

10-11-2019

## 2018 China-United States Trade War: Framing Analysis of Online News Coverage in the United States and China as portrayed by the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily*

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2018 China-United States Trade War: Framing Analysis of Online News Coverage in the

United States and China as portrayed by the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily*

by

Jiangling Huang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
with a concentration in media studies  
Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications  
College of Art & Sciences  
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:

August 2019

Keywords: trade dispute, content analysis, the framing theory, national conditions

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## Acknowledgements

My major professor, Dr. Roxanne Watson supported my thesis with her excellent guidance and supreme patience throughout the entire research process. Her feedback and explanation always let me sort out my ideas and solve my puzzles. I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Watson.

I also would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Kelli Burns and Artemio Ramirez, for their suggestions and patience during the research process and defense. Special thanks go to Dr. Liu for helping me in data statistics. Many thanks go to all other professors in Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications

I also thank my friend Wenminzi Wu, for helping me as the second coder and her constructive comments and suggestions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their financial support and trust in my studies. Their encouragement gives me both peace of mind and motivation in learning and living. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my dear parents, thank you for your endless love and encouragement.

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## Abstract

Grounded in framing theory, this thesis explores a differential study by content analysis.

The 2018 China-United States trade dispute is a major event that was officially launched by the United States and attracted worldwide attention. The ongoing trade disputes have had a huge impact on the economies of the two countries and the world economy, and a large number of news media have reported and commented on the incident. The purpose of the study was to determine the differences between news reports in the two countries depicted in the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily*. The sample comes from an online database of 176 reports from the *New York Times* and 150 reports from the *People's Daily*. The study tested their frame content and attitudes by conducting a comparative analysis of two newspapers on twelve representative reporting terms. Results of the content analysis support fractional hypotheses that there are significant differences in frames of positive/ negative frames in the two newspapers. Based on the findings, implications and future research suggestions are provided.

## Chapter One: Introduction

The China-United States trade dispute originated with the signing of a memorandum by U.S. President Donald Trump on March 22, 2018, announcing that the U.S. Trade Representative would impose tariffs on goods imported from China in accordance with Article 301 of the *1974 Trade Act*. The aim of the tariffs was to punish China for stealing technology from the United States, including intellectual property and trade secrets that involve commodities totaling U.S. \$60 billion. In retaliation, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce subsequently implemented counter-measures to tax 128 U.S. imports, including soybeans, the most popular U.S. export from China (Zhong, 2018). The trade dispute, however, is not just an economic duel between two countries, the trade war also impacts other countries that trade with China and the United States.

There has always been competition and disputes between the economies of China and the United States, and the tariff on traded goods has been a controversial issue between the two countries. For example, the United States accuses China of stealing U.S. jobs because China's labor costs are low, and China accuses the United States of insisting on a hegemonic model that suppresses the economic development of developing countries. In the end, the long-term contradictions and disputes have escalated the beginning of this trade war.

The media is charged with delivering the news (the event process) to its own people and



to foreigners, and media reports allow people to understand and comment on events. “Public events are held to exist because of the practical purposes they serve, rather than because of their inherent objective importance” (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p. 101). However, often based on national interests and other concerns, two countries “frame” the same news story from different positions. Goffman (1974) defines a frame “as a schema of interpretation that helps people to locate, perceive, and guiding actions” (p. 21). What’s more, “frames influence opinions by stressing values, facts, and other considerations” (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997, p. 569). In looking at frames, it is important to identify differences between ideologies and media systems, especially as it relates to political news.

### **Purpose of This Study**

The study aims to identify differences between the news coverage in two countries. When an event occurs, the countries involved have different tendencies, different angles, and different terms in their news coverage. The United States and China are two countries that have huge differences in historical background, cultural differences, and political and economic systems. The differences between the way that these two countries report the same events in their news coverage is a considerable question to research. Based on framing theory and the four theories of the press, the study hypothesizes that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* and the *People’s Daily* will be likely to promote a negative frame of China and the United States, respectively.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Frames and Framing

Marvin Lee Minsky (1974), who is known as the father of artificial intelligence (AI), created the theory of frames in his book *A Framework for Representing Knowledge*, and it was widely in use. The concept of a “frame” derived from English anthropology and cognitive psychologists Gregory Bateson (1955). Goffman (1974) introduced this concept to social-psychological research. Afterward, the frame was applied to mass communication research and became an important theory in quantitative and qualitative research.

Goffman’s work is one of the representative studies in the history of framing theory. In a journal article *Frame analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Goffman (1974) analyzes the relationship between the frame and subjective interpretation of events and explains how frame affects audiences. Goffman (1974) defines a “frame as a schema of interpretation that helps people to locate, perceive, and guiding actions” (p. 21). The “primary framework” is the bias or stereotypes from past experience and social and cultural awareness. Goffman (1974) indicates that people understand an event and the world based on their own “primary framework”. This is the framework that derives from the people themselves. Natural frameworks and social frameworks are two types of primary frameworks. Natural frameworks focus on those uncertain occurrences in the natural world, while the social framework emphasizes the role of providing

background information and context in helping readers to understand the world. Therefore, Goffman believes frameworks are important because they provide the basis for understanding events. Tuchman (1978) explains the frame is an efficient device to net, sort, and transmit information by journalists. The framework is important evidence that allows people to convert social reality into subjective thinking, and it is also the subjective interpretation and thinking structure of people.

In addition to Goffman, several eminent scholars have also proposed the definition of a frame. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) illustrate that “frames influence opinions by stressing values, facts, and other considerations” (p. 569). According to Gitlin (1980), the framework is an “over time” cognition, interpretation, and presentation, as well as a stable and invariant paradigm of choice, emphasis, and omission. The frame is defined by Gitlin (1980) as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (p. 6).

With the development of “frame,” a conceptual change was proposed between the frames and framing in the area of mass communication. In the article *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*, Entman (1993) explains how framing is used in context and how framing affects one’s thinking process. “Frame” represents the existing cognitive framework, while “Framing” represents the process through which people are influenced by the content, that is, media effects. “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 for the item described” (p. 52). In Entman’s study, “selection” and “salience” which are two aspects of framing are an important aspect of the theory that have been cited in subsequent studies. In the “selection” process, as the name implies, specific content will be selected to represent a certain event rather than the entire event. In the “selection” process, the highlights of reports tend to appear biased when people’s minds are influenced by that selected information (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The “Salience” process focuses more on how to make “a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). These two types of framing processes explain how the framing process impacts the receivers or audiences from the angle of the content provider. Meanwhile, the “selection” and “salience” framing processes laid the foundation for the later research.

The four locations where the framing process may play a role as the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (Entman, 1993). Furthermore, the four locations correspond with four functions of framing that include defining problems (in common cultural values), diagnosing causes (which create problems), making moral judgments (evaluating causal relationships), and suggesting remedies (offering and justifying the solution to the problem, and predicting the possible outcomes). The communicator controls selection and reporting and decides the frame that will be used for the content and what part of the event will be presented to receivers. When framing occurs in the text it will be shown on “certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, the source of information, and sentences that provide thematically

reinforcing clusters of facts or judgment” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The receiver reads “edited” and “selected” content by the communicator, he or she is guided to read the framed text which also affects the receiver’s attitude and emotions. The culture frame is related to the common perception and the thinking of the majority of people in a social group (Entman, 1993). For example, an impression of a country or the impression of a national character is influenced by the framework in which content is presented.

Agenda-setting is a communication theory that is related to framing. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) interpret the differences between those two theories which have a different emphasis. Agenda-setting emphasizes the correlation between the media coverage and how much the audience is affected. Framing emphasizes how to present the issue and then to influence an audience. Moreover, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) stated that framing has “both a macro level and a micro level construct” (p. 12). From the macro view, framing utilizes the existing framework to provide resonance with the audience. From the micro view, “framing describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). In other words, the frame shows what is emphasized and what is ignored in presenting a particular issue. Thus, the frame functions as a “thought organizer” for audiences (Ferree et al., 2002). McQuail (2003) illustrated that public expression is limited by frames presented by the media, but frames also help the audience to understand complex events.

Framing theory has continued to be developed by communication scholar Scheufele. Scheufele (1999) illustrates the concept of frame building and frame setting and their differences in his article *Framing as A Theory of Media Effects* (1999). Frame building focuses on the process through which a frame is created, while frame setting focuses on the process through which a frame is used. There are three factors affecting the process of frame building—journalist norms, political actors, and cultural contexts (Scheufele,1999). Therefore, frame building is influenced by both irresistible factors (cultural contexts in different countries) and human factors. In another words, it has a highly subjective initiative in the process of building the frame. Tuchman (1978) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) also note the relationship between journalists and government or political members when political issues are reported. On the other hand, de Vreese (2005) describes frame setting as the “interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions” (p. 52). In de Vreese’s (2005) viewpoint, frame setting operates at two levels: the individual level and the societal level. When people are influenced by a frame that changes their attitudes and emotions, that is described at the individual level. On the societal level, “political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions” (p. 52) may be shaped by frames in the process of frame setting. This study is the basis for the research on political news coverage and differences political news frame used in different countries for the same issue. In the process of frame building, the researcher shows the frames journalists use and examines whether the political target may have influenced the frame. In the process of frame setting, the focus is on the relationship between the media and receiver. Therefore, people are

able to realize how they are influenced by frames and why different countries frame political news coverage on the same issue very differently.

In 2003, Entman used a different definition of framing, thus, in the intervening ten years, his idea of how to conceptualize the notion of framing had changed slightly. In 2003, Entman compared preferred versions of foreign affairs and the ways the media actually reported them. “Framing entails selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2003, p. 417). In the process of framing, journalists “use words and frames highly salient in the culture, which is to say noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged” (p. 417). Compared with articles before and after this, in 2003, Entman focused more on the process of how people deal with framing than the people who actually create the frame. Instead of subjective elements, Entman (2003) seems more concerned with concrete, more objective or quantifiable elements within a perceived reality; moreover, he replaces the term “defining a problem” with the term “selecting an issue”.

The framing theory illustrates how communicators convey content by selecting frames along with how these frames impact receivers. In journalism, the question is whether news framing plays an important role and how news framing presents and affects audience, the next section reviews studies in this area.

## **Framing in News**

“By suspending belief that an objective world exists to be reported, we develop a conception of news as a constructed reality” (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p. 101). People learn about current events and politics from news reports. The way in which a news story is framed can influence the audience’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward the issue (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). People depend on media to receive news and information. “The artificial censorship, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs” result in people choosing the simple way to receive a message from media (Lippmann, 1921, p. 21-22). Wolsfeld (2003) discusses this as well, that especially when critical events occur, the audience tends to search relevant information immediately and the news media plays a role as “massive search engines” with a dramatic title. However, in terms of online information searching, China is a unique case. Many websites are blocked in mainland China such as all Google products (including Google Map, Gmail, YouTube), Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, and other popular websites in the world (Goldkor, 2009). VPN (Virtual Private Network) has to be used in order to access these websites in mainland China. Chong and Druckman (2007) indicate that news framing influences “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (p. 2). When it comes to international information, because of language, culture, and other barriers, Flournoy and Stewart (1997) found that people’s impression of foreign countries mainly depends on the news coverage in their own media.



News framing is impacted by the socio-political reality and is also used for purposeful propaganda (Entman, 1992; Scheufele, 1999). Liu (2009) clarifies that the framing theory is appropriately applied to “analyzing political and public controversy especially in the international context” (p. 8). Scheufele (1999) emphasizes that the process of frame building is potentially influenced by government bureaucracies and stakeholders. Some scholars have studied how politicians use media coverage to influence public opinion in order to get votes. (e.g., Aalberg, Strömbäck & de Vreese, 2011; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2006). Some scholars have even directly studied the relationship between media framing and politics. Hallah (1999) points out that “Critical researchers consider media framing essentially a tool of power that can be used in the struggle to define whose view of the world will predominate” (p. 223). Furthermore, Lawrence (2011) elaborates that on the premise of national foreign policy and national security, news reports show less independence, and journalists are on the same side as political appeals. When Hallin (1986) suggested that the news framing stands out during wartime, it shows that news framing reflects the close relationship between politics and media, especially when it comes to stakeholder reporting in major political events. For instance, stakeholders use frames to “mobilize votes behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines” (Jacoby, 2000, p. 8), and during the process of an election campaign, news media becomes a crucial tool to collect public opinion polls and an essential tool for policy advocacy (Schudson, 2002). Conversely, Entman (2004) states that “the

media should provide enough information independent of the executive branch that citizens can construct their own counter-frames of issues and events” (p. 17).

In relation to news framing, different reports of an identical event were compared by some studies. Yang (2003) looks at the differences in news coverage of NATO air strikes by Chinese media and the U.S. media in 1999, and the research indicates that the Chinese newspapers defined the air strikes as an “intervention into Yugoslavia’s sovereignty and territory,” but Americans regarded the air strikes as “humanistic aid”. The news coverage of HIV/AIDS in China and the United States were compared in 2004 (Wu, 2007). The finding was that while AP reports (the U.S.) present “an overarching anti-government frame,” Xinhua’s coverage (China) presents “a pro-government frame”. In a comparison of the main evening television news programs in four European countries with the common European currency—the euro on January 1, 1999, de Vreese, and Semetko (2010) found that “variations across countries in the emphasis on political and economic news” (p. 107). The news coverage of the 2004 European parliamentary elections in all states of the European Union (EU) were analyzed and the research found that the elections were more visible in the new member states than in the old EU member states (de Vreese, Banducci, Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2006). Similarly, Brossard, Shanahan, and McComas (2009) compared newspaper coverage of global warming in France and in the United States, and found that French newspapers’ coverage was focused more on event-based and international relations, while American coverage tended to introduce and interpret “conflicts between scientists and politicians” (p. 375). Moreover, the authors suggested

that “cross-cultural comparisons are essential to understanding how different news regimes might affect public opinion” (p.359).

Framing theory can be used effectively to explore how different countries cover the identical event differently. In this research, framing theory, as the base theory, supports the object of study in the aspect of news framing.

### **Four Theories of the Press**

Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson (1956) published a book called *Four Theories of the Press*, elaborated the philosophical and political different purpose and different forms of the press in different countries. Four theories of the press include the Authoritarian theory (“the press therefore functioned from the top down”(p.6)); the Libertarian theory (“the press is conceived of as a partner in the search for truth” (p.6)); the Social Responsibility theory and the Soviet Communist theory.

The Social Responsibility theory of the press shifted from pure libertarianism in the twentieth. The premise of this theory is that the press is obliged to be responsible to society. For instance, in Britain, the General Council of the Press has been established to supervise and encourage the awareness of public responsibility and public service in the press. Moreover, the Commission on Freedom of the Press listed five requirements of the press which are the truthful context, the critical comment, the representation of the constituent groups in society, the presentation of the goals and values of the society, and the timeliness of the press. In sum, Social

Responsibility theory pursues the responsibilities of information, high-quality content, and highly qualified practitioners.

Based on Karl Marx, the Soviet Communist theory of the press was explained from the following perspectives: in the philosophy, it derives from the Marxist materialistic determinism and class struggle; in the concepts of man, individuals belong to the collective and individuals need to obey the leadership; in the concept of the state, it is a self-appointed dictatorship; in the concept of control, the government has extreme control of “ownership, Party membership, directives, censorship, review, criticism, and coercion”(p.102). So that the Soviet Communist theory emphasizes the mass communication is an instrument serving the regime while the Social Responsibility theory believes “the mass communication is a service rather than an instrument” (p.102).

Severin and Tankard (2001) summarized the book *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). The authoritarian theory is related to monarchs with absolute power. The purpose of this system is to support and advance the policies of the government in power and to service the state. The main feature of the authoritarian theory is that strict obedience of the rules set by the government in power. It is manifested in the fact that publications and media are subject to the government patents, guilds, licensing, and sometimes censorship laws. The libertarian theory comes down to truth or falsehood. “The press was to serve the function of helping to discover the truth and checking on government as well as informing, entertaining, and selling” (Severin, & Tankard, 2001, p. 311). However, this does not

mean that there is complete freedom of expression as the legal system has relevant regulations about defamation, obscenity, indecency, and wartime sedition. The social responsibility theory is that “the media are controlled by community opinion, consumer action, professional ethics, and, in the case of broadcasting governmental regulatory agencies” (p. 314). Soviet-totalitarian theory in its exposition earliest referred to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and later was used to describe China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba (p. 317). In this theory, “the media are controlled by the economic and political action of the government” (p. 315). In a word, at the heart of the Soviet-totalitarian theory of the press is the concept that the media are state-owned and state-controlled.

According to Severin and Tankard (2001), the media of the U.S. falls within social responsibility theory, that the media need to assume the obligation of social responsibility. On the other hand, Chinese media are owned by the government and required to be loyal to the political activities of government, so the press-government relationship is closer to the Soviet-totalitarian theory. These theories of press-government relationships, though imprecise, can provide a backdrop to understanding the differences in the way in which the Chinese and U.S. may differently frame the Trade War conflict.

### **2018 China-United States Trade War**

According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China was the world’s fastest-growing major economy until 2015. China is the world’s largest manufacturing economy and exporter of goods, the world’s fastest-growing consumer market and second-largest importer

of goods, and the largest trading nation in the world. Now, China plays an important role in international trade and has active participation and communication in trade organizations and treaties (Barnett, 2013; Sims, 2013). According to the public debt data from the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States has the second-largest industrial output in the world and is a high-technology innovator. What's more, the New York Stock Exchange is by far the world's largest stock exchange by market capitalization and the U.S. dollar is the currency most used in international transactions and is the world's foremost reserve currency. The international status of the United States has been consolidated by its economic strength. Economically, China is the United States' largest import partner while the U.S. is China's largest export partner. The economic and trade links between the two countries are inseparable.

However, there has always been competition and dispute between the economies of China and America. America has been disturbed by the growing economic power in China. For example, America has accused China of stealing U.S. jobs because China has lower costs of labor, and America points out that China did not abide by its commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Although this may be true, businesses are choosing China because of the lower market cost, and "competitive pressures to lower production costs and thereby offer better prices to consumers and higher returns to shareholders" (Hughes, 2005, p. 98). Hughes (2005) states that "the misunderstandings behind them have opened the way to a trade war between the United States and China that, if it escalates, could do considerable damage to both sides" (Hughes, 2005).

Because of differences in the economic and political systems in the two countries, the background and circumstances of the trade war between China and the United States have generally been narrated from different perspectives by national media in the two countries. However, the issue of tariffs on traded goods has always been a dispute between the two countries.

In 2016, the United States Presidential hopeful Donald Trump emphasized China's "abuse of the broken international system and unfair practices" during his campaign (Bump, Phillips & Borchers, 2016). Specifically, the United States charged that Chinese laws forced foreign companies to set up joint ventures with Chinese that undermined U.S. intellectual property rights. Because of this, Chinese companies were enabled to steal technologies from foreign companies. Moreover, China's economic system is recognized as being "distorted" by capitalist countries (Akan, 2018). Economist Irwin Stelzer (2017) wrote that the centrally directed economy of China guaranteed the communist party would control both the politics and economy in that country. Indeed, the Chinese Socialist-market economic system and autocratic leadership guarantee that China's state-owned and party-controlled industries are able to offer massive subsidies, which may have led to vast amounts of overcapacity. According to a report by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), Chinese state-owned enterprises control hundreds of billions of defense, energy, telecommunications, and aviation spending to support these monopolies, according to experts. Thus, the United States accused China of violating WTO rules by providing "excessive domestic subsidies, stockpiling of commodities, and

discriminatory taxes” (Stelzer, 2017). According to the 2018 Congressional hearing “*U.S. Tools to Address Chinese Market Distortions*”, China’s doctrine of “the Party leads everything” adds pressure to U.S. companies, and impacts the performance of the trading rules, even impacts the U.S. economy. The United States charges against China focus around the theft of intellectual property, technology, and trade secrets, and forcing technology transfer from U.S. companies to Chinese enterprises (Oh, 2018). Overall, Abigail Grace, the Central figure in a New American Security think tank in Washington, says “the structural problem that the Chinese communist party’s fundamental opposition to free-market capitalism and fair competition is considered as the root of the United States-China economic tensions” (Ward, 2018).

The Chinese government has responded to America’s accusations, noting such charges, without evidence, are discriminatory. In response to the U.S. accusations that China has stolen intellectual property, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Chunying Hua pointed out that the United States has repeatedly accused China of stealing intellectual property, but it has never produced strong evidence (He, 2018).

In May 2018, China and the United States reached a consensus on suspending trade wars and issued a joint statement seeking reconciliation (Wearden, 2018). However, the Office of the United States Trade Representative went on to announce the list of tariffs imposed on China on June 16, and the State Council’s Customs Tariff Commission of China subsequently issued a reciprocal list in retaliation. At the same time, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce also restarted the anti-dumping investigation against a number of U.S. products exported to China. On July 6,



2018, the Trump administration officially imposed a 25% tariff on goods worth \$34 billion from China, marking the official implementation of Trump's tariff policy toward China. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce later issued a statement indicating that the United States violated the WTO rules and had launched the largest trade war in economic history so far. According to the General Administration of Customs of China, retaliatory measures would be implemented as soon as the United States imposed its tariff measures.

According to Section 301 of the Investigation Fact Sheet from *Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR)*, for establishing a fairness and reciprocity in the United States' trade relationship with China, USTR initiated an investigation that found "China's acts, policies, and practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation are unreasonable or discriminatory, and burden or restrict U.S. commerce" based on Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. It also found that these practices caused the U.S. loss of \$50 billion annually based on a three-year annual average. USTR has also determined that the 25 percent Ad valorem tax, imposes a 25% additional tariff on approximately \$50 billions of products from China. At the same time, USTR is pursuing dispute settlement at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address China's discriminatory licensing practices.

After the United States announced the \$50 billion tax collection list, the Chinese Embassy in the United States issued a statement on the incident, expressing strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition. The Chinese side stated that this measure violated the rules of the WTO, seriously violated the legitimate rights and interests of the People's Republic of China and

threatened the development interests of the People's Republic of China. Jiyao Bi, vice president of the China Academy of Macroeconomic Research, believes that the *301 Investigation Report* attributed China's industrial progress to China's forced transfer of technology to the United States, but this accusation had no basis at all because the real intention of the United States in taking these steps was to curb the development of China's high-tech industries (Yu & Ye, 2018).

Tiankai Cui, Chinese diplomat and currently the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, discussed the U.S. trade deficit in an interview with *Securities Daily* (China), noting that the U.S. trade deficit is caused by various factors. Firstly, the United States has a trade deficit not only with China, but also with many other countries. Secondly, as the main international payment currency, the U.S. dollar objectively needs to maintain a certain deficit in order to maintain its status. Thirdly, the formation of deficits is also a matter of American policy, that is the United States restricts the export of some high-tech civilian products to China, even in cases where China is willing to purchase these. "If the United States releases some high-tech civilian products to China, then whether it is a surplus or a deficit, I am afraid it is not easy to say," Cui said (Dong, 2018). Thus, he suggests that the U.S. could reduce the deficit if it worked with.

On September 24, 2018, the State Council Information Office of China issued a white paper entitled "Facts on Sino-U.S. Trade Frictions and China's Position." According to the white paper, the United States has a large number of investment and trade restrictions and practices that distort market competition, hinder fair trade, and separate global industrial chains, including: discriminating against other countries' products in violation of the principle of fair competition,

abusing the “national security review”, hindering the normal investment of other companies in the United States, providing large subsidies to distort market competition, using a large number of non-tariff barriers, and abusing trade remedy measures. The white paper also pointed out that the United States emphasized the “U.S. First”, internationalized domestic issues and politicized economic and trade issues, which not only harmed the interests of China and other countries, but also damaged the international frame of the United States itself, and ultimately would harm the long-term interests of the United States.

The following is a timeline of major event days in the ongoing 2018 China-United States Trade War:

- On January 22, 2018, President Trump imposed a 30% tariff on foreign solar panels and fell to 15% four years later. China is the world’s largest market for solar photovoltaic and solar thermal energy.
- On March 22, 2018, in response to the unfair trade practices of China over the years, President Trump asked the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate applying tariffs on US\$50–60 billion worth of Chinese goods and the infringement of intellectual property rights based on *Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974*.
- On April 2, 2018, China responded by imposing tariffs on 128 products imported from the United States that includes aluminum, airplanes, cars, pork, and soybeans (which have a 25% tariff), as well as fruit, nuts, and steel piping (15%).

- On May 29, 2018, the United States announced that it would impose a 25% tariff on \$50 billion of Chinese goods with industrially significant technology, and some certain companies and organizations would be restricted from technology import from America. China responded that it would cease the negotiation with Washington if the United States imposed trade sanctions.
- On June 19, 2018, China announced that it would impose tariffs on \$50 billion of U.S. goods, claiming that the trade war, launched by the United States, would disrupt supply chains in other countries.
- On August 8, 2018, the USTR published the finding that 279 Chinese goods, worth \$16 billion, would be subject to a 25% tariff effective from August 23, 2018. China responded by imposing its own tariffs of equal value.
- On August 14, 2018, China appealed to the WTO, alleging that the U.S. tariffs on foreign solar panels conflicted with the WTO ruling and destabilized the international market for solar PV products.
- On September 17, 2018, the United States announced a 10% tariff on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods would be imposed with effect from September 24, 2018, increasing to 25% by the end of the year. The United State also threatened to impose additional tariffs on \$267 billion worth of imports if China retaliates.
- On September 18, 2018, China promptly responded by imposing 10% tariffs on \$60 billion of U.S. imports.

- On December 1, 2018, at the G20 summit, the presidents of the two countries Xi Jinping and Donald Trump reached a consensus, agreeing to hold a negotiation in 90 days and suspended new trade measures during the negotiation period.

### Chapter Three: Research Hypotheses

Based on the framing theoretical framework, the purpose of this study is to explore the frames used in news coverage in the two countries of the 2018 China-United States trade dispute. To this end, the *People's Daily* and the *New York Times* has been selected as the contradistinctive samples for this research, two newspapers representative of China and the United States, respectively.

Founded in 1851, the *New York Times* has worldwide influence and readership. It is often used as a direct source of news by other newspapers and news agencies around the world (Kalven, 1964). Friel and Falk (2004) indicated that the *New York Times* is an authoritative source of information on issues of public policy. The *People's Daily* first issued on May 15, 1946, is the largest circulating official newspaper in China (Wu, 1994). The *People's Daily* is controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and published worldwide to express the views and perspectives of Chinese officials on world events. Although the ownership of the *New York Times* is private and the ownership of the *People's Daily* is public, the content of both newspapers enables a reflection on the correct reading by the news media of the official reports. In addition, both newspapers are available in online and bilingual versions that facilitate the process of data collection and data examination, so these two newspapers are considered appropriate for comparison.

Page (1996) identifies an important finding from a compilation of communication research by Sigal (1973), Gans (1980), Hallin (1986), Bennett (1990), and Soley (1992) that “government officials serve as the chief sources of many kinds of political news and tend to constrain the range of debate found in the media” (Page, 1996, p. 20). The primary political values reflected in newspapers is intimately linked to the political stances that are taken in overt editorials. The media easily obtains valuable and legitimate sources of information through officials, so that, the media’s dependence upon the source of information means that the policy stands expressed by the media organization may often reflect the stands taken by the authorities. Therefore, when examining the policy views and comments of political events advocated in media, very often it is seen that priority is given to the political stands represented by the government.

In summary, the *People’s Daily* and the *New York Times* enable to select as representatives of the two countries, and the different nature and purpose of the two newspapers provide research feasibility for research differences. Because the 2018 China-United States Trade War is a contest of interests between two countries, this study assumes that there are differences between the frame of coverages between two countries for their different positions.

In response to this incident, as the two parties in the dispute, the two newspapers report events, based on the framing theory and the theories of the relationship between the press and the government of the United States and China. This research seeks to determine whether there are

different tendencies, different angles, and different terms in the two newspapers. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: In reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People's Daily*.

H2: In reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more positive frame of the United States than the *People's Daily*.

H3: In reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times*.

H4: In reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more positive frame of China than the *New York Times*.



## Chapter Four: Methodology

### Content Analysis

Content analysis is an appropriate quantitative method to be used in this research. As early as in 1952, Berelson stated that content analysis can be used in “the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). According to Powers and Knapp (2006), the content analysis is defined as a general term for a number of different strategies used to analyze text. It is a “systematic coding and categorizing approach” used for exploring large amounts of “textual information” to find trends and patterns of words or phrases used about their frequency, relationships, and structure of content (Mayring, 2000; see also Gbrich, 2007). In other words, content analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, researchers systematically evaluate texts from documents such as books and papers; oral communication such as speech and theatrical performance; graphic texts such as drawings, and icons; and audio-visual texts such as TV programs, and videos (Klaus, 2004). According to Bloor and Wood (2006), the function of the content analysis is to explore the characteristics of the text by examining who says what, to whom, and with what effect. Moreover, with regard to analyzing data, content analysis is a technique that is suitable for the analysis of “open-ended” data (Harwood & Garry, 2003). In this research, content analysis is a technique that enables

researchers to analyze two different newspapers and compare how they construct different reports with respect to the same event. Therefore, content analysis is an independent and reliable quantitative research method suitable for this research.

### **Data Collection**

The research used two authoritative newspapers, the *People's Daily* and the *New York Times*, to explore coverage of the 2018 China-United States Trade War. The study used their official website as the database. Even in the twenty-first century, “newspapers or print journalists remain a frequent reference point for rival news media, and a routine source for understanding how an event or issue is interpreted” (Cushion et al., 2018, P. 165). Relatively authoritative political shows and news programs on television or broadcasting certainly review the day's newspapers and analyze the significance of political stories. Therefore, the official newspaper consistently plays a more prominent role in covering the political and economic news of the day.

The search terms used to find stories was different combinations between “trade”, “tariffs”, “China”, and “the U.S.” in online databases of the New York Times. On the other hand, the search terms used to find stories was in the same way by Chinese in online databases of the People's Daily. Using the search terms, the researcher found more than one thousand reports.

This research focused on two one-month periods which are March 15, 2018 to April 15, 2018, and August 8, 2018 to September 8, 2018. These dates include two key events which are significant in the development of the trade war – a memorandum by U.S. President Donald Trump on March 22, 2018, and China's response by imposing tariffs on April 2, 2018. For that

reason, the first period was chosen between March 15, 2018 and April 15, 2018. What's more, throughout the entire process, the intensity of events in August and September was significantly higher than in other months. Specifically, on August 8, 14th, 22nd, 23rd, 27th, September 17th and 24th, either the U.S. or Chinese trade decisions are implemented. This is the reason for the second period between August 8, 2018 and September 8, 2018. A total of 326 relevant articles were selected. In the first period, 91 quantitative samples from the *New York Times* and 86 quantitative samples from the *People's Daily* were collected between March 15, 2018 and April 15, 2018. In the second period, 85 quantitative samples from the *New York Times* and 64 quantitative samples from the *People's Daily* were collected between August 8, 2018 and September 8, 2018 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Pub Date \* Newspaper Crosstabulation

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Pub Date	3/15-4/15	Count	91	86	177
		% within Newspaper	51.7%	57.3%	54.3%
	8/08-9/08	Count	85	64	149
		% within Newspaper	48.3%	42.7%	45.7%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## Frames Definitions

1. *“Unfair trade practices” frame.* This frame focuses on that the United states criticizes China’s closed markets and trade manipulation that exploit gaps in international rules or breach them outright.
2. *“WTO rules/ Free-market rules” frame.* This frame focuses on that China criticizes that the United States takes advantage of gaps in international rules or breaking them.
3. *“Authoritarian system” frame.* The Communist Party government still subsidizes key industries, lavishes credit on state-owned companies and imposes barriers against foreign competitors. “The Communist leadership abolished the presidential term limit”. “Censors have been deleting a torrent of criticism online, some of it directed at President Xi Jinping’s leadership”.
4. *“Unilateral and protectionist trade measures” frame.* The term “Hegemonism” and the United States intends to more protectionist, “America First” approach.
5. *“Intellectual property right protection” frame.* It refers that China blocks off valuable markets from American competition. China has robbed American companies of billions of dollars in revenue and killed thousands of jobs. “301 Investigation”.
6. *“Economic loss in the united states” frame.* It includes that the U.S. companies setting up companies in China are adversely affected, including manufacturing, semiconductor supply chains and soybean plantations. Tariffs are damaging taxes on American consumers.

7. *“Economic loss in China” frame.* It refers that the drop of the currency, and exports to the United States account for a large share of China’s economic growth.

8. *“Economic loss in the world” frame.* Trump’s trade policy undermines the stability of global multilateral trading system. As the world’s largest economy, the United States has a major impact on the world economy. The international media are also worried about the consequences of the trade war.

9. *“The worry about the trade dispute” frame.* Worries about economic loss and unemployment situation.

10. *“Confidence in the trade war” frame.* China has said that there is no need to be pessimistic. It should face the problem and turn the crisis into an opportunity. “It is the short-term risks but the long-term benefits”.

11. *“The threat of the U.S”. frame.* Reports that the United States aims to curb China’s development. Through the threat of trade wars, the United States has forced China to open its markets for economic benefits.

12. *“The threat of China” frame.* Reports that China poses a far greater threat to the United States than Japan, the Soviet Union or any other historic rival.

## Chapter Five: Results

### Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability is crucial in content analysis. According to Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken (2002), “intercoder reliability, more specifically termed intercoder agreement, is a measure of the extent to which independent judges make the same coding decisions in evaluating the characteristics of messages and is at the heart of this method” (p. 587). To ensure the intercoder reliability, content analysis projects require multiple coders to assess the content. The result will be more credible if the percent agreement is high. Therefore, a second coder assisted the process of data collection in this study, and 10% of content was coded twice. Firstly, 10% (34) of the reports were randomly selected from the pool of 327 reports. Secondly, the author and second coder who is also a mass communication major at USF and from China coded the same 34 samples of reports following the coding scheme. Finally, intercoder reliability could be verified by the analysis of percentages of coding agreement between coders and Krippendorff’s Alpha. On the one hand, “Percentage agreements of .90 and greater are nearly always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 145). Table 2 presents all percentages agreements of coding categories are greater than .90 so that there is acceptable intercoder reliability between the two coders. On the other hand, Krippendorff’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) presents the

intercoder reliability “when observers agree perfectly, observed disagreement  $D_0=0$  and  $\alpha=1$ , which indicates perfect reliability, and when observers agree as if chance had produced the results,  $D_0=D_e$  and  $\alpha=0$ , which indicates the absence of reliability” (Krippendorff, 2011, p1). In the light of Krippendorff (2004)’s suggestion,  $\alpha \geq .800$  represents an acceptable result. Table 2 manifests that in the results all Krippendorff’s Alpha were greater than .800 between two coders that also verified the intercoder reliability in this study.

**Table 2.** Intercoder Reliability

Coding Category	% Agreement	Krippendorff’s Alpha
Article theme	93.75%	.9066
Unfair trade practices	100.00%	1.0000
Free-market rules	93.75%	.9302
Authoritarian system	100.00%	1.0000
Unilateral and protectionist trade measures	100.00%	1.0000
Intellectual property right protection & mandatory technology transfer	100.00%	1.0000
Economic loss in the United States	100.00%	1.0000
Economic loss in China	100.00%	1.0000
Economic loss in the world	96.88%	.8421
The worry about the trade dispute	100.00%	1.0000
Confidence in the trade war	100.00%	1.0000
The threat of the U. S	96.88%	.8421
The threat of China	96.88%	.8421

## Hypotheses Testing

In this study, each comparison item was tested with Pearson's chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test and the pairwise z-test. Pearson's chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test tests against the null hypothesis that the frequency of content distribution is the same between two newspapers. When p-value is smaller than .05 reflected from the chi-square test, it means there is strong evidence to indicate that there is a difference between two newspapers in comparison item. Then the pairwise z-test of the difference in proportions is used to specifically show the difference in the coverages of two newspapers.

All reports are divided into three topics which are "state of the dispute", "impact of the dispute", and "comments of the disputes". Chi-square test results (Table 3) shows that there is no difference among three themes ( $X^2=.30$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p>.001$ ). Specifically, the pairwise z-test (Table 4) indicates that both in the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily*, the "comments of the dispute" accounted for the highest proportion of the three themes ( $n=139$ , 42.6%), then the "state of the dispute" is second ( $n=118$ , 36.2%), and the "impact of the dispute" is the least ( $n=69$ , 21.2%). Meanwhile, it reveals that these three themes are distributed across all reports with little difference in the two newspapers, which ensures diversification of data.



**Table 3.** Chi-Square Tests: Article Theme

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.304 <sup>a</sup>	2	.859
Likelihood Ratio	.304	2	.859
Linear-by-Linear Association	.295	1	.587
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.75.			

**Table 4.** Article Theme \* Newspaper Crosstabulation

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Article Theme	Status of the dispute	Count	66 <sub>a</sub>	52 <sub>a</sub>	118
		% within Newspaper	37.5%	34.7%	36.2%
	Impact of the dispute	Count	37 <sub>a</sub>	32 <sub>a</sub>	69
		% within Newspaper	21.0%	21.3%	21.2%
	Comments of the dispute	Count	73 <sub>a</sub>	66 <sub>a</sub>	139
		% within Newspaper	41.5%	44.0%	42.6%
Total	Count	176	150	326	
	% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Following the coding scheme, hypotheses will be tested by analyzing the frequency of twelve representative reporting terms in two newspapers.

Result 1: Chi-square test results (Table 5) shows that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=77.50$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.001$ ). After that, the pairwise z-test (Table 6) indicates that 47.2% ( $n=83$ ) reports on the *New York Times* used the term of “*unfair trade practices*”, while only 4.0% ( $n=6$ ) of reports on the *People's Daily* mentioned the same term. In

the light of the definitions of the coding scheme, the result 1 strongly supports the H1 which is that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People's Daily* because the term “*unfair trade practices*”, which represents the accusation from the United States to China, was more frequently presented on the coverage of the *New York Times* than the *People's Daily*.

**Table 5.** Chi-Square Tests: Unfair trade practices \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	77.495 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	90.294	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	72.069	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.			

**Table 6.** Crosstab: Unfair trade practices \* Newspaper

		Newspaper			Total
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Unfair trade practices	Yes	Count	83 <sup>a</sup>	6 <sup>b</sup>	89
		% within Newspaper	47.2%	4.0%	27.3%
	No	Count	92 <sup>a</sup>	144 <sup>b</sup>	236
		% within Newspaper	52.3%	96.0%	72.4%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 2: Chi-square test results (Table 7) shows that there is no difference between the two newspapers appears ( $X^2=1.91$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p>.001$ ). Furthermore, the pairwise z-test (Table 8) indicates in greater detail that the frequencies of the reporting term “WTO rules/ Free-market rules” appearing in the *New York Times* and the *People’s Daily* were similar to each other 11.4% ( $n=20$ ) and 16.7% ( $n=25$ ) respectively, and a total 13.8% of this term were mentioned in the two newspapers. Therefore, the result 2 lacks sufficient evidence to support the H3 which is that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People’s Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times*. The selected term “WTO rules/ Free-market rules” was used to indicate that China accused the United States of using WTO rules to combat developing countries presents with a similar rate in both newspapers. Not only did the *People’s Daily* report this accusation, but the *New York Times* also reported on this accusation from China.

**Table 7.** Chi-Square Tests: WTO rules/ Free-market rules \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.914 <sup>a</sup>	1	.167
Likelihood Ratio	1.908	1	.167
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.908	1	.167
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.71.			

**Table 8.** Crosstab: WTO rules/ Free-market rules \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
WTO rules/ Free-market rules	Yes	Count	20 <sub>a</sub>	25 <sub>a</sub>	45
		% within Newspaper	11.4%	16.7%	13.8%
	No	Count	156 <sub>a</sub>	125 <sub>a</sub>	281
		% within Newspaper	88.6%	83.3%	86.2%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 3: Chi-square test results (Table 9) indicates there is a significant difference between the two newspapers in the use of the term “*authoritarian system*” in reporting ( $X^2=44.89$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Specifically, the pairwise z-test (Table 10) shows that 27.3% ( $n=48$ ) reports in the New York Times used the term “*authoritarian system*” in representing of China, differently, only 0.7% ( $n=1$ ) of reports on the People’s Daily mentioned the same term. In the light of definitions in the coding scheme, the result 3 supports the H1 which is that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People’s Daily* because the term “*authoritarian system*”, which represents the negative frame of China within the current international consensus, was more frequently presented in the coverage by the *New York Times* than in the *People’s Daily*.

**Table 9.** Chi-Square Tests: Authoritarian system \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	44.886 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	42.827	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	44.748	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.55.			

**Table 10.** Crosstab: Authoritarian system \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Authoritarian system	Yes	Count	48 <sup>a</sup>	1 <sup>b</sup>	49
		% within Newspaper	27.3%	0.7%	15.0%
	No	Count	128 <sup>a</sup>	149 <sup>b</sup>	277
		% within Newspaper	72.7%	99.3%	85.0%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 4: Chi-square test (Table 11) shows the result that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=68.02$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Moreover, the pairwise z-test (Table 12) indicates that 10.2% ( $n=18$ ) reports in the *New York Times* used the term “*Unilateral and protectionist trade measures*”, while 52.0% ( $n=78$ ) of reports in the *People's Daily* used the same term. Therefore, the H3 which suggests that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York*

*Times* is supported by the result 4 because “*unilateral and protectionist trade measures*”, which refers to China’s condemnation of the United States in the news coverages, was mentioned more frequently in the *People’s Daily* than in the *New York Times*.

**Table 11.** Chi-Square Tests: Unilateral and protectionist trade measures \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	68.016 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	71.305	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	67.807	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 44.17.			

**Table 12.** Crosstab: Unilateral and protectionist trade measures \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People’s Daily		
Unilateral trade measures	Yes	Count	18 <sup>a</sup>	78 <sup>b</sup>	96
		% within Newspaper	10.2%	52.0%	29.4%
	No	Count	158 <sup>a</sup>	72 <sup>b</sup>	230
		% within Newspaper	89.8%	48.0%	70.6%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 5: Chi-square test result (Table 13) presents that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=48.70$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.001$ ). What's more, the pairwise z-test (Table 14) provides that 42.6% (n=75) reports on the New York Times used the term of “*Intellectual property right protection*”, which in contrast, only 8.7% (n=13) of reports in the People's Daily used the same term. In light of the definitions used in the coding scheme, result 5 significantly supports the H1 that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People's Daily*.

**Table 13.** Chi-Square Tests: Intellectual property right protection \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.694 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	53.405	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.417	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.			

**Table 14.** Crosstab: Intellectual property right protection \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Intellectual property right protection	Yes	Count	75 <sub>a</sub>	13 <sub>b</sub>	88
		% within Newspaper	42.6%	8.7%	27.0%
	No	Count	100 <sub>a</sub>	137 <sub>b</sub>	237
		% within Newspaper	56.8%	91.3%	72.7%
	12.00	Count	1 <sub>a</sub>	0 <sub>a</sub>	1
		% within Newspaper	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 6: Chi-square test result (Table 15) presents that there is no significant difference between the two newspapers ( $X^2=1.44$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p>.001$ ). Besides, the pairwise z-test (Table 16) indicates that 34.9 (n=61) reports in the New York Times applied the term of “*economic loss in the United States*”, similarly, 841.3% (n=62) of the reports in the People’s Daily used the same term, and total 37.8% (n=123) of reports in the two newspapers used this term which is a large proportion. Meanwhile, the result 6 cannot be used to evidence to support the H2 and H3 which were that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* would promote a more positive frame of the United States than the *People’s Daily* and in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People’s Daily* would promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times*.



**Table 15.** Chi-Square Tests: Economic loss in the United States \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.440 <sup>a</sup>	1	.230
Likelihood Ratio	1.439	1	.230
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.436	1	.231
N of Valid Cases	325		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 56.77.			

**Table 16.** Crosstab: Economic loss in the United States \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Economic loss in the United States	Yes	Count	61 <sup>a</sup>	62 <sup>a</sup>	123
		% within Newspaper	34.9%	41.3%	37.8%
	No	Count	114 <sup>a</sup>	88 <sup>a</sup>	202
		% within Newspaper	65.1%	58.7%	62.2%
Total		Count	175	150	325
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 7: Chi-square test result (Table 17) confirms that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=12.41$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In addition, the pairwise z-test (Table 18) shows that 13.6% ( $n=24$ ) reports in the New York Times used the term “*economic loss in China*”, in contrast, only 2.7% ( $n=4$ ) of reports in the People’s Daily used the same term. In light of the definitions of the coding scheme, the result 7 supports both H1 and H4, which respectively

support in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People's Daily* and in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more positive frame of China than the *New York Times*.

**Table 17.** Chi-Square Tests: Economic loss in China \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.412 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	13.895	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.374	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.88.			

**Table 18.** Crosstab: Economic loss in China \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Economic loss in China	Yes	Count	24 <sub>a</sub>	4 <sub>b</sub>	28
		% within Newspaper	13.6%	2.7%	8.6%
	No	Count	152 <sub>a</sub>	146 <sub>b</sub>	298
		% within Newspaper	86.4%	97.3%	91.4%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 8: Chi-square test result (Table 19) shows that the difference between reports in the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=24.88$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Furthermore, the pairwise z-test (Table 20) indicates specifically that only 2.8% ( $n=5$ ) of reports in the *New York Times* used the term “*economic loss in the world*”, conversely, 20.0% ( $n=30$ ) of reports in the *People’s Daily* applied the same term. Therefore, the result 8 is another evidence for H3 that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People’s Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times*.

**Table 19.** Chi-Square Tests: Economic loss in the world \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.880 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.721	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.804	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.10.			

**Table 20.** Crosstab: Economic loss in the world \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Economic loss in the world	Yes	Count	5 <sub>a</sub>	30 <sub>b</sub>	35
		% within Newspaper	2.8%	20.0%	10.7%
	No	Count	171 <sub>a</sub>	120 <sub>b</sub>	291
		% within Newspaper	97.2%	80.0%	89.3%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 9: Chi-square test result (Table 21) shows that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=17.30$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Moreover, the pairwise z-test (Table 22) indicates specifically that 12.5% ( $n=22$ ) reports on the *New York Times* used “*the worry about the trade dispute*”, on the contrary, only 0.7% ( $n=1$ ) of reports on the *People's Daily* used the same term. In light of the definitions in the coding scheme, the results do not support of H2 which is that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more positive frame of the United States than the *People's Daily*. In fact, it supports the opposite.

**Table 21.** Chi-Square Tests: The worry about the trade dispute \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.293 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.665	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.240	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.58.			

**Table 22.** Crosstab: The worry about the trade dispute \* Newspaper

		Newspaper			Total
		New York Times	People's Daily		
The worry about the trade dispute	Yes	Count	22 <sub>a</sub>	1 <sub>b</sub>	23
		% within Newspaper	12.5%	0.7%	7.1%
	No	Count	154 <sub>a</sub>	149 <sub>b</sub>	303
		% within Newspaper	87.5%	99.3%	92.9%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Result 10: Confidence in the trade war**

Chi-square test result (Table 23) confirms that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=19.50$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). What's more, the pairwise z-test (Table 24) presents specifically that only 6.3% ( $n=11$ ) reports on the *New York Times* used the term "*the confidence of trade war*", however, 23.3% ( $n=35$ ) of reports in the *People's Daily* used the same term.

Therefore, H4 which posted that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more positive frame of China than the *New York Times* is supported by the result 10.

**Table 23.** Chi-Square Tests: Confidence in the trade war \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.501 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	20.063	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.441	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 21.17.			

**Table 24.** Crosstab: Confidence in the trade war \* Newspaper

		Newspaper			Total
		New York Times	People's Daily		
Confidence in the trade war	Yes	Count	11 <sup>a</sup>	35 <sup>b</sup>	46
		% within Newspaper	6.3%	23.3%	14.1%
	No	Count	165 <sup>a</sup>	115 <sup>b</sup>	280
		% within Newspaper	93.8%	76.7%	85.9%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 11: Chi-square test result (Table 25) shows that the difference between the two

newspapers is significant ( $X^2=13.56$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Equally important, the pairwise z-test (Table 26) provides specifically that only 6.8% ( $n=12$ ) of reports in the *New York Times* used the term “the threat of the U.S.”, however, 20.7% ( $n=31$ ) of reports on the *People’s Daily* used the same term. Therefore, H3 which posted that, in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People’s Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times* is supported again by result 11.

**Table 25.** Chi-Square Tests: The threat of the U.S. \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.563 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	13.803	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.522	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.79.			

**Table 26.** Crosstab: The threat of the U.S \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People’s Daily		
The threat of the U. S.	Yes	Count	12 <sup>a</sup>	31 <sup>b</sup>	43
		% within Newspaper	6.8%	20.7%	13.2%
	No	Count	164 <sup>a</sup>	119 <sup>b</sup>	283
		% within Newspaper	93.2%	79.3%	86.8%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Result 12: Chi-square test result (Table 27) indicates that the difference between the two newspapers is significant ( $X^2=49.15$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Furthermore, the pairwise z-test (Table 28) presents specifically that 27.8% ( $n=49$ ) reports in the *New York Times* used the term of “the threat of China”, while this is true, there is no report ( $n=0$ , 0.0%) in the *People’s Daily* using the same term. Therefore, the H1 is supported, which is that in reporting on the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People’s Daily*.

**Table 27.** Chi-Square Tests: The threat of China \* Newspaper

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.149 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	67.765	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	48.998	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.55.			



**Table 28.** Crosstab: The threat of China \* Newspaper

		Newspaper		Total	
		New York Times	People's Daily		
The threat of China	Yes	Count	49 <sub>a</sub>	0 <sub>b</sub>	49
		% within Newspaper	27.8%	0.0%	15.0%
	No	Count	127 <sub>a</sub>	150 <sub>b</sub>	277
		% within Newspaper	72.2%	100.0%	85.0%
Total		Count	176	150	326
		% within Newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In conclusion, results 1,3,5,7 and 12 proved H1, results 6,9, and 10 proved the opposite of H2, results 4, 6, 8, and 11 proved H3, and results 1, 7, 9, 10, and 12 proved H4.

## Chapter Six: Discussion

In order to maintain the integrity and consistency of the comparison, four hypotheses were developed to determine whether in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily* would be likely to promote a negative/ positive frame of China and the United States, respectively. Content analysis as the method of data analysis provided the best method to support this study. "Content analysis can be used to show how sources of messages construct messages and have motivations underlying the messages sent and how a source's messages are intended to influence a specific receiver" (Wrench et al., 2008, p. 276). From the specific results shown, the hypotheses were mostly proven indicating that there are, indeed, differences between the reports by the two newspapers. Results 1, 3, 5, 7, and 12 supported H1 which supported that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more negative frame of China than the *People's Daily* respectively that: reflects U.S. accusations of the unfair trade practices by China; depictions of a Chinese authoritarian system which is harmful to the free-market; the U.S. emphasis on Intellectual Property Right Protection and mandatory technology transfer by China; the economic loss by China in the tariff dispute; and the negative term "the threat from China". These significant results showed that the *New York Times* promoted an overall more negative frame of China with these terms than the *People's Daily* in reporting the 2018 China-United

States Trade War. Results 6, 9 and 10 indicated, however, that H2 which suggests that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* will promote a more positive frame of the United States than the *People's Daily* was not confirmed. The result 6 showed that the *New York Times* did not report less often on the economic loss to the United States in tariff disputes than the *People's Daily* (n=61, 34.9%), and the result 9 and 10 together provided that rather than “Confidence in the trade dispute” (n=11, 6.3%) the *New York Times* was likely to more often use the term “the worry about the trade dispute” (n=22, 12.5%). Therefore, in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *New York Times* did not promote a more positive frame of the United States' position in the dispute than the *People's Daily*. In another word, it also reflects that the *New York Times* was not more likely to create a positive frame of its government. Results 4, 6, 8, and 11 confirmed H3 which suggested that in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* will promote a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times* respectively that: China accused the United States of unilateral, protectionist trade measures and promoting the “America First” principle; 41.3% of reporting by the *People's Daily* delineated the economic loss in the United States; the *People's Daily* also described the economic loss to the world to condemn the origin of tariff disputes—the United States; and the paper used the negative term “the threat from the United States” often. These significant results showed that, in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* promoted a more negative frame of the United States than the *New York Times*. Results 1, 7, 9, 10, and 12 supported H4 which posited that in reporting the 2018 China-United

States Trade War, the *People's Daily* would promote a more positive frame of China than the *New York Times*. The lesser mention of the negative term is also a way to promote a more positive frame to the news coverage. Result 1 indicated that only 4% of reports in the *People's Daily* used the term “*unfair trade practices*”, meanwhile, the term was used only to refute accusations by the United States. Similarly, there was only one report (0.7%) of the term “*authoritarian system*” in the *People's Daily*, in an article that explained that, due to overpopulation and lower average education level, China could not establish the same system as other developed countries, but, based on national conditions had to explore new paths. Results 7 indicated that the *People's Daily* rarely mentioned the economic loss to China (n=4, 2.7%) compared with 24 (13.6%) reports in the *New York Times*. Moreover, results 9 and 10 together demonstrated that, compared with the “*the worried about the trade dispute*” frame (n=1, 0.7%) the *People's Daily* more often used the term “*Confidence in the trade dispute*” (n=35, 23.3%). Obviously, result 12 there is no report in the *People's Daily* using the term “*the threat from China*”, instead it was more likely to use the term “*counterattack*”. Therefore, in reporting the 2018 China-United States Trade War, the *People's Daily* generally promoted a more positive frame of China than the *New York Times*.

People are appreciative of what they hear and feel, whether it is beautiful, interesting, or bad, unpleasant, as long as the information itself is neutral, just as the photo itself is just a copy of things. Meanwhile, the frame of the photo will limit the interpretation of the photo. On the basis of the findings, the most frequently occurring statements are shown distinctly. “We will not

start a war, however, if someone starts a war, we will definitely fight back” is a quotation reflecting the most frequent focus in the *People’s Daily*. “China’s approach relies on unfair and predatory practices, and on stolen American technology” is the most emphasized point of view expressed in the *New York Times*. In response to the accusations by the United States, the Chinese government has said that China and the United States are at different stages of development, and China has been striving to protect intellectual property rights, which is the frame used by *People’s Daily* with regard to the term “Intellectual Property right protection” in result 5. Another point worth noting, just as the *New York Times* often refers to the “economic loss in the United States” (n=61, 39%), is that the *People’s Daily* China frequently mentions the economic losses brought by the trade war to the United States and the world and the opposition voice of the American people and the world. However, it is very difficult to find an article describing the loss to China from the reports in the *People’s Daily* (n=4, 2.7%).

Overall, from the findings, there are three distinct differences between the two newspapers that also appear in the process of study. Firstly, the *New York Times* serves as an international media for international audiences and provides a wide range of comprehensive discussions because it reports opinions and comments from different positions and more specific details of reports and analysis compared to the *People’s Daily*. However, the reporting by the *People’s Daily* was highly consistent over the period. In the process of reading the sample, it was found that many similar themes/narratives appeared in different reports, such as the rhetoric of the attitude toward the United States, or the expression of attitudes in China. Analysis in the

*People's Daily's* and the length are of stories shorter than in the *New York Times*. Secondly, the two newspapers had completely different attitudes toward their respective government and the presidents. The *New York Times* was more often willing to publish critical comments of the President of the U.S., remarks or government decisions. On the contrary, the *People's Daily* did not evaluate the government's decision-making at all. Thirdly, for the same event, reports by the *New York Times* often reported the U.S. economic losses and tended to more often express concern about the trade war, while the *People's Daily* basically did not talk about losses to China caused by the trade war, and its attitudes tended to be optimistic. One possible reason for this may be different media positioning in relation to the government alongside different political and economic systems in the two countries. Thus, under the four theories of the press, the author has indicated that the United States falls closer to a libertarian approach to press freedom, while China's press/government relationship more closely aligns with the Soviet Theory. Within a libertarian context, more freedom is allowed to press to criticize the government, and this criticism is expected. However, within the Socialist relationship, the government owns the press and the press is responsive to the government's position rather than critical of it. In the author's opinion, the message of the government in China is reflected in the sample of stories identified in this study—"There is no winner in the trade war. The trade war is an obstacle that we must face, but we have confidence that we can overcome". On the other hand, in the United States, while there is a feeling that China has not been fair in trade practices, there is also a strong feeling among mainstream journalists that Trump's decision to start a trade war was ill-advised and had

a greater potential to hurt Americans business and consumers than to level the playing field. “By suspending belief that an objective world exists to be reported, we develop a conception of news as a constructed reality” (Molotch & Lester, 1974). The value of this research is to compare the differences in attitudes and expressions between the two media, which represent the respective countries and portray them as the protagonist of the event.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The trade dispute between China and the United States is one of the most newsworthy events in 2018 and it continues to be an issue in 2019. In this thesis, a quantitative study was done on the newspaper coverage of the New York Times and the People's Daily using content analysis as the method to collect and analyze data. The results of the analysis proved that the two newspapers used different frames in their coverages, and both newspapers have a different focus on content. For the New York Times, the reports promoted more negative frame of China than the People's Daily, because of the more using of the terms that include China's unfair trade practice, Authoritarian system, the theft of Intellectual property, economic loss in China, and the threat from China. Meanwhile, the New York Times did not promote a more positive frame of the United States than the People's Daily, because the number of reports about the economic loss and the worry about trade disputes did not have a difference with the People's Daily. For People's Daily, the reports promoted more negative frame of the United States than the New York Times as the result of the more using of the terms that include the United States' violation of WTO rules, Unilateral and protectionist trade measures, economic loss in the United States, the economic loss in the world caused by the starting of the trade dispute by the U.S., and the threat from the United States. Meanwhile, the People's Daily promoted a more positive frame of China than the New York Times because the reports in People's Daily mentioned a little loss of



China and keep the positive attitude to the trade dispute.

A noteworthy finding is, as an international media, the New York Times has not concealed or reduced its description of the country's own economic losses. However, different from the New York Times, in the People's Daily, the content of reports did not mention the loss to the country or include any negative comments about the President.

### **Limitation Buried and Future Direction**

The limitation of this thesis is that, although the study selected a perspective two-month period to collect data, the trade dispute continued afterward. Inevitably, the attitudes and ways of reporting will change during the ongoing process of the event. Future research should explore the full timeline of the events to gain a fuller practice of the reporting. Another limitation is, to make the current research feasible, the research data used limited online database and two representative newspapers. It would be better to use more media and newspapers to compare together in order to gain a more comprehensive assessment of differences in frames used.

As this event continues to intensify, the next study should follow the development of the event and provide the frame of the coverages with more data. Moreover, it would also be a worthwhile study to explore how the coverage of newspapers influence attitudes and opinions of audiences through a survey, based on frame building theory and frame setting theory.

Additionally, this study only focuses on the frequency of analyzing keywords. In the process of collecting data, it was found that the choice of references to other external reports in the report is also an aspect worth studying.

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## Appendix: Content Coding Scheme

### I. General

Code by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date coded: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Newspapers

- New York Times
- People's Daily

#### Publication date of the article

- March 15, 2018 — April 15, 2018
- August 8, 2018 — September 8, 2018

### II. Report Theme

Please code each article into one of the four theme categories. Only one primary theme of the article should be taken into consideration, while other themes that may appear in the article should be neglected.

- The status of the trade dispute.
- The impact of the trade dispute.
- The comments of the trade dispute.

### III. Report Frames

Please code each report into the alternative categories according to instructions presented below.

Frame	Yes/Present	No/Absent
1. <i>“Unfair trade practices” frame.</i> This frame focuses on that the United states criticizes China’s closed markets and trade manipulation that exploit gaps in international rules or breach them outright.		
2. <i>WTO rules/ Free-market rules frame.</i> This frame		

<p>focuses on taking advantage of gaps in international rules or breaking them.</p>		
<p>3. <b>Authoritarian system frame.</b> The Communist Party government still subsidizes key industries, lavishes credit on state-owned companies and imposes barriers against foreign competitors. “The Communist leadership abolished the presidential term limit”. “censors have been deleting a torrent of criticism online, some of it directed at President Xi Jinping’s leadership”.</p>		
<p>4. <b>Unilateral and protectionist trade measures frame.</b> “Hegemonism” and the United States intends to more protectionist, “America First” approach.</p>		
<p>5. <b>Intellectual property right protection frame.</b> China blocks off valuable markets from American competition. China has robbed American companies of billions of dollars in revenue and killed thousands of jobs. “301 Investigation”.</p>		
<p>6. <b>Economic loss in the united states frame. The U.S. companies setting up companies in China are adversely affected, including manufacturing, semiconductor supply chains and soybean plantations. Tariffs are damaging taxes on American consumers.</b></p>		
<p>7. <b>Economic loss in China frame.</b> The drop of the currency. Exports to the United States account for a large share of China’s economic growth.</p>		
<p>8. <b>Economic loss in the world frame.</b> Trump’s trade policy undermines the stability of global multilateral trading system. As the world’s largest economy, the United States has a major impact on the world economy. The international media are also worried about the consequences of the trade war.</p>		

9. <b><i>The worry about the trade dispute frame.</i></b> Worries about economic loss and unemployment situation.		
10. <b><i>Confidence in the trade war frame.</i></b> China indicates there is no need to be pessimistic. It should face the problem and turn the crisis into an opportunity. “It is the short-term risks but the long-term benefits”.		
11. <b><i>The threat of the U.S. frame.</i></b> The United States aims to curb China’s development. Through the threat of trade wars, the United States has forced China to open its markets for economic benefits.		
12. <b><i>The threat of China. frame.</i></b> China posed a far greater threat to the United States than Japan, the Soviet Union or any other historic rival.		