

DOCTORAL THESIS

The Involution and Politicization of U.S. Elite Press: A Case Study of Framing Discrepancies on the News Coverage of Sino-US Trade War

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Abstract

The elite U.S. Press such as the New York Times (NYT), the Washington Post (WP), and the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), when framing the Sino-U.S. trade war, tended to frame the disputes and issues concomitant to the trade war in completely different ways because of the differences inherent to the entirely distinctive media systems, as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004), and a wide range individual and societal level factors. The consensual view of the news is that journalists have a fourth estate role as the news texts and images are not merely concerned with representing the factual reality, but also the products of media institutions. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the news production in order to gain a deeper insight into the social and cultural phenomena behind the news contexts.

This research primarily adopts a combination of methods, including framing analysis, diachronic framing analysis, and multivariate regression analysis, and Chi-squared tests, along with more qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and discourse analysis, to explore the various dimensions of framing discrepancies, identify the presence of the master and emplotting frames on the three U.S. elite newspapers, namely, New York Times (NYT), the Wall Street Journals (WSJ), and the Washington Post (WP), along with two Chinese newspapers, China Daily (CD) and the Global Times (GT), in their diachronic dynamics with major events occurring along the timeline of the trade war, and, more importantly, examine the causalities between the two dimension of the core construct, news sources, viz. the locality and political power reliance and the concerned frames. Moreover, it has been found that there are significant differences among the five newspapers in the salience of political frames, economic frames, conflict frames, human rights frames, consequence frames, and secondary technology frames, including technology theft, forced technology transfer, and types of technology disputes. It has also been discovered that there are significant differences between Chinese & U.S. newspapers in the salience of political power reliance, conflict, consequence, and technology frames. In addition, WSJ and WP also witnessed a trend of using alternative and oppositional frames in

U.S. news coverage. In conclusion, this study contributes by putting forth the involution and parochialism of U.S. elite newspapers for their tendencies towards less diversity of frames, disproportionate focus on national interest of U.S. being compromised, disproportionate low presence of national interest of China, heavy reliance on government & authoritative sources, and last but not least, the myopic and over-simplistic views held by journalists towards the trade war. Further analyses also revealed strong antagonistic politicization trends of U.S. newspapers in general, with WP taking the lead, while the two Chinese newspapers, particularly GT, show strong predilections towards outward propagandization. This dissertation intends to further inform the extant literature in framing studies and international communication studies.

Keywords: Media Frames, Framing Discrepancies, Impression Management, Involution, Antagonistic Politicization, Professional Autonomy, Deviation of Journalistic Professionalism, Locality of Sources, Political Power Reliance of Sources, Outward Propagandization

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