the outlets in a multitude of ways.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the five key issues at the forefront of US-China geopolitical and diplomatic relations (military, trade, finance, technology, and human rights) are given varied treatment depending upon the media outlet. Television networks and legacy print outlets are framing China-related issues in significantly different ways. There is substantial variation in the amount of coverage media outlets give to China as well as variation between how media outlets cover China-related foreign policy issues. In addition, there is a significant variation in what the diverse media outlets covered between the Trump and Biden administrations on foreign policy issues relating to China. Finally, across different media channels, the central issue of human rights is articulated in relation to various diplomatic stressors in disparate ways.

The case can be made that the overarching finding of this study is there is not one "media agenda"- there are multiple media outlets and each has its own agenda. If there was a single media agenda, we would find a greater uniformity of China coverage between outlets. In trying to ascertain the agenda of these media outlets regarding China, we see that *The Washington Post* has begun to give more coverage to China-related policy issues than *The New York Times*. During the Trump administration the legacy print outlets were fairly equal in coverage. One of our key questions was whether the news hole (i.e., the media agenda) varies by outlet in what objects make it into the news. Our findings indicate that these objects do in fact vary by media outlet. The focus in *The Washington Post* on military policy issues during the Trump administration was minimal. However, in only three months, the number of military issues being raised in *The*

Washington Post increased by over 30%. The question then becomes, why the focus on military in *The Washington Post*?

However, the more important question is **how** this finding can be used. According to the data set we reviewed; FOX News will be more likely to cover the story equally, regardless of administration. Conversely, *The Washington Post* will most likely be interested in the story if the military aspect of the particular policy is emphasized. Operationally, this study can help inform media strategy for the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). This type of work can help to change behavior, justify strategic decisions and assist in calibrating the message that CNAS wants to emphasize with a particular policy issue.

These findings are significant because the media plays an integral role in shaping political reality as well as the social context in which policies are established. Particularly, the media has a considerable impact on public perceptions when the direct experience or knowledge base of the audience is limited. Therefore, the influence of the media is more pronounced when dealing with perceptions of domestic affairs versus foreign affairs because we have more direct experiences with domestic affairs. In essence, the media acts as the main instrument between those who want to influence policy and policymakers controlling the scope of political discourse. Focal issues for policymakers are often determined by the policies in which the media focuses their attention, i.e., frames the story.

Think tanks are often considered to be increasingly important actors in public policy, and this means they need to be agenda builders for both the general citizenry and the media. If a think tank wants to engage, influence, or educate the public with respect

to a policy then these findings and this type of work provide an avenue for the organization to examine how issues are being framed. If they want to use these media outlets to proffer a policy, this type of work gives them guidance on how the policy should be framed. For instance, if an organization is attempting to communicate a message regarding human rights issues in China and wants to have their message aired on MSBNC, they would most likely want to frame their story in terms of human rights issues, not in terms of Hong Kong. On the other hand, if a media outlet or newspaper publication normally frames human rights stories closely related to Hong Kong, then the message should be framed accordingly. If they want to provide a position on a policy that the public could then take to their representatives and senators, the findings indicate that in contacting *The New York Times*, the policy should be framed in terms of human rights in China.

This is a useful study, but it is not without its limitations. It is more qualitative than quantitative in terms of its applications, but it certainly provides empirical insights concerning what these particular media outlets are likely to cover. A major limitation of this study is that it focused on only three months of the Biden administration (and even much of this period was before his formal inauguration). Also, the data for MSNBC was limited and led to an inability to perform certain analyses (e.g., production of proximity charts). Lastly, we only analyzed transcripts for three networks and within those networks, we only looked at two shows. We did not search for terms relating to climate, although climate change is often part of the discourse with China and the United States. The unique media agendas may not only be channel specific but show specific as well.

There are many possibilities for future research that can help drive an organization's media strategy. Climate change should be added as a policy topic since tackling this global threat is becoming even more important and is tied in with many other issues. Examining how trade and human rights are linked in coverage about China could also prove insightful. Research can also be expanded to other key countries by conducting an on-going longitudinal assessment of Russia, Latin America, Mexico, and Canada to demonstrate the trends over time. Since this study compared a limited selection of media outlets, it would be interesting to use the search phrases to create "media frames" and deductively compare these and other outlets in the same manner. Future research should also include examining this data by reporter, television show, and television show within network to provide even more detailed recommendations.

While this study is just a first step, it does demonstrate that liberal, moderate, and conservative outlets engage the audience differently in terms of their coverage of foreign policy issues. These compelling findings reveal that there is not a single media agenda, and each outlet approaches China is unique ways. We see it is not only about how often the issue is being raised but also how the issue is being framed. This type of work provides insight into how media outlets adjust to external shifts. The findings revealed that a news organization may need to reevaluate what issues are being raised and how they are presenting them (the frame). Just as the media possesses the power to influence foreign policy so does the think tank and therefore, examining trends in the media will help to inform media strategy.

Appendix A

Two rounds of research for this project were completed before arriving at a third and final approach to data collection. Each round of data collection used slightly different terms, parameters, and sources. The bulk of the methodologies section focused on the final round of data collection, which yielded the data used for this analysis. However, below is an outline of the process which was used to arrive at the final approach.

The first round of data collection was conducted in mid-January 2021 and early February 2021. The results of each Nexis Uni search were reviewed manually, and transcripts were downloaded one at a time, after some findings were excluded.

The second round of data collection was conducted in mid-February 2021; most transcripts were pulled on February 15, 2021. New search terms and sources were used as per guidance from my academic advisor and transcripts were downloaded in bulk, thereby eliminating the manual review process. During this time, the decision to create and analyze a constructive month of data was also eliminated.

The third and final round of data collection was conducted in early March 2021, on March 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th respectively. Adjustments to search terms, sources, and parameters were made several times. The most significant change was to the timeline, which was limited from January 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021. All other adjustments were minor; the changes were necessary because of the discovery that Nexis Uni had recently made significant changes to its search function and publication access. All searches and downloads were finalized by the end of the day on March 5, 2021.

Appendix B

The terms and adjustments used for this project are listed below.

Military Key Terms:

1. South China Sea

2. Taiwan and Arms Sales

3. East China Sea

4. Senkaku Islands: Added "disputed Islands" and "China and islands," because I found that our sources often used these terms in place of "Senkaku Islands."

5. Freedom of Navigation Operation: Shortened to "Freedom of Navigation," because I found that sources did not always use the full phrase.

6. The People's Liberation Army

Trade Key Terms:

1. US-China Trade Deal: Changed to "Trade Deal," because I found that sources rarely used the full phrase "US-China Trade Deal."

2. US-China Trade War: Changed to "trade war" for the same reason as outlined for "Trade Deal."

3. Phase One Trade Deal: Separated this term into two separate search terms, "Phase One and Trade Deal, because we found that networks often used "phase one" and "trade deal" in separate sentences.

4. US-China Tariffs: Changed to "tariffs," for the same reason as outlined for "Trade Deal."

5. US-China Sanctions: Changed to "Sanctions," for the same reason as outlined for "Trade Deal."

6. Export Controls

7. Subsidies

8. Market Access

Finance Key Terms:

1. US Debt

2. Chinese Investment in Corporations: Initial phrasing did not yield any search results, so I adjusted to "Chinese Investment w/sent Corporations." The w/sent notation searches for sentences that include both "Chinese investment" and "Corporations." This change yielded relevant results.

3. Chinese Investment in Real Estate: I made the same change here: "Chinese Investment w/sent Real Estate."

4. CFIUS

5. FIRRMA

6. US Exchanges and Delist

Technology Key Terms:

1. TikTok

2. Facial Recognition

3. Artificial Intelligence

4. 5G

5. Huawei

6. Technology Transfer

7. Intellectual Property Theft

Human Rights:

1. Xinjiang

2. Internment Camps

3. Hong Kong

4. Initially, Uighur was excluded as a term and later searched for within the data. This term has four popularly used spellings in the United States context: Uyghur, Uighur, Uigur, Uygur. We searched for all four.

Appendix C

- CNN: The term "Strength" was often included in "Position of Strength" and the term "Rights" was most often included in "Human Rights, but not always.

- FOX: The term "National" was almost always "National Security."

    o "Foreign" = Foreign Policy

    o "Good" = "good job" "good for us" to have "good customers" and "good relations."

- MSNBC: There was not enough data to make Proximity Chart valid.

- Politico: There was a lot of substantial coverage and only one with climate.

- NYT: The term "Hong" for Hong Kong was very high. (NYT + Post) have "Taiwan" instead of "Hong."

- Washington Post: The term "Deal" = Trade Deal. The term "Hong" was also high.

Appendix D

I used both Trump and Biden Data for RQ1 and RQ2. ONLY Biden data was used for RQ3. Decision was made that looking at Biden data may be more beneficial for CNAS than Trump and Biden data. RQ4 used both Trump and Biden data. RQ5 used ONLY Trump data. The rationale behind this decision was that there really wasn't enough "Biden administration" data to make a strong comparison. Also, this graph demonstrated how the media covered Human Rights during a republican administration.

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