Engendering the Positive Image of the China Government through Flood Framing

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Abstract: *The study investigated how the flood news in China is framed by the People's Daily, an official newspaper of the Communist Party of China. The objectives of the study were to: (1) identify the frequency of thematic and episodic framing of flood events; (2) examine the frame dimensions used for framing flood events; and (3) determine the dominant valence of news articles on flood events. Altogether 180 articles on flood in the online People's Daily (English edition) published from 1 January to 31 December 2023 were analysed. The results showed a dominance of the episodic frame (94.4%) compared to the thematic frame (5.6%). The main frame dimension is the attribution of responsibility but it is to highlight the capability of the government to take care of the people rather than to attribute blame for poor management. There was a dominance of positive valence (70.6%) compared to negative valence (26.1%) and neutral valence (3.3%). President Xi Jinping was portrayed as a "caring leader" and a "compassionate and hands-on leader" in dealing with the flood woes of the people.*

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1. Introduction

Floods are becoming increasingly frequent, thereby multiplying the negative impact on people, property, and the environment. For example, floods cause erosion, resulting in bad environmental effects. Floods also cause water contamination, causing diseases to spread. In China, flood-related economic losses in 2021 amounted to USD25 billion compared to USD41.8 billion in Europe (Ng, 2022).

Eastern and southern China are prone to floods because they are in the vicinity of seven major rivers of China, namely, Yangtze, Yellow, Soughua, Liaohe, Haihe, Huaihe and Pearl River Basin. As flood is an age-old problem dating back to 206 B.C., China has an integrated flood management strategy comprising:
  i. storing the flood-water in up stream areas to the extent possible;
  ii. protecting the flood prone areas against ordinary flood in middle and down stream reaches of major rivers;
  iii. making joint use of the levees and storage and detention basins for handling the extraordinary floods; and
  iv. flood preparedness and flood fighting before and during flood season relying on the well organized emergency management system. (Zhang, n.d., p. 2)

The flood management is highlighted in newspapers published in China. For example, Xu (2016) analysed textual and visual portrayal of the Chinese government in handling the 1998 Yangtze River flood, among other natural disasters. The content analysis of the theatrical structures identified an image of security, heroism and compassion. The leaders are shown in acts of expressing sympathy, participating in government-led mourning ceremonies for the flood victims. The narratives of flood response and recovery show heroism through the use of military metaphors like the leaders visiting the frontline of the flood destruction. The portrayal of the responsible leaders may create a sense of security that the government cares for the people.

Similarly, Repnikova's (2017) analysis of how the 2012 Beijing floods was portrayed in Jinghua Shibao and Beijing Ribao showed the crisis management. The media reporting was favourable to the government to comply with a soft propaganda directive. Both newspapers projected an effective official response to the storm that caused the flood, "portraying Beijing authorities as sensitive to public needs, efficient, modern, [and] professional" (Repnikova, 2017, p. 9). Jinghua Shibao, being a commercial daily, took liberty to publicise citizen heroes and its own contribution in giving donations which received commendations from the Beijing head and vice-minister of the propaganda department of the Communist Party of China. Jinghua Shibao also had articles telling readers about lessons learnt from the flood disaster to increase community preparedness. Surprisingly, Beijing Ribao, an official newspaper of the Party, had articles had carried implicit critical content. "It argues that weak infrastructure exacerbated the effects of the storm in those poorer areas, calling for improvements to be made in the future" (Repnikova, 2017, p. 12). Nevertheless, a majority of Beijing Ribao's articles attributed salience to the government's efforts and the unity of Beijing residents as part of its veiled pro-regime news reporting. Repnikova (2017) stated that the flood news articles in China tended to convey hope in the form of quotations from speeches of high-ranking officials and efforts to manage the flood crisis (present and future).

The overwhelming positive valence in newspapers published in China derived from portrayal of the government's capacity and confidence in managing the crisis is starkly different from framing of flood news in other countries. For instance, Roney et al. (2022) found that the five newspapers (2 international, 3 Italian) carrying news of the Florence flood in Italy had strong negative tones. In Ireland, Devitt and O'Neill's (2017) analysis of three newspapers showed that the focus was on the emotional impact of the flood on people and citizenship participation in risk management. In India, the coverage of the Uttarakhand flood in four newspapers showed a focus on response and less on the level of community preparedness (Giri & Vats, 2018).

Thus far, the few studies on flood framing in newspapers in China indicate a strong presence of the government in flood relief efforts. At the time of Repnikova's (2017) study, there were already netizens expressing opinions and critiques of the official response to flood in blogs but some of the posts were later removed. The growing boldness of netizens to express their views on government initiatives may influence the soft propaganda directive on media reporting. Zhang et al. (2023) found that the communication style of Chinese digital propaganda has changed based on an analysis of 43,259 posts from the People's Daily's Weibo account. From 2019 to 2022, Zhang et al. (2023) reported that a majority of the posts were emotionally neutral, and positive energy posts were used to distract when the authorities encountered challenges. However, in the framing of the newspaper articles, it is not known whether there has been a relaxation of the soft propaganda directive for the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China. Hoddie (2006) pointed out that China scholars believe that documenting the

frequency and content of articles [in the People's Daily] serves as an effective means of gauging the current leadership's level of interest and views on a particular topic.

The study investigated how the flood news in China is framed by the People's Daily, an official newspaper of the Communist Party of China. The objectives of the study were to:
  i.   identify the frequency of thematic and episodic framing of flood events;
  ii. examine the frame dimensions used for framing flood events; and
  iii. determine the dominant valence of news articles on flood events.

2. Theoretical framework of study

In his framing theory, Entman (1993) identifies frames as existing in four locations of communication, which are the communicator, text, receiver, and culture (Figure 1). 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 (Entman, 1993).
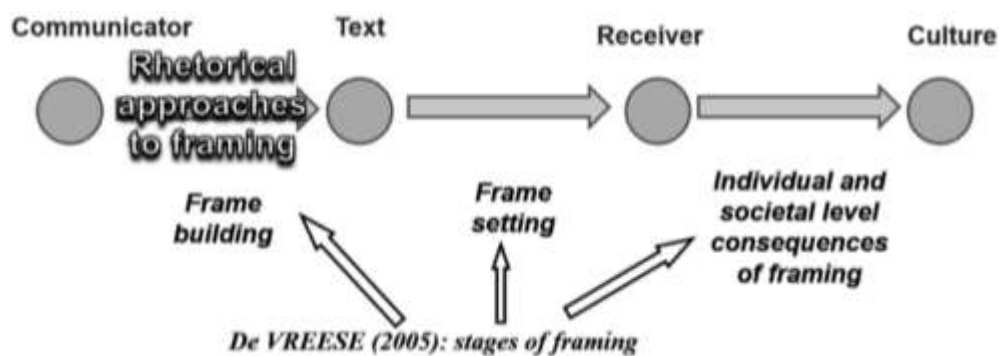

Figure 1: Framing theory incorporating Entman (1993) and de Vreese (2005)
(Source: Carlan & Ciocea, 2016)

When the communicator constructs the text, this process is referred to as frame building by de Vreese (2005). The frame building takes place in the newsroom, where journalists consider editorial policies, news value, and social movements. Journalists then construct frames in the news using both issue-specific and generic frames, referred to as episodic and thematic frames by Iyengar (1990). The subsequent stage of framing is frame setting whereby the readers' prior knowledge and dispositions influences how frames in the news are received (de Vreese, 2005). The final stage of framing is framing effects, which refers to the individual and societal level consequences of framing. This sociological framing approach considers media frames as a dependent variable (Correa, 2010), emerging as outcomes of the frame-building process influenced by organisational pressures, journalistic routines, and social movements (de Vreese, 2005). In the present study, the focus is on the frames in news articles.

Episodic and thematic frames
Iyengar (1990) posits that people's understanding of issues like poverty is influenced by how those issues are framed using issue-specific or generic frames. Iyengar (1990) introduces a framing analysis method that categorises framing into episodic frames and thematic frames respectively. Episodic framing accentuates individual events and personal narratives (Iyengar, 1994), such as the living conditions of a poor person. Episodic framing tends to elicit a more profound emotional response from readers (Gross, 2008). However, readers may not be able to see the event as connected to past history or events. On the other hand, thematic frames situate events and issues within a broader context or general trend (Iyengar, 1994) such as poverty

rates, changes in the government's definition of poverty, and increases in hunger across countries. Thematic framing tends to elicit no or weak response from readers (Gross, 2008) but enables readers to have a macro perspective.

Mainstream media often prioritises immediate details over providing contextualization for issues, commonly employing episodic framing in straight news. This framing approach reflects a top-down communication format, relying on elites as primary news sources, limiting the creative space for journalists (Van Dijck, 2013). An example is Chicago Tribune articles on corruption which had a prevalence of episodic framing over thematic framing in 2001-2011 (Park, 2012). The extensive use of episodic framing may lead the public to think that corruption is inconsequential if undetected, or that the problem will dissipate once perpetrators are convicted (Park, 2012). Similar extensive use of the episodic framing was found for child abuse news in Bangladesh (Jahan & Razib, 2023), and floods in India (Giri & Vats, 2018). Boukes (2022) found that in crisis news, episodic framing reduces the attribution of political responsibility.

Frame dimensions

In their framing analysis, Smetko and Valkenburg (2000) opted for a deductive approach to assess the prevalence of frames in the news. They specifically investigated five dimensions of news frames as follows:
  i. Conflict, emphasising conflicts for audience engagement;
  ii. Human Interest, showcasing the human or emotional perspective of events;
  iii. Economic Consequences, reporting on events with economic impacts;
  iv. Morality, contextualising events within religious and moral values; and
  v. Responsibility, describing issues attributed to the responsibility of government, individuals, or groups

Shabbir et al. (2015) found differences in frame dimensions in the climate change news in the Guardian and China Daily during the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The study found that in the China Daily, the most used frame was responsibility, followed by human-interest frame, whereas consequence, conflict, and morality frames were hardly used. However, in the Guardian articles, the most used frame was consequence, followed by human interest and responsibility frame. The dominance of the responsibility frame in the China Daily is unusual. Fu et al. (2012) reported that the six Chinese newspapers analysed ran fewer articles about the government's responsibility pertaining to a Sichuan earthquake compared to American news articles on Katrina. Fu et al. (2012) also reported that with other domestic Chinese newspapers, the People's Daily rarely reported articles about deaths, injuries, and destruction, whereas over 70% of its articles covered the government's response and mitigation. The findings indicate that Chinese media have successfully served as the agenda setters of the government's emergency response.

Valence

De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) introduced the concept of valence framing in political communication research, wherein issues or events are assessed positively or negatively. They argued that frames often inherently possess a valence, and as such, news frames play a role in shaping public support for various policy measures. According to Entman (1993), frames, by nature, carry inherent valence as they encompass a "moral evaluation" as a defining characteristic (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Valence framing has the potential to impact readers' attitudes towards issues and events.

Research on the China press shows that the positive valence tends to be prevalent in mainstream newspapers. The positive tone prevailed even for the coverage of COVID-19 in Africa, based on Gabore's (2020) analysis of CNN, BBC, France 24, CGTN (formerly CCTV), China Daily, and Xinhua. The Chinese media had mostly positive valence (75.5%), with less neutral (23.2%) and negative valence (0.7%) while the Western media had a balance of valence (positive, 24.4%; neutral, 41.2%; negative, 34.3%). However, the People's Daily had a balance of valence when reporting events in the United States (positive, 24.5%; neutral, 53%; negative, 22.5%) based on the 2000-2010 articles (Liu & Yang, 2015). However, it is likely that articles covering events in China tend towards positive valence as long as news reporting in China is strictly controlled by the authorities.

3. Method of Study

The descriptive study involved framing analysis of articles on flood published in the People's Daily online, English edition. The People's Daily was established on 15 June 1948 and was published in Pingshan County, Hebei, until its offices were moved to Beijing in March 1949. Ever since its founding, the People's Daily has been under direct control of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Shi, 2023). The People's Daily provides direct information on the policies and viewpoints of the Party in multiple languages. People's Daily Online was founded on January 1, 1997.

The People's Daily was selected for analysis because it is official newspaper of the Communist Party of China. In the 2022 Annual Top 100 List of Postal Issues released in China, the People's Daily holds the top position (Baidu, 2024a). Additionally, in the top 10 selection of the "New Media Influence Index: by the China Economic Media Association in 2021, the People's Daily Online achieved the highest score (Baidu, 2024b). As of 2016, People's Daily has grown its readership from 3 million in the era of pure print media to 350 million users (People's Daily, 2016).

The use of the search term "flood"in the online portal of this media, http://en.people.cn/, yielded 180 news articles from 1 June to 31 December 2023. Only news articles were collected for analysis. Opinion pieces, business news, videos and some news with only pictures were excluded. The total word count is 65,615 words. The year-long data collection period was chosen to cover the whole cycle of floods in a year. The unit of analysis was the news articles for the identification of episodic and thematic framing, frame dimensions, and valence.

For the analysis of thematic and episodic framing, a dominant frame was identified for each news article. An article is considered episodic if it accentuates individual events and personal narratives (Iyengar, 1994) although it may contain a minimal amount of background information such as history, analysis of facts, and expert opinions. An article is considered thematic if it promotes a macro perspective by situating issues within a broader societal (Iyengar, 1994).

The frame dimensions were analysed based on Smetko and Valkenburg (2000). The definitions of the dimensions are given in the Theoretical framework of the study section. As for valence, the analysis framework in Table 1 was used. During the preliminary analysis, the coding of flood news such as rallies was discussed to reach intercoder agreement. The neutral valence is more difficult to analyse. An article is considered to have neutral valence, if there is a balance of positive and negative tones. For example, the reporting of the rescue in flood which called "Red Cross rescuers evacuate 1,475 people in flood-affected Hebei city". The negative valence

in the news is due to the large number of people affected by the flood. The positive valence is due to the successful rescue by the Red Cross. In this study, pure neutral it just as a headline sentence without emotion.

Table 1: Analysis framework for valence of flood news articles

Valence	Definition
Positive	Actions to handle flood and preserve the good image of the government
Negative	Blame, criticism, suits, allegations, investigations of individuals and poor/ mismanagement of flood
Neutral	No emotional overtones & Balance of positive and negative tones

4. Results

This section describes the results from the analysis of 180 news articles on flood in the People's Daily for the thematic and episodic framing, frame dimensions and the valence.

Episodic and thematic framing of flood news
Table 2 shows that most of the news articles in The People's Daily are episodic framing (94.4%), and a small proportion are thematic articles (5.6%).

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of flood news in episodic and thematic frames (N=179)

Type of frame	Frequency	Percentage
Episodic	169	94.4
Thematic	10	5.6
Total	179	100

Episodic articles revealed details of flood- rescuers work, restoration works and government calls, like "Xi calls for continuous efforts in post-flood reconstruction in Beijing, Hebei". The president Xi Jinping's inspection took place on 10 November 2023 and he gave a speech during the visit. His speech was extensively quoted in the news article. This news article has a human interest story, an excerpt of which is included here to illustrate the one-to-one interaction that the president has with ordinary citizens:

> The local residents warmly bid farewell to the general secretary when he was leaving the village. Xi said to them, "I have been concerned about the people in the disaster-stricken areas. The Communist Party is a party that serves the people and always places the people in the highest position in our hearts. Whether it is emergency relief or post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, we will spare no effort. I hope you will remain confident and work hard to build a better home."

On the other hand, thematic articles revealed the broader context of flood like "China's Haihe River Basin sees worst flooding since 1963: officials". The following excerpt quotes Yang Bang, an official from the Haihe River Water Conservancy Commission under the Ministry of Water Resources.

According to Yang, the average annual precipitation in the Haihe River Basin is 525 mm, meaning the region received a quarter of the annual rainfall in the four days this time. According to data, back in 1963, the river basin saw 60 billion cubic meters of rainfall during a week-long rainstorm.

The Haihe River Basin is densely populated and involves many large and medium-sized cities, including Beijing, Tianjin, Shijiazhuang, Tangshan and Qinhuangdao. (Source: http://en.people.cn/n3/2023/0804/c90000-20054218.html)

This news article refreshed the readers' memory with some background on annual rainfall and population as well as the history of rainfall in 1963. The comparison with the 1963 flood incident shows the severity of the November 2023 flood. The article closed with a reassuring message that "the commission will make proper arrangements with relevant departments and closely monitor the situation".

Dominant frame dimensions

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of frame dimensions in People's Daily. The main frame dimension in the headline is the responsibility frame (86.6%), followed by economic consequences frame (11.2%), human interest frame (1.1%), and conflict frame (0.6%). There were no morality frames in the articles on flood.

Attributions of responsibility. The news article did not blame or point out shortfalls of authorities in charge of flood relief. Instead the attributions of responsibility were positive in the People's Daily flood news articles. For example, the headline of 5 July article read "Xi stresses prioritizing people's safety, property in flood prevention, disaster relief". Adjectives such as "stresses" and "prioritizing" were used to create the image of a responsible leader who cares for the people during times of crisis. As the government's propagator, the People's Daily tends to emphasise the positive image of the government in disaster reporting.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of frame dimensions in People's Daily (N=179)

Frame dimension	Frequency	Percentage
Attribution of responsibility	155	86.6
Economic consequences	20	11.2
Human interest	2	1.1
Conflict frame	1	0.6
Morality frame	0	0
Not classifiable	1	0.6
Total	**179**	**100.1***

*Exceeded 100.0% due to rounding off

Human interest. Most of the People's Daily articles on flood provided statistics on the flood such as rainfall volume and number of people affected, missing or killed. The few articles that made an emotional appeal through a human interest frame were either republished from other newspapers or about flood incidents in other countries. An example is the 24 July 2023 article headlined "Heavy rains, floods hit multiple places as China enters peak rainy season". The lead-in of the article republished from Global Times is as follows:

Heavy rains and floods lashed multiple places in China over the weekend and wild temperature swings are expected to continue in the following days, as the country enters its peak rainy season, which is expected to last till early August.

The other articles with the human interest dimension are reports of floods in other countries such as the 29 August 2023 article, "1 killed in floods in India's Assam". Words such as "killed" and "death toll" dramatises the casualities to evoke the reader's emotions. Although human interest stories can connect with readers on a personal and emotional level and provide

a different perspective from the government-centric narratives, this journalistic strategy was not used much in the People's Daily.

Economic consequences. Economic consequences highlighted in the People's Daily include financial loss, and funds allocated. For example, a 5 September 2023 article headlined "China allocates funds for flood prevention, disaster relief". The allocation was 200 million yuan (about USD28 million). This framing approach emphasises the government's commitment to address economic implications, and announces financial resources dedicated to flood prevention and relief efforts, which is conducive to maintaining a positive government image.

Conflict frame. The sole article with a conflict frame is not about flood in China but in Australia. The 20 December 2023 article headlined "Australian government defends weather agency from criticism amid floods" reported the conflict between the Australian government and people living in Cairns who alleged that they received the flood warning from Bureau of Meteorology too late. It would be rare for the People's Daily to carry flood news articles with the conflict frame because disaster news articles are usually framed in a such way to highlight the stability and effective collaboration within Chinese institutions.

Morality frame. In China, there is a tendency for media outlets to adhere to certain guidelines and avoid coverage that might involve sensitive topics, including religious matters. The government plays a significant role in shaping the media narrative, and discussions related to religion are often carefully regulated. As we can see in this research, no news articles be found within religious tenets or moral prescriptions. The emphasis on practical and pragmatic approaches to disaster reporting in a state-controlled media environment will prioritize information related to government actions, relief efforts, and economic consequences rather than delving into religious or moral perspectives.

Dominant valence of flood news

Table 3 shows that most flood news articles in the People's Daily are positive (70.9%). Negative valence was less (26.3%) and there were only 2.8% of articles with neutral valence.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of flood news in valence (N=179)

Valence	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	127	70.9
Negative	47	26.3
Neutral	5	2.8
total	179	100

Positive valence. Articles with positive valence projected a feel-good perception of the flood, mostly derived from what the government was doing for the people. For example, the headline of a November 13 article reads "Ensuring flood-affected people stay warm and safe in winter". Adjectives such as "warm" and "safe" showed that people were taken care of. This article described Li Jinping's visit to a villager's home in Shuiyuzui Village, Boading, Hebei Province. The villager was quoted as saying that the flood waters reached the first floor "but with government subsidies, he managed to repair the two-story house and furnish it with new furniture and appliances". The People's Daily often serves as a platform to promote positive narratives about government actions and policies.

Negative valence. Numbers about victims and flood frequency used to carry a negative evaluation. However, negative valence news never shows the government in a bad light. An

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example of a 3 August 2023 article that has negative tone highlighted the high risk of flooding ("China faces high risk of flooding, multiple typhoons in August"). Interestingly, this is a republication of a Global Times article about rapid rise of the water level in the Winter Olympic park in Beijing's Shijingshan district. Articles that were originally written for the People's Daily seldom had a negative tone.

Neutral valence. There were no articles with a purely neutral tone because flood is a natural disaster that brings destruction and economic losses. The neutral valence was mainly due to the presence of both positive and negative frames. An example is the 6 July 2023 article headlined "China ramps up efforts against floods as heavy rains kill at least 15" The drowning is negative news but the flood mitigation effort by the government is positive. Thus, this news article has positive and negative messages, giving it an overall neutral valence.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study examined news frames employed by the online People's Daily, the English edition. Three main findings are worthy of a discussion. Firstly, the strong episodic orientation in the news articles on flood. In crisis news, episodic framing brings breaking news on the unfolding events. Furthermore, episodic framing also allows the president Xi JinPing to be portrayed as a compassionate and hands-on leader who visits flooded areas and is in touch with the sufferings of the people. The percentage of episodic news articles are particularly high, compared to Giri and Vats' (2018) findings on the coverage of the Uttarakhand flood in four Indian newspapers, where about 70% are episodic articles. The small percentage of thematic articles on flood in the People's Daily means that readers are influenced to think of flood relief as concrete actions to mitigate devastating impacts on individuals rather than policies, and long-term environmental damage and recovery challenges.

Secondly, the attribution of responsibility frame is very salient in flood news articles published in the People's Daily. The responsibility frame tends to be used to attribute blame to parties involved or to question the capability of the parties involved. However, in the People's Daily flood articles, the responsibility frame emphasises Xi Jinping's commitment to taking responsibility for understanding the extent of the damage and addressing the needs of the affected villagers. The news articles also occasionally put responsibility on the readers to be proactive and informed about flood risk mitigation.

Our study is possibly the first to use Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framework to analyse news on natural disaster. For other events, researchers who used Smetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framework found either a dominant responsibility frame or human-interest frame. For example, Cho and Wang (2021) analysed framing of COVID-19 in one state mouthpiece and another commercial newspaper in both China (People's Daily and Southern Metropolis Daily) and Korea (Chosun Ilbo and Hankyoreh). The analysis identified attribution of responsibility frame was overwhelmingly used by Chinese media and Korean media. The Chinese media used more economic consequences frame, morality frame, and less conflict frame and human interest frame than the Korean media. A higher percentage of Korean news articles used more conflict frame and human interest frame than Chinese news articles less morality frame and economic consequences frame. In another study, Wendorf Muhamad and Yang (2017) analysed autism-related news coverage of children in U.S.-based newspapers in January using Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Almost all the news articles carried the human interest frame (95.9%), followed by attribution frame (69.5%), conflict of interest frame (39%), morality frame (33.2%) and economic consequences frame (24.9%). The comparison of findings from

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framing studies using Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) indicate that the Chinese press seem to refrain from the human interest frame.

By using Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framework of frame dimensions, we can delve deeper into aspects important in a disaster such as the cause (flood, possibly worsened by infrastructure), effects (disruptions and loss of lives, economic losses), as well as people who are at the centre of the unfolding events. We found that there were no morality frames, which concur with Shabbir et al.'s (2015) analysis of climate change news in the China Daily. Such framing analysis yields more insights than studies like Adekola and Lamond (2018) which focusses on actor groups involved (government, local communities, business, multilateral organisations and non-governmental organisations). The responsibility frame can take account of actor groups in the flood events if the analysis is taken further to include the parties which are responsible.

Thirdly, the valence analysis revealed that the overwhelming positive valence (70%) in the People's Daily is due to favourable portrayal of the president Xi Jinping and the government machinery involved in handling the flood. Although flood is a disaster, articles with positive valence are more likely to evoke public gratitude and hope that the problem will be resolved. In contrast, the flood was covered with mostly neutral valence in Indian newspapers (Giri & Vats, 2018). China and India have different state systems. India is a capitalist multi-party country with diverse political struggle environment, so media reports tend to remain neutral. However, China is a socialist country with a one-party system, and the media work for the government and represent the official image. Therefore, official newspapers of the Communist Party of China must assume the inspiring social function, which is the role that the media is expected to play in disasters.

Taken together, the news frames in flood-related articles in the People's Daily have been built to make the president Xi Jinping salient to promote his image as a caring, compassionate and hands-on leader. The People's Daily is a typical government-controlled official media. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the media and the government in shaping a favourable national narrative. For instance, Fu et al. (2012) found that during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China, the People's Daily rarely reported articles about deaths, injuries, and destruction. Instead, over 70% of its articles focused on the government's response and mitigation efforts. In contrast, nearly one in five articles from the Southern Metropolis Daily reported deaths, injuries, and destruction, with less than half of its articles addressing the government's response and mitigation efforts. However, they have never portrayed the leader in a negative light. Given the unique situation in China, there is an emphasis on portraying a positive image of national leader. The image of China's leaders can help shape their own political future and cement the political unity in a country ruled by a single-party system. Future research should investigate whether the national leader takes centre stage in news frames on disaster reporting if the newspapers are from countries with multi-party systems like the United Kingdom and Malaysia.

Acknowledgement

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