

Media Gatekeeping with Chinese Characteristics:

An Analysis of the Chinese Government's Role in English-Language State-Owned News Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This thesis strives to explore the relationship between Chinese news media publications and their Government overseers through the usage of both a quantitative and qualitative methodology. The research goal is to input collected data through a sentiment analysis technique to find variations within as well as between the news media apparati. These variations will hopefully shed light on the extent to which the Chinese State has been overseeing their news media at the article level. The Chinese concept of ‘unity and harmony’ has been long espoused by its leaders. However, whether this concept pervades into the realm of media publications meant for foreign distribution will be examined. This ideal, in conjunction with the well-established Western-oriented Gatekeeper theory, provides the theoretical foundation upon which the following research is built. The conclusion of the research is that while there is undeniably significant evidence of unity amongst the various news media, there are still factors that indicate lower levels of unity than anticipated. However, it is wholly confirmed through the sentiment analysis that the usage of gatekeepers has a significant impact with regards to the dictation of Chinese media’s actions and statements. Overall, this thesis has shed light on the direction the Chinese Government has taken their media outlets.

Keywords: Bhutan, China, CCP, Gatekeeping Theory, Harmony, India, Media, News, Sentiment, Unity

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCP	Communist Party of China
SAPPRFT	State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television
SCMP	South China Morning Post
US	United States

Chapter 1. Background and Research Questions

1.1 Introduction

The Himalayan mountain range has long been the cause of isolation between India and China (Walcott, 2010). Interaction was sparse at best for centuries. However, this seemingly impassable terrain has in contemporary times transformed into the catalyst for interstate tension. These two states have grown into powerful regional actors, competing for resources and influence. With a porous and difficult to access border between the two, conditions have been ripe for a territorial dispute. There are multiple ongoing disputes between China and their Western neighbors. In this research, the specific sovereignty disagreement that will be referenced is the Doklam Border Dispute, referred to in the Chinese lexicon as Donglam. This is a territory on the border between Bhutan and China. However, due to the relatively insignificant political influence Bhutan is able to exert, its foreign and military policies are largely dictated by its neighbour, India (Anon, 2007). This protected state status is the reason for the incursion of the Indian military into Bhutan in defence of Bhutanese interests. However, firstly, a brief chronological overview is first required to gain a fuller understanding of the geopolitical tension in the region, and thus the motivation for this research.

The contemporary dispute over this territory can be traced back to 1890, during the British Colonial era. At this time, the bilateral Convention of Calcutta was signed between the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the Qing Dynasty. Unlike many other treaties, including the more famous Sino-Indian dispute caused by the McMahon Line agreement, the signatories itself are not under dispute. In this instance it is the meaning behind the words delineating the boundaries that is at the core of the issue (Chinese Foreign Ministry, 2017). Based on the wording, China argues that it is ‘indisputably’ their territory. The validity of the historical Chinese maps used to reinforce this claim are disputed, however (Bhardwaj, 2017; Garver, 2015, p.182). Nevertheless, the Chinese vehemently defend their claims over the territory, while India, with their mandate to defend Bhutanese interests, is equally assertive. It is noteworthy to mention that the latter’s defense of their neighbor is not a wholly altruistic act. On the contrary, the Doklam territory has long been seen as strategically vital to the region. The colonial British Empire saw the acquisition of this land as crucial towards containing the growing threat from 19th century Russian expansionism. This led to the aforementioned

Convention of Calcutta. The geopolitical significance of this cannot be overstated. The Doklam region and its immediate surrounding area contains narrow valley passes through which supplies can traverse across the Himalayas. These go longitudinally through Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The controlling party is able to place increased pressure on its neighbors during discussions over land-based trade agreements (Woodman, 1970).

With strategic importance and disputed historical reinforcement, the current Chinese administration has been eager to reclaim their wrongfully taken land. With a shifting status quo within the region, they are more comfortable with taking stronger steps towards accomplishing this goal. To maximize efficiency, utilising all arms of the government to work as one unified and harmonious unit is paramount. It is this course of action and unique combination of historical ideals and contemporary political policy that has resulted in the following feasible research question.

1.2 Research Aim and Contribution

This thesis seeks to investigate the Chinese state-controlled media from a uniquely Chinese perspective vis-à-vis the Confucian-borne concepts of unity and harmony. This is pertinent due to President Xi Jinping's focus on adapting many facets of international norms to suit Chinese characteristics and traditions, as well as the traditional focus on a harmonious and unified society. There has been a dramatic shift over the past decade within Chinese society, with the Chinese media often at the forefront of this alteration, announcing and/or guiding these changes.

It is the goal of this thesis to analyze this shift through the lens of a historically-unique Chinese ideal. Research methods have been imposed to allow for a thorough analysis along with the implementation of Chinese concepts, specifically Xi Jinping's adaptation of the Confucian concepts of Unity and Harmony. This research will demonstrate the extent to which the CCP has incorporated these concepts into the Chinese state-owned media arm, while concurrently showing their level of control over it. As the omnipresent fatherly figure in Chinese society, it is logical to surmise that the CCP wishes to maintain the unity of the English language media alongside their Chinese-language partners.

1.3 Research Questions

It is the goal of this thesis to answer the following complex question:

- To what extent has the CCP unified their level of control over the various state-owned media apparatus's English-language publications, so as to align with and reinforce the government's agenda and actions?

Additionally, three sub-questions have arisen during the course of the research that have also been addressed:

- How much does each news organization differ in their coverage of a particular event?
- What is the level of hostility displayed towards an actor deemed to be acting against Chinese interests?
- How extensive is the numerical variance of coverage between the news articles, and why does this variation exist?

1.4 Delimitation of Study

This study has a strict chronological delimitation. There is a timeframe during which all relevant news articles have been collated, as well as a chronologically presented quantitative graphing to assist with the analysis. Specifically, the time frame chosen is from May 1st, 2017 to September 1st, 2017. This was chosen to allow for any short-term pre- and post-dispute tension to be scrutinized. Additionally, four newspapers were chosen out of the numerous that have elements of Chinese influence. These are, in alphabetical order, Global Times, People's Daily, South China Morning Post, and Xinhua News. These were chosen to give a wide sample of the different news agencies within China, as layman's knowledge of these newspapers will anticipate there being variance in their coverage of a given event.

1.5 Disposition

This thesis is organized in a fairly traditional manner, with the introductory section providing the historical context, followed by an explanation on the importance of researching this tumultuous topic. Following this are both the literature review that explains the significance and the mainstream beliefs surrounding the four aforementioned news agencies. The theoretical framework, data analysis, and results comes afterwards. This section is organized to allow for a

numerically oriented approach to provide the foundation, with a qualitative analysis to give the reader more in-depth results. This is expounded upon in the methodology section. Finally, there is the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The concept of a unified China has been cited by academics as a cornerstone of the policy of Chinese leaders throughout the centuries (Ko, Koyama and Sng, 2018). Mao Zedong was widely known for his unification of China in the post-civil war period and subsequent push towards rapid industrialisation. In his opening quotations of the ‘little red book’, Mao Tse-Tung writes, “... united front of all revolutionary classes and all revolutionary groups under the leadership of such a Party” (Mao, 1967). The controversies surrounding many of his policies from this era are widely researched. However, it is the portrayal of a contemporary version of a unified China that is of interest. Scholars vary on their focus, whether it be analyzing the historical reasons for the successful spread of the concept of unification or the contemporary attempts at it. In this regard, the latter will be scrutinized further on with the intent of providing a glimpse into the level of unification, or lack thereof, within the state-owned news media apparatus. The media has proven to be a crucial outlet for the CCP to the wider world. It is a tool they wish to use to educate the world on their perspective of events. However, with a multitude of news outlets existing in this state-controlled society, it seems inevitable that a unified message would be difficult, if not impossible, to coordinate.

2.1 Unity Within China

This belief in ‘Unity’ has prevailed through history and the literature. Since Classical Confucian times, the “Great Unity” has been seen as a prevailing thought invoked by leaders to spur progress. From then on, concepts such as harmony and unity were used as tools by leadership. Authors that have recounted this confucian record have referred to unity synonymously with a harmonious society, rather than a harmonious identity. Thus, the harmony, vis-a-vis unity, is a concept that exists on the state-level, rather than individual level (Cheng, 2009) (Chen, 2013).

When it comes to unifying a state, it has been found that external aggressors are an effective means of bringing about unity and a nationalistic sentiment. This is particularly relevant in the era immediately following China's 'Century of Humiliation'. The 'Imperialist aggression provided part of the catalyst for Mao Zedong to adopt Marxist nationalism (Zhang, 2013). In the post-Civil War period, the Mao era policies focused on the 'Chinese People' as a singular unit. The government and the people were one and the same. Mao stated with regards to their victory in the 1949 Civil War that "The Chinese people have stood up ever since then." (Myers, 1995, p. 161).

The contemporary example of the aforementioned classical thoughts regarding unity given by scholars has been the 20th century unity displayed by China juxtaposed with the fragmentation of European states (Brady, 2015). While there have been periods of time in Chinese history where states have fragmented, they have inevitably come together in the face of a singular external threat. However, during this period of time, in Europe, instead there have been a multitude of smaller external threats that have kept those actors occupied and prevented full integration (Ko, Koyama and Sng, 2018). Furthermore, the pervasive concept of unification of the ancestral lands has become a dominant theme during this century, spurring the push for a unified China. This has become a tool that leaders have used to sway domestic opinion (Stockmann, 2013). With regards to the tumultuous relationship with the Taiwanese government, this is also a sore area that the mainland government wishes would be rectified. The modern government portrayal of their regional foreign policy is a push towards the reunification of territories lost in previous centuries.

One crucial piece of that push has been an outlet for the central government to illustrate their intentions to foreign audiences through a particular perspective that paints them in a positive light. There already is a well established propaganda industry within the State, directed for domestic consumption (Shirk, 2011). However, reaching foreign audiences is a more difficult goal. This has been a focus area since the post-Civil War period, with the exception of the cultural revolution. To do this has required a coherent and extensive party-led institutionalization of the media. This control has manifested itself in various forms throughout the years, with much research done on both the extent and effectiveness of these institutions. Initially, the Mao-era propaganda arm was taught by Stalinist advisors on effective propaganda and thought reform techniques (Kovalev, 1992). They were shown how to portray both the state and the party in

news publications. Bodies were created to oversee various aspects of information dissemination, including the Artists Association, Journalists Association, Writers Association, and others. (Brady, 2010, p.36). From this point forward, it is clear that party involvement in all aspects of education and information distribution under the Mao government had become an accepted part of life. Evidence will be shown later in this section that demonstrates the continuation of control through contemporary times.

2.2 Marketization of State-Controlled Media

However, without credibility, these institutions and state-controlled media set up to form a bubble around citizens would collapse. It has been shown that the “dictator’s dilemma” can be resolved through a partial marketization of the media (Dickson, 2016). Fear alone is not enough to control a populace. They must be made to believe their government is working to better their lives. The government cannot survive without unified support. To do this within China, a partial marketization plan was touted by Deng Xiaoping. This period marked a shift in the organization and incentivization of Chinese media. Profiting from journalism and media was no longer discouraged. This was part of Deng’s larger attempts at reforming China, but it became one of the more high-profile aspects of the new “authoritarian capitalist” state (Scotton and Hachten, 2010). The post-1978 era saw the introduction of business-like oversight through the major Chinese newspapers in an effort to increase profits and reduce expenditures (Zhao, 1998). This is widely portrayed as the beginning of the modern era of Chinese journalism.

Nevertheless, despite the loss of the financial monopolization that the state held over the media, they still retained a high degree of control over the publication of news. The authoritarian style utilized by the Chinese state is not without precedent. In fact, this style had been studied and theorized a half century prior. Known as the four theories of the press, this Cold War-era academic publication purports there are four different types of media philosophies: authoritarian, communist, libertarian, and social responsibility theory (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1956). In this instance, the relevant designator would be the aforementioned authoritarianism. Media, unlike in the libertarian or social responsibility scenario, have become an integral part of the state apparatus. While in Libertarian and social responsibility societies, the media acts in a *laissez faire* style in their search for the truth, sometimes at the expense of the state, in an authoritarian regime the truth is choreographed by the state to push an agenda. The concepts of the latter two

categories are largely foreign to the Chinese people, at least to the same extent that is prevalent throughout the Western world (Lee, 1994).

The function of newspapers in an Authoritarian state is to disseminate the truth, as dictated by the ruling party, both internally and externally. However, it goes much deeper than that. It is the view of the ruling party that the citizenry they are directing are incapable of adequate decision making. Thus, it is widely perceived that the elite have a mandate to step in and dictate how they should view the world in order to maximise harmony and unity (Ming, 2006). However, the full extent of the interference by the leadership may be vulnerable to under-representation in academic literature, as it can be difficult within an authoritarian state with strict information controls to adequately discern who is pulling the strings. However, despite the limited retrospective literature on Xi Jinping's handling of the media, it is apparent that he has designs to revert them to a quasi-totalitarian style mode of operation. Through quotes such as “family name of the media is the Party” to emphasize its obligation to the state, it is clear what his intentions are for the media in China (Wong, 2016).

2.3 Media Publications within China

In this regard, there have been differing amounts of literature written that focuses on the media in china at the publication level, as opposed to the individual or provincial and state levels. Two of the larger publications with a history that is more closely intertwined with the Chinese state has been the People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency.

Regarding the People's Daily, it has become almost ubiquitous when discussing state-censored media within China. When a newspaper wishes to obtain a license, it is well established that the level of sponsorship they receive within the Party system decides the level of influence and distribution scope (Stockman, 2013, p. 52). In the case of the People's Daily, they are sponsored directly by the Central Propaganda Department at the national level. Therefore, it can be safely construed within academia that any publication that comes from the People's Daily is aligned with the viewpoint of the CCP itself.

Similar to the People's Daily is the Xinhua News Agency. This news agency has a storied history. It has long been put on a pedestal akin to that of the People's Daily, and has deep roots within the government at the Ministry level. Founded during the pre-Civil War era, it has been seen as an extension of the Party in foreign countries (Hoare and Pares, 2009). Xinhua news has

led the way when dealing with international audiences that do not speak Chinese. Both publications have set the standard on what needs to be added to non-chinese language articles to give the reader an adequate “explanatory background” that they might feel is lacking elsewhere (Malek and Kavoori, 2000, p. 345). However, this aspect of the Chinese media is often overlooked, and is scarcely covered in recent years. The role of the top-level media in China should be more thoroughly addressed in order to gain a fuller understanding of the way they function. There is dated literature that focuses on the origins and purpose of the establishment and maintenance of English-language media. While this is meaningful to know, the literature fails to acknowledge the important niches that individual publications can carve out within the growing media market (Scotton and Hatten, 2010).

Contrasting this role are other papers such as the South China Morning Post. This publication, while still falling under the aforementioned oversight, has significantly more leeway and thus is considered more commercialized. Despite their comparatively cavalier writing style concerning domestic political events, they have up until recently held a high degree of freedom (Pereira, 2015). For instance, in 2013, the Hong Kong-based news agency published photos of a commemoration for victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown (Anon, 2013). Based on the literature given by academics, newspapers with a higher level of control and oversight would not be permitted to publish such articles (Schudson, 2002; Gallagher and Stockmann, 2011). Considered by other Asian papers to be the most independent internally placed publication within China, there began a concerted campaign in 2015 to reign in this fringe outlet with the justification of solidifying the aforementioned concepts of unity and social harmony. While largely not covered by traditional academic literature, this crackdown is a sign of a larger campaign designed to increase the control that state institutions have over the information dissemination process. In the case of the South China Morning Post, Beijing-based pressure forced changes in the leadership to unify them with the party’s goal (Anon, 2015). However, what the literature largely fails to mention when discussing this Hong Kong publication, or any of the other Hong Kong based media, is that this pressure had been occurring since prior to the handover to China in 1997. While not originating with the party, the control began inconspicuously with Chinese business magnates purchasing the media in the hopes of gain favor with the Beijing leadership. Self-censorship ensued, while state-directed censorship for a time did not have much effect on the media. This information is gleaned from a 1998 publication by

Stephen Hutcheon, who felt that the veteran editors at the major Hong Kong publications would be able to stave off pressure from Beijing for the foreseeable future (Hutcheon, 1998). However, even Hutcheon conceded that this independence would not last indefinitely.

Last but not least is the Global Times. This paper holds a unique place in the view of scholars. It is often cited as holding a relatively ‘hawkish’ stance with regards to foreign policy issues. Foreign policy magazine cited it in 2011 as China’s “Fox News” (Larson, 2011). This reputation is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, it had been ongoing for many years prior to Xi Jinping taking power. Originally designed to be the profit-making arm of China’s central media voice, the People’s Daily, they carved their own niche in the burgeoning media market of China. They did this in part through sensationalist articles that other, more traditional papers would not touch. They were cited by Lee Chin-Chuan in 2003 as being “entitled to package news in an irresponsibly sensationalized and market-driven manner without regard for political consequences.” (Chin-Chuan, 2003, p.4). This was in reference to his findings on Global Times’ reporting on US-Sino relations at that time. Furthermore, Lee found in 2011 that the Global Times was one of the primary sites for discussion amongst the ‘elite’ of China. Despite his findings, which Lee himself has acknowledged that there is, with regards to their reporting of international events, a divergence from the uniformity presented by the rest of the Chinese news agencies, a definitive answer is still elusive. The answer to this is not easy to discern, as it is widely known that the publicity department does not always uniformly censor international reporting (stockmann, 2013). At the time of the publishing, it was the opinion of Lee that the Global Times, despite their sensationalist stance, still abided by the Community Party philosophy and opinion.

Where this leaves the Chinese media in its current form is an area that is more difficult to discern. Despite the increased marketization, the opacity within the Communist Party is such that it can be difficult to determine who is controlling the news agencies. This is particularly the case since Xi Jinping took power in 2012 and began in 2017 endorsing Xi Jinping thought into all aspects of Chinese society, including media reporting. Change happens rapidly within the regime, with the overall goal of unification being moved forward with each effort. Recently, Xi Jinping has consolidated several media monitoring institutions under one apparatus, the CCP Propaganda Department, with the purpose of “strengthen[ing] the ability to shape public

opinion” (Anon, 2018). Therefore, it is prudent to look into this matter from a relatively recent period in China’s rise.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

As it has become evident, there are a variety of underlying factors that dictate the guidance given to the state-controlled media. These range from traditional Chinese concepts to more modern ideals strived towards by the party under Xi Jinping’s leadership. However, two stand out due to their applicability towards the contemporary changing of the status quo. Through the usage of these, one can better contextualize and frame the reasoning behind the CCP’s decision making, as well as their level of uniformity amongst the various media outlets under their umbrella of control. First and foremost, there is the gatekeeper theory, presented utilizing the framework initially given by Kurt Lewin and expanded upon by several other prominent media academics. This theory posits that at all levels of media, including newspapers, there are ‘gatekeepers’ controlling the flow of information. In this instance, the gatekeeper is the CCP and the information is the selective release of articles by the four aforementioned publishers. It is the hope of this thesis that the gatekeeper theory can be demonstrated sufficiently so as to be relevant this situation of traditional media control within China. Supplementing this theory is a uniquely Chinese style of thinking, which is the emphasis on social unity and harmony (Cheng, 2009). The desire for a more harmonious socialist society can be traced back to the teachings of Confucius. This concept has lasted through the millennia and now has a solid place in the sociocultural foundation in China (Cheng, 2009; Geis and Holt, 2009). These concepts will be explored in-depth hereafter.

3.1 Gatekeeper Theory and Agenda-Setting

“Out of all of the events that happen and are recorded every day by correspondents, reporters, and the news agencies, the editor chooses certain items for publication which he regards as more important or more interesting than others. The remainder he condemns to oblivion and the wastebasket.” (Park, 1999, p. 328)

First, an introduction to the gatekeeper theory is prudent, as it is the primary theoretical framework for this study. In this section, the origins of this theory will be introduced, followed

by a discussion of its relevance to this research, as well as how its insertion into the data analysis enhances the study.

Gatekeeping is an attempt at an explanation of the who, what, when, and where news is publicized. This concept is not associated with contemporary scholars; it has been an idea amongst academia for close to a century. In 1922, Robert Park introduced this idea in his publication, quoted at the beginning of this subsection. His book, focused on the subject of agenda-setting, has shaped the future of media gatekeeping. However, while he was the first, others also refined on that idea until it transformed into a solidly defensible theory. Walter Lippman believed that the mass media is the “principle connection between (a) events that occur in the world and (b) the images of these events in our minds.” (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p.11). This connection serves as a crucial focal point. His proof has come through the multitude of authors that have built upon the agenda-setting theory. Media groups have a hierarchy, sometimes discernable, sometimes more obscured, yet still existing if one searches for it. In democratic societies, it is more difficult to find. There is no government-created institution that assigns importance to events. This is done by those at the top of the media hierarchy. For instance, the BBC and New York Times each dominate their region of the globe. When they decree an event as newsworthy, lesser read publications take note and follow suite. This has been documented through peer-reviewed investigations that show the New York Times as the gatekeeper for widespread media coverage (Ploughman, 1995) (Mazur, 1987).

While this imperfect control over media coverage can significantly limit the perspectives given through the traditional media, the implementation of mass media has limited that to an extent. It is worthwhile to acknowledge that while other limitations have arisen through the usage of social media, investigating these would be outside the purview of this research. In a society with limited access to the global social media network, the gatekeeper role is the sole decider of the information that reaches the average citizen, thus playing a pivotal role in shaping their global perspective. China has been declared a ‘not free’ country by the Freedom House, reinforcing the lack of freedom amongst the media to ‘guard’ their own gate (Freedom House, 2017).

Whereas it has previously been shown that the journalist is the ultimate gatekeeper, it shall be demonstrated in this research that the state can play a pivotal role in the alignment of news across media outlets. Often, the gatekeeping role is said to be influenced at the individual

level, with its accompanying inherent biases and perspectives (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). However, in this particular case, the role is pushed up the hierarchy to the government editors overseeing the newspapers. In turn, these editors have clear regulations dictated to them as to what is permissible (Yu, 1994). These regulations, as of 2013, are being issued by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television Agency (SAPPRFT) (Blumell, Qiu, and Peaslee, 2016). To emphasise the importance of the rule of law as their media gatekeeper, “there are more than 500 specific laws referring to news publications that are subdivided into the management of newspapers, periodicals, journalists, delinquent conduct, and precautions against false reports.” (Blumell, Qiu and Peaslee, 2016, p. 2405). The burden of these laws undoubtedly alter the actions of journalists when discussing sensitive issues, as evidenced through Western reporting on this repression (Reuters Staff, 2014).

It is undeniable that the CCP’s word is essentially law with regards to permissible published material. However, unlike other authoritarian states with repressive media policies such as Cambodia and Thailand, there is a facet to this that gives it the quintessential ‘Chinese characteristic.’ This will be discussed hereafter.

3.2 Unity and Harmony as an Influencer of Media Policy

“All the work by the party’s media must reflect the party’s will, safeguard the party’s authority, and safeguard the party’s unity” -Xi Jinping, February 2016 (Albert and Xu, 2017)

The harmonious society concept is a response to perceived inequalities and growing social conflict throughout China, and the world. By promoting a set of ideals throughout all aspects of Chinese society, society’s path can be more effectively guided and molded into whichever form the ruling party wishes. In contemporary times, this social conflict aspect has taken a more prominent role. Hu Jintao declared in 2006 that China should strive for a more harmonious society (Fan, 2006). In the long term, the hope is that the concepts of harmony and unity spread to other societies. There has been particular emphasis on it through China’s aid efforts in Africa (Callahan, 2012).

Within the Chinese media realm, there has been a concerted push to more strictly adhere to the CCP’s agenda. Unity of thought is the new policy axiom espoused by the party leadership. However, this unity is explicitly centered around the Party (Bodeen, 2018). While Xi Jinping has

adapted this concept to his liking, the necessity for unity has renamed. “The inclusion of Xi's thought into the country's fundamental law ensures a high-level unity between the will of the Party as well as the aspirations of the people.” Much thought has been put into how to best push the country forward under one banner. With over 1.3 billion people, it is a massive task to maintain a unified perception of the CCP. However, the concept of unity, as well as society over the self, is rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy. This has helped the CCP's efforts in molding society to their image. Despite this, there are obstacles that the contemporary socio political atmosphere has put in the way of the Party's end goal.

In the current time, complete harmony and unity is not a feasible option. Therefore, ‘Harmony-with-diversity’ has been adopted. Complete sameness is no longer a requisite for Harmony to be reached. In the words of Confucius, “the exemplary person harmonizes with others, but does not necessarily agree with them (he er butong); the small person agrees with others, but is not harmonious with them.” By this logic, one can surmise how the ideals of Harmony and Unity can still be progressed towards without explicitly insisting on a unified media agenda and tone. Xinhua News reported in 2003 that this phrase was the “most frequently used” by Wen Jiabao in his U.S. visit (Callahan, 2012). While the wording of this has changed to ‘Harmonious World’ and later ‘Unity without Uniformity’, the underlying meaning has not. While “China respects diversity among nations...it demands that foreign critics likewise respect Chinese ‘difference’.” (Callahan, 2012, p.22) This difference is the injection of the concepts of Unity and Harmony into the state's attempts at control over the media. This is one aspect how the Chinese state differs from Vietnam and other authoritarian regimes (Gonzalez and Mendoza, 2002).

Chapter 4. Methodology and Research Design

The methodology behind this research consists of data gathered from articles published by four different newspapers, with these materials being collected from the database at LexisNexis. Relevant keywords were used to find all articles over a set time frame that covered the aforementioned geopolitical tensions. These articles were then run through a word analysis software to accurately and efficiently quantify the sentiment. The results of this semantic content analysis assisted in the assessment of which articles would be used in the qualitative analysis. Both the results and the software itself will be expounded upon below. This software was utilized

to offset the subjective nature of the qualitative portion of the research, as well as give further credibility to the findings (Bryman, 2008). While the introduction of this software can reveal new issues, which will also be discussed further on, the benefit of objectivity outweighs this risk. This research was conducted in two phases.

Firstly, there is the qualitative section. This is the supplementary, albeit crucial, analysis method for this thesis. Articles have been chosen based on criteria that allows for maximum potential for analysis. However, the method in which these articles have been chosen relies upon a quantitative analysis of a larger group of articles. Thus, it is prudent to arrange the presentation of these two sections with the quantitative coming first. Therein lies our second section, further explained below. However, it is important to point that one section is no less important to the overall equation than the other. Each relies upon the other for validation and verifiability of their results.

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

The usage of quantitative analysis in this scrutiny of newspapers is not a new phenomenon. Specifically, sentiment analyses to reveal obscured biases, emotions, and agendas has become a burgeoning field. However, there are several ways from which this can be approached. The common thread that they all originate from is that they rely upon a body of text, whether it be from social media, interview transcripts, or as is the case with this research, newspaper articles. This pool of data (words) is then put through a by-the-numbers analysis, either through careful manual scrutiny of the material, or software. This is often referred to in texts as a dictionary-based content analysis approach (Sevanans, et al., 2014). The automated approach has been seen much more use in recent years, as technology and software improves the feasibility of this option.

It is this path that has been chosen for this research. The automated dictionary-approach has several advantages over the manual, qualitative method. The implementation of a reputable software gives the researcher confidence that no potential data points have been missed. Additionally, the dictionary provides a consistent wordbank from which to draw upon. However, these dictionaries are not infallible. They are made by individuals who have chosen words from the English language that fit their needs. Therefore, when using another individual's created dictionary, it is important to vet the thoroughness of it as well as the viability of the dictionary's

ability to suit one's needs. The words chosen to suit the purpose of a particular line of research may not be sufficient for another researcher's purposes. To counter this, one must either manually confirm the relevance of the keywords in the dictionary or create a new one that suits their needs. Additionally, they should be vetted through a discussion of past research conducted with this software. While a complete listing would be impractical, it can be seen that this software and dictionary has been used effectively in other similar situations. In one such case, the 7D general election debate in Spain, the media framing perspective was analysed (Fenoll and Rodriguez-Ballesteros, 2017). The mixed methods technique utilized garnered results that showed discrepancies in the overall agenda of the media reporting on this issue. This could have been missed if it was conducted using a manual approach or a purely qualitative methodology.

4.2 Sentiment Dictionary

“Political discourse cannot be reduced to mere factual information—the tone of a text may be as influential as its substantive content.” (Soroka and Young, 2012)

There are various dictionaries for quantitative analysis that are available on the internet, either for free or at cost. These vary in reputation and purpose. Therefore, it is prudent to review the feasibility prior to implementing a dictionary into research. To this end, the dictionary that has been chosen to reinforce the qualitative section comes from WordStat, a Provalis Research software. The Wordstat software is run in tandem with QDA Miner, a software similar to Nvivo with regards to its ability to help sort and codify qualitative data. However, for the purpose of this thesis, Wordstat suits the needs better than Nvivo, as it more heavily oriented to a quantitative, numerical approach. Additionally, this software is accompanied by a sentiment dictionary that can be configured for use with the articles being analyzed.

This software has been independently reviewed for its ability to help with analyzing unstructured data. In a comparative study, it is shown that both Wordstat and a second, similar software, SAS Textminer, both offer the ability to extract major themes from a given dataset. However, due to the constraints with any software, they cannot be used effectively without intervention from the researcher. The results given by this software are only as useful as the codes and categories inputted in by the user. Therefore, it is prudent to point out that without further analysis independent of the findings given by Wordstat, the efficacy of the results becomes questionable

(Angelique, et al., 2005). This is the justification for implementing the aforementioned qualitative aspect into this research.

Overall, this dictionary-based approach, while seemingly blunt, provides a clear definition of the boundaries of this research. There is merely a frequency count showing the number of times a predetermined word or category of words has been stated. As it has been explained earlier in this section, it is important to supplement these quantitative findings with a qualitative content analysis (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013). The need for an automated approach to improve reliability is well-founded. It has been shown that a human performing the same task as a machine with regards to dictionary-based content analysis cannot perform as reliably (Krosnick, 1999).

4.3 Why Sentiment?

Sentiment is the expression of feelings, whether they be positive, negative, or neutral. Everything that is said or written has some element of sentiment attached to it. In some instances, it is easy to discern signs of sentiment within a body of text. However, other times it can be subtle, yet still pushing an agenda based on an opinion or feeling. This rule applies to a range of topics, including the field of journalism. Within the field of content analysis of journalist's articles, the most obvious choice when discussing sentiment has been on issues that evoke the strongest base emotions. As cited in John E. Richardson's book on critical discourse analysis of newspapers (2009), one of the most commonly cited forms of sentimentality in newspapers has been child suffering. This compelling example can give the reader a sense of how an author may portray an issue to invoke emotions without a reader. This tool of sentimentalism has been harnessed, as it will be demonstrated further on, by the Chinese state as part of their efforts to ensure a sense of unity aligned with the CCP's goals. Primarily, when using sentiment, one classifies categories in a relatively simplistic manner. Positive, negative, and varying levels of those are used, with the dictionary presorting the selected words into these categories.

In this research, the sentiment being expressed by the State-run newspapers is one of the primary focuses. Additionally, the consistency of their sentiment across the selected spectrum of newspapers will be scrutinized. The aforementioned dictionary-based content analysis, as well as the qualitative critical analysis, will be combined to discover the level of unity behind the Chinese state-owned media apparatus. While in theory, one may assume that the state would

have similar publishings throughout their various news outlets, the influence of marketization with a simultaneous increase in oversight plays an indeterminate role in their level of sentiment portrayed in their English-language publications.

4.4 Data Collection Technique

The collection process for the data being mentioned hereafter was gathered exclusively from the LexisNexis database. This comprehensive archive of newspaper articles from publications worldwide allowed for a textual search for relevant keywords within the chosen articles. To reduce the corpus of available articles, the specific search terms were selected after a comparison of common terms in articles relating to the 2017 Sino-Indian standoff. This primary data was collected and sorted by date. This allows for a cross-comparison within the corpus chosen for this project.

Regarding the corpus, this was selected from articles published between the first of May, 2017 and the first of September, 2017. Common terms were gathered during a manual search of a selection of articles. This was used in the database search to form the final dataset. These terms are the following: ‘bhutan* OR India* OR border OR territory OR donglang OR Doklam’.

Regarding the chosen news organizations, they are the Global Times, People’s Daily, South China Morning Post, and Xinhua News Agency. As demonstrated in the literature review section, these four were chosen to provide a diverse representation of the Chinese political spectrum.

The dataset was then inputted into the aforementioned WordStat software with the Sentiment Dictionary analysis pre-loaded. This dictionary provides results in an excel format, sorted at the article level, of positive and negative words. These were then placed into an visual format, which is what will be displayed in the following section.

Regarding the measurement validity of this, it is imperative to ensure that this measurement of sentiment actually signifies a differentiation between the organizations’ publishing styles. As it has been mentioned prior to this, sentiment measurements work best on issues with high emotional value. That is, topics that can be used by the state to sway public opinion towards their own side, thereby increasing unity. In this instance, the importance of asserting strength throughout neighboring regions, particularly South Asia, has already been justified. It has also been stated that issues that affect the Chinese state inherently also affect the Chinese people, as

they are striving to become a singular unit. By this logic, one can assert that a military dispute between China and its largest neighbor, both economically and population-wise, is vital to the importance of unity. Therefore, it can be construed that the levels of emotion being brought forth into this issue are measurably higher than in other newsworthy issues.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

There have been no significant ethical or moral issues faced during the creation of this thesis.

However, it would be remiss to not discuss the topic of reflexivity with regards to the research and analysis of this paper. While it bypasses the potentially tumultuous topic of ownership of the territory, there are nonetheless still instances in this thesis where biases can come into play. As the writer is a U.S. citizen, there is the potential for anti-Chinese sentiment to play a role in the choosing of perspectives to present (Pew Research Center, 2017). Therefore, the quantitative section of the data analysis is crucial to allow for a more unbiased understanding of the results. This forces the qualitative section into a more rigid and non subjective format. As the Sociologist Alan Bryman stated, “there are...numerous points at which bias and the intrusion of values can occur” (Bryman, 2016, p.39). One cannot be too careful when attempting to counter hidden or subtle biases.

The importance of the mixed methods approach, as well as the importance placed on numerical values and pre-selected words, plays an integral role in preventing the injection of agendas into the research. In fact, results have been shown that painted China in a more favourable light than the Indian media encountered during the research would have one believe. It is therefore the goal of the author during the writing of this paper to entirely avoid placing blame for the initiation of the conflict, as well as attributing ownership of the territory to either side.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This comparative newspaper analysis at the organization-level is intended to demonstrate a level, or lack thereof, of differentiation in the publishings across the Chinese news media spectrum, using the Sino-Indian dispute as a case point. This empirical analysis is being

conducted via a mixed methods approach. In this section, the quantitative findings will first be presented, which will then assist with justifying the reasoning for the articles chosen in the subsequent qualitative portion. There will be a presentation of each newspaper's quantitative findings, to allow for a compare and contrast. It is the author's hope that this quantitative section will sufficiently provide a foundation and direction for the subsequent qualitative section, and thus allow for complementary evidence to be shown. Together, these two methodologies provide for a stronger analysis. The graphs shown in the quantitative section will provide a visualization of the results that allow the reader greater clarity when viewing the written analysis portions. It is the author's hope that the reader looks at the graphical data as a macro-level picture, and then allows the subsequent written explanation to provide a micro-level discussion and analysis. This is due to the limited information the graphs alone can convey. However, when combined with the information presented throughout the rest of this paper, as well as the articles themselves, a more accurate and descriptive picture can be presented to the reader.

One may inquire as to why the quantitative section is listed first. The reasoning behind the structure is twofold. One, it allows for a style of organization that permits the reader to discern from the outset the potentially hidden differences between each newspaper organization through a cursory glance at the quantitative results of each newspaper's coverage of the border stand-off. Second, the subsequent qualitative section permits a deeper analysis of the pivotal articles that represent the variations in the coverage seen through the quantitative section. While the numbers may show the larger trend, it cannot alone give a full representation of how this strategically important conflict is covered through the State-owned media. Therefore, it is important to provide this mixed methodology as a way to give credible results.

5.1.1 Quantitative Results

“[Quantitative] content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p.263)

In the following four sections, I will seek to portray the level of variance in the portrayal throughout the Sino-Indian conflict amongst the four chosen State-owned media organizations.

This is done through the aforementioned semantic content analysis. The overall goal is to discover what can be discerned through a numbers-heavy approach. Graphs will be shown along with a detailed explanation of the information displayed. Specifically, line graphs were chosen to allow for a visualization of the numerous data points over X period of time with Y percentage of words fitting into the pre-designated sentimental words. These are shown as either positive or negative. The blue points and trendline represent negative sentiment words and the corresponding red are for the positive sentiment. It is the author's goal to provide this information in an objective manner, and thus inferences as to the underlying meaning and larger sociopolitical or geopolitical context will largely be avoided unless deemed necessary.

Presented immediately hereafter are the four newspapers being examined, in line graph form, with a faded trendline and labeled X and Y axes. The percentage shown is the percentage of sentiment found out of the total words in the individual article. Each article has two plot points; one for negative and one for positive sentiment. The reader should take note of both the spacing and labeling of the X and Y axes, as they are not uniform, but based upon the makeup of the results found within the corpus of data.

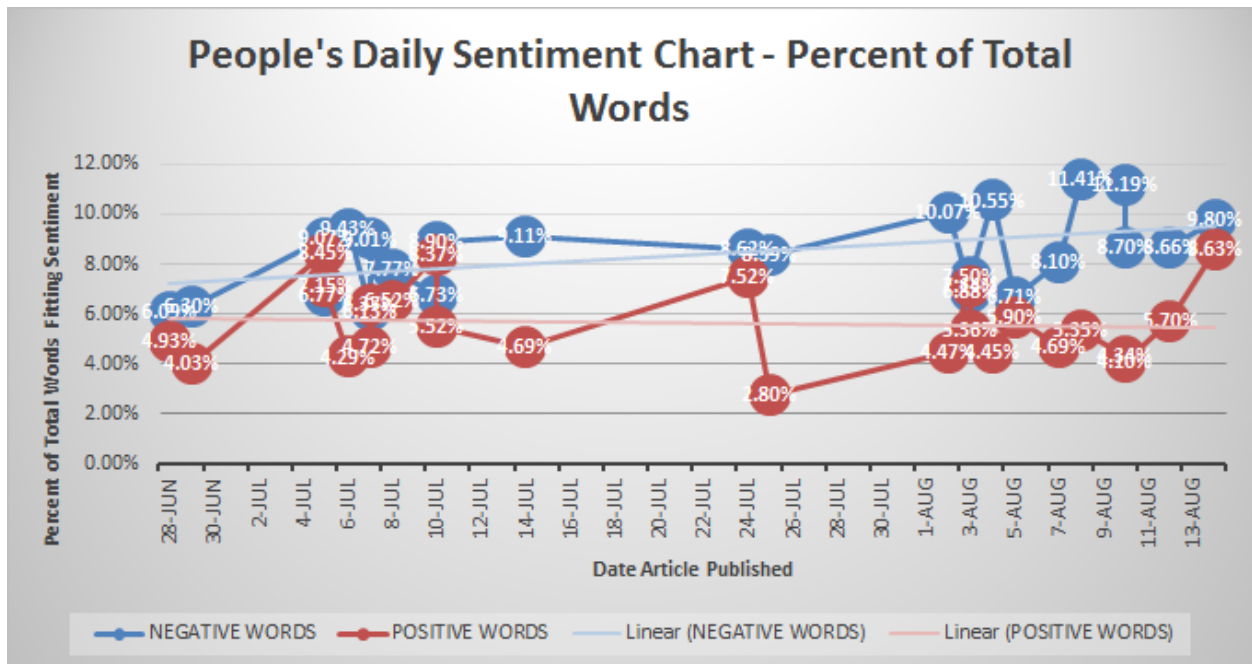


Figure 1.1

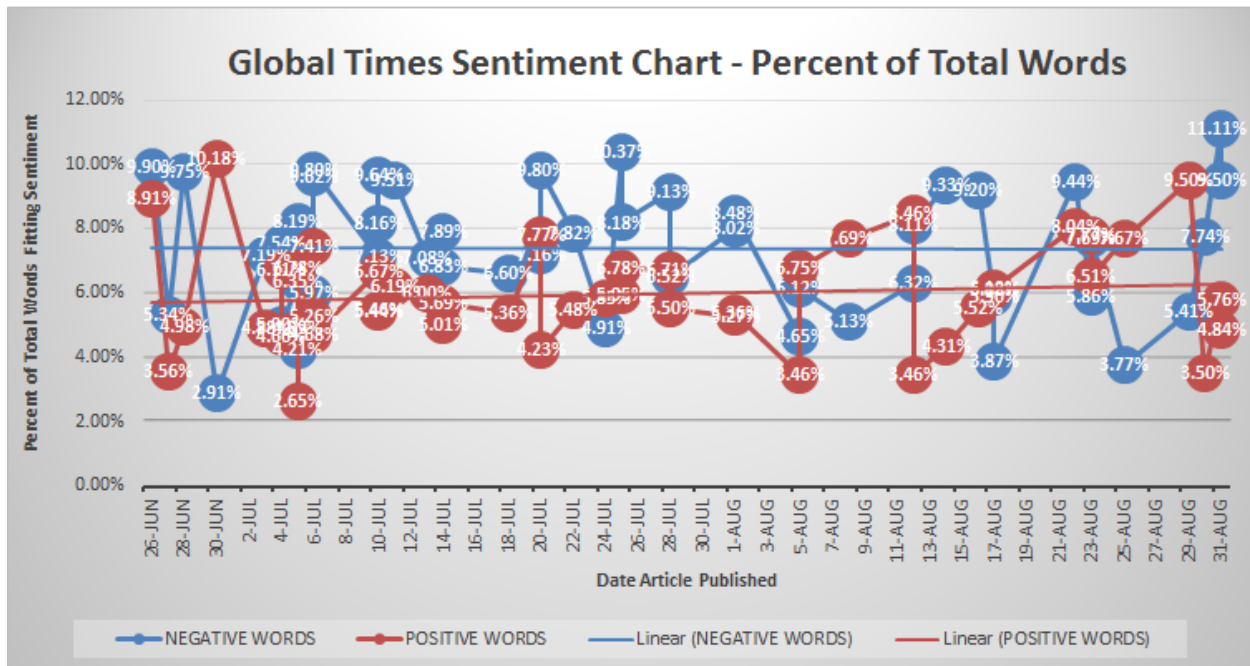


Figure 1.2

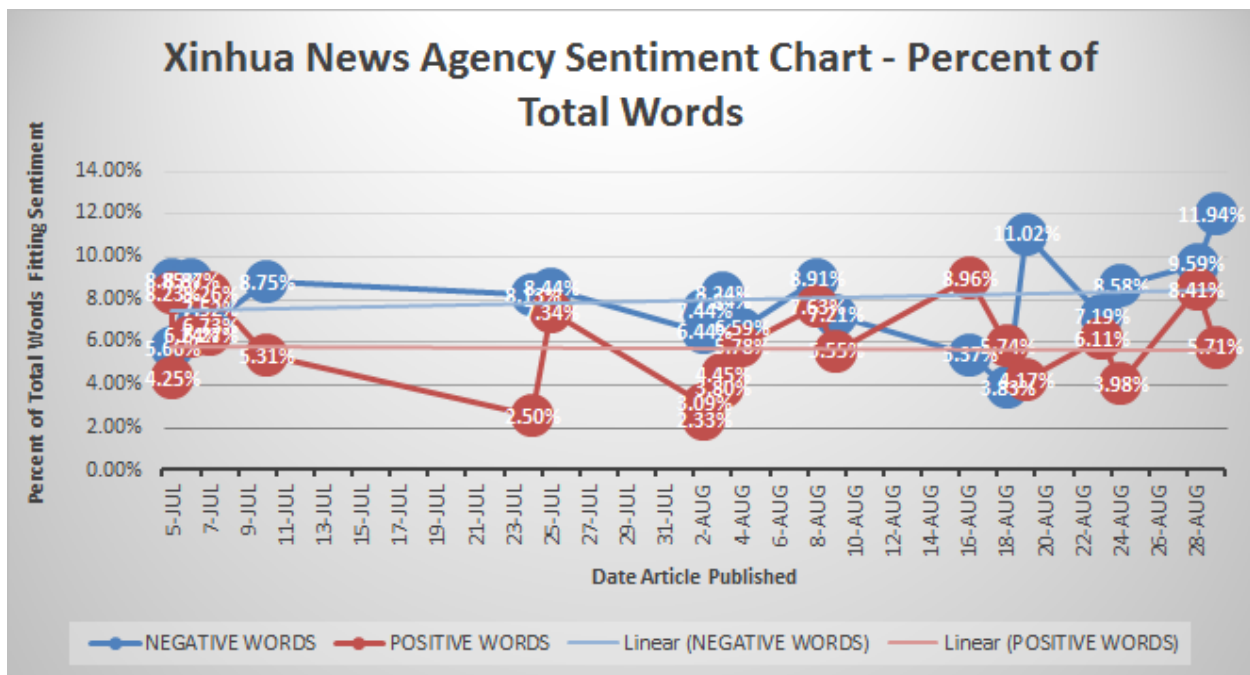


Figure 1.3

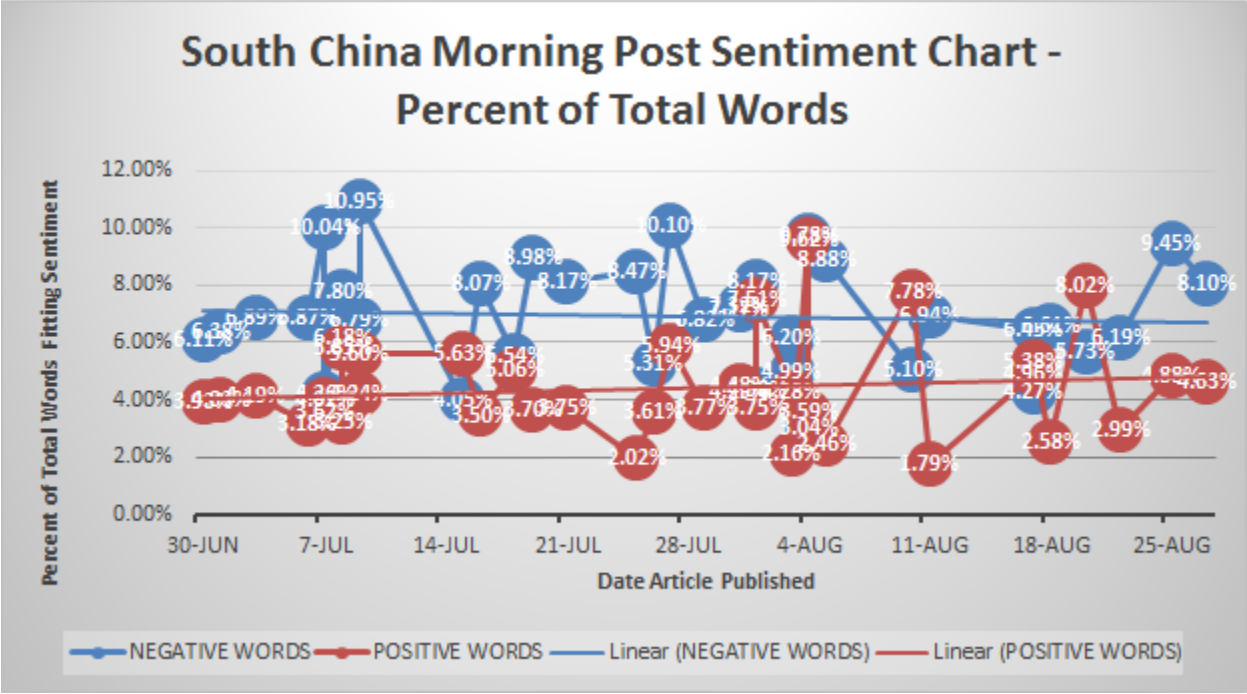


Figure 1.4

5.1.2 Discussion of Unity

It is demonstrated in this graph, as well as the ones to follow, that this formulation of a consistent response takes time. Therefore, despite the dispute sharply escalating on June 16th, it was twelve days before the first article was published by the Chinese side (The Hindu Net Desk, 2017). However, through further research within the aforementioned LexisNexis search engine using the same parameters, it has been shown that the wider international media also failed to report on this in a timely manner. The New York Times has no mention of this dispute prior to 27 June. Meanwhile, the Indian based Hindustan Times also failed to report until that same day. Therefore, it must be assumed that other factors were involved that precluded the reporting of the border standoff. Being the sole gatekeeper of information within the Chinese state makes the task of withholding information trivial. However, speculation as to the cause of this would be conjecture, as the reasons for the military secrecy on both sides has not officially been revealed. Past flare-ups of geopolitical tension have been quickly extinguished through back-channel diplomacy (John, 2006). However, it is apparent through the subsequent and sudden public scrutiny over the border dispute that any efforts that may have taken place in this regard were unsuccessful.

Nevertheless, information can be gleaned from these graphs that allows us to empirically demonstrate a concerted effort by the state to coordinate their public response to this crisis. The two highest ranked media outlets within the state, People's Daily and Xinhua, have noticeable similarities in the spacing of the sampled articles. For instance, there is a proverbial 'media blitz' between 5-8 July. The quantitative analysis allows us to see the pattern in the data, and then investigate what is said. The *why* can possibly be attributed to talks breaking down on 6 July between Premier Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi at the G20 summit (The Hindu Net Desk, 2017).

5.1.3 Variance in Negativity

Once again, the evidence presented in past literature does not necessarily correspond to the findings from this research. While the contradictory findings are not strong enough to draw conclusions from, it is prudent to look into why this may have occurred. There is much that can be gleaned from this regarding the viewpoints and amount of potential oversight and control over the news outlets. For instance, it is abundantly clear that there are larger variants in the 'cavalier-esque' Global Times when juxtaposed with the People's Daily. This is in line with the aforementioned socio political makeup of the two organizations. Furthermore, similarities that meet or exceed one's expectations exist between Xinhua and People's Daily. However, trend line abnormalities appear when viewing the South China Daily Post. These will be discussed further on.

5.2.1 Analysis of People's Daily

Beginning with the People's Daily, one can see consistent negativity throughout the delineated timeframe. This lasts throughout the conflict, with the occasional exception, such as on 5 July (Anon1, 2017). However, it should also be noted that the positivity nearly matched throughout the early weeks of this conflict, during the aforementioned media blitz. During the first and second week of July, the data largely shows a cautious optimism by the People's Daily, and thereby the party and government itself, as it has been previously demonstrated that the People's Daily will publish articles that closely align with the official government view. There were statements by less aggressive figures throughout this time, including the Chinese Ambassador to India, Luo Zhaohui. However, others, including the Chinese Foreign Minister spokesman Geng Shuang, have produced more mixed numbers. In a July 6th article titled *China*

accuses India [of] legitimizing border incursion in name of protecting Bhutan, the author discusses in comparatively hostile tones the accusations of bilateral agreement violations. In this, it is stated “Branding China’s road building with security implications is ‘ludicrous’” (Shuang, 2017). This statement has several negative sentimental attributes. The most obvious is the explicit suggestion of how the reader should feel about the situation. There is the additional discussion point of the usage of the term ‘branding’ to describe India’s labeling of the road building across the disputed territory. These examples will be expounded upon in the qualitative analysis section. However, it will be shown that the highest negative percentages come in rebuttals to actions or statements issued by India. The highest negative score, on 10 August, rebukes “irresponsible remarks” by the Indian defense minister (Anon2, 2017).

However, this comparatively low differential between negative and positive soon increases. The positivity largely drops while negativity is either maintained or increased noticeably. While there is a gap in the reporting throughout the next two weeks in July, the activity soon picked up with an uptick in articles in the first week of August. The negativity level also increases during this period. The reader should take note of this, as it will be echoed further on in the quantitative analysis of the other news organizations.

Moving forward, the lack of data for the remainder of the surveyed period is noteworthy. Despite high-level statements being made by both sides between 13 and 28 August, there is a dearth of reporting on this in the Lexis Nexis database. Nevertheless, from the available information conclusions can be drawn on levels of unity and control by the State. To this end, Xinhua News Agency will be examined in a comparative style to discover potential similarities.

Positive Sentiment

While the negative sentiment showed a strong increase in the latter half of the study, there was no such difference noted in the positive sentiment measurements. The numbers are largely consistent, with lower positive percentages throughout. Few anomalies exist. This could be attributed to the rigidity which the People’s Daily exists within the CCP structure. The institutions in place prevent them from putting out statements that would be counter to the prevailing narrative, or excessively pushing select agendas. When authors are worried about being scrutinized for their content, it has been shown that they will alter their content and adhere to the phrase ‘better safe than sorry’.

At the onset of the conflict, there is the cluster of articles with relatively equal positive and negative sentiment. However, as the conflict continues, language becomes harsher, and the positive sentiment dips accordingly, albeit at a smaller rate than the negative sentiment increase.

However, there is one anomaly with a particularly significant positive to negative sentiment ratio that is worth scrutiny. This is the July 25 article, in which a focus is put on Western viewpoints that align with the CCP's narrative. Particularly, this is a former Australian journalist, which coincides with larger evidence of CCP's agenda to gain public sympathy within that country (Marshallsea, 2018). This could explain the abnormal numbers uncovered.

5.2.3 Analysis of Xinhua News Agency

In examining Xinhua news, it is readily apparent that the clustering at the onset of the conflict is similar to that of the People's Daily, with the notable exception of any pre-July publishings. Speculation behind this would likely involve directives issued at the ministerial level. It has been demonstrated through directive leaks that the CCP will micro-manage news outlets when sensitive issues are being discussed (China Digital Times, 2014). Additionally, one can see through a cross-comparison of People's Daily and Xinhua News that there is a similar clustering within the first ten days of July. The resemblance is uncanny. In fact, a closer scrutiny of the articles within the corpus's cluster reveal the reasoning behind this. There are four identical articles published on July 5-6 on People's Daily and Xinhua. Included among this total is the aforementioned quoted article cited in reference to its sentimental neutrality. Further on, there is some divergence, yet the pattern is relatively maintained. There is a break through most of July, followed by two additional identical articles on 24-25 July, then another match on 2 August. From there, there is a small divergence, with coordinated yet separate commentary articles on 3 August. The negativity is maintained throughout this time. However, the negativity significantly dips to an abnormal low on the 16 and 18 August. The former article is anomalous for its brevity and conciliatory tone. It focuses on the positive attributes of the two regional power's potential contributions towards political and economic stability. Likewise, the latter discusses Japan's official reaction to this conflict. On that day the Japanese Ambassador to India made statements in support of India's position on the conflict. While it has been demonstrated that the highest negativity is often seen in reactions to foreign statements negative towards

China, the relative neutrality in this could be indicative of further Chinese intentions regarding Sino-Japanese relations. While one could delve into the meaning behind the comparatively light response, there is insufficient data to draw conclusions on the intention behind the government and party's decision to publish this article. However, on the other end of the spectrum are the subsequent spikes in negative activity. There are high negative scores attributed to a 19 August spotlight article *What's behind India's illegal trespassing into China?* (Xia, 2017). In this they bring up statements by several experts to reiterate their stance on ownership of the Doklam Territory. Strong negativity is pervasive throughout this spotlight article. This hostile tone is also apparent in the final piece of the corpus, published after the cessation of hostilities. In this, they state their intentions to remain vigilant along the disputed border despite the withdrawal of Indian troops

Positive Sentiment

The parallels between the positive and negative sentiment is apparent in the data provided. There is the initial cluster with a relatively neutral tone that is also seen in the People's Daily, albeit to a lesser extent. However, after that point, there is a precipitous drop, with a low of 2.50% on 24 July. On that day, an article was published with the title *Indian Scholar Advises India to get out of mess in Doklam* (Anon3, 2017). The perspective of a foreign scholar that is pro-China has significant connotations, which will be explored later. One day after this heated article, there is a Spotlight article that seems to reconcile the aforementioned hostility, albeit with the strong pro-Chinese perspective. This is a consistent theme throughout the articles published by this centrally-controlled paper. The following month, there are additional articles with sparse positivity, such as 2 August. The cluster of articles published at the beginning of the month have a noticeable climbing trend, with a peak on 16 August of 8.96%. While this is still lower than the negativity peak, it is a sign of thawing tension. On that day, the first of two articles were published that demonstrated an overall positive perspective by Xinhua. This anomaly is not witnessed to this extent anywhere else in this corpus.

5.2.3 Analysis of Global Times

The relative excess and sensationalism by the Global Times is well established. Indeed, they have become seen as increasingly distant from the stringent adherence to the Party values that

once was expected of major publications. The staid, unadventurous nature of the People's Daily and Xinhua are not found in this publication (Branigan, 2009). This is apparent from the dispersion within the plotted data presented earlier in this chapter. One can plainly see that despite their roots, they have become more free with regards to the variation in their writing style. There is empirical evidence showing a level of uniformity amongst these two top-level newspaper organizations within China. However, despite Global Times being an offshoot of the People's Daily, it operates largely independent of its parent organization (Branigan, 2009). Therefore, one may anticipate different results with this paper. The variability is visibly greater, with the two lowest negative scores within the corpus coming from this organization, with 3.77 and 3.87 percent on 17 and 25 August, respectively. However, there is no discernable trend emanating from this data. That is reflected in the linear trendline, with a significantly static plot shown throughout the duration being studied. Nevertheless, there are several points of interest. The most prominent outliers, such as both the 28 and 30 June, show markedly different sentiment by the Global Times. The specifics of the latter will be discussed further on in a qualitative fashion, thereby providing a more thorough explanation as to the significance of this abnormally tranquil post. Regarding the former, the article, titled 'Indian troops' provocation brings disgrace to themselves', is oriented to the sentiment of the Chinese perspective, showing a strong negative reaction to the incursion. It is apparent that a commonality linking the study's corpus is that the response to any Indian action draws the harshest critique, while opinion pieces on Chinese strategy and reaction maintains a comparatively positive sentiment. To this end, the final publishing of this relatively untamed organization is negative, keeping in tradition with the Xinhua and soon to be analyzed South China Morning Post.

Positive Sentiment

The varied data reflected in the negative plotline is also reflected in the positive as well. There are comparatively wide fluctuations in the sentiment on a given day. Beginning with the initial variations within the first days of the reportage on the dispute, there are noticeable incidents of variety not seen in Xinhua or People's Daily. As demonstrated earlier, on 30 June the highest level of positive sentiment was shown, at 10.18%. After this point, there is a marked drop in positivity, with a 5 July article reaching the low for the corpus at 2.65%. This article's title has indicators of an article with the potential for a low positivity rating: *India using Bhutan to*

Trespass. The accusatory nature of this alludes to hostile feelings. There is the aforementioned rebuttal aspect in this title as well. In addition to the slew of articles during the first two weeks of July, there are indicators that the way news is conducted at Global Times differs from that of Peoples' Daily and Xinhua. The number of articles where positivity outranks negativity is greater than either of those publications. Further along on the positive sentiment line, there is slightly positively angled trendline. Coupled with the wide variety in sentiment, and it can be difficult to otherwise ascertain general trends without this piece of information. Anomalies are interspersed throughout the corpus, to the point where it no longer becomes an anomaly to have a jump or dip in the data.

5.2.4 Analysis of South China Morning Post

Lastly, but certainly not least, is the Hong Kong based South China Morning Post. At one point seen as a final bastion of independent media, it too has witnessed increasing evidence of control put forth by the mainland government. This is particularly apparent in the post-Alibaba buyout era (Mooney, Feng and Schlesinger, 2016). However, that unity is not yet tightened to the point where it fully falls in line with the People's Daily, Xinhua, or even Global Times. In fact, it still has a place of its own and an evidently increased ability, relatively speaking, to formulate their own opinions and publish as they please. This is apparent simply from the trendline of the data. This is the only dataset collected in this research that has a decreasingly negative corpus. However, this should not be dismissed as viewpoints counter to the CCP. In fact, there are many high negative values, in line with the rest of the datasets, which suggests a strong preference for the mainland perspective. Nevertheless, there are several aspects that set this apart from the mainland publishers which will be looked at hereafter. Overall, there is both a lower amount of positive and negative sentiment. While the negative side prevails throughout early and mid July, there is a noticeable lessening of hostility towards the end of the conflict, putting it at odds with the results from People's Daily. Regarding the earlier coverage of this conflict, there are several unique findings that are worth delving into. On 7 July, two articles were featured with markedly different negativity. The first published that day has a higher negativity. However, in this instance the intention of the negative tone is different than that of previously analysed articles. This will be looked into further on in a more thorough, qualitative fashion. Following that article is another anomaly within the corpus. This article focuses on the tense diplomatic talks over the

dispute, but departs from the established norms by discussing the Indian perspective at length without immediate rebuttal. Therefore, it can be inferred that this lack of a counter-argument has assisted in the lowering of the negative score. Similarly, this pattern repeats itself in several other instances, including the two articles published on 9 July and 4 August.

Positive Sentiment

The positivity in this paper remains largely clustered, with fewer outliers than the Global Times. However, the positive sentiment consistently scores lower than the negative, with few exceptions. The low numbers seen in the first two weeks of July set the tone for the reporting from this paper for the remainder of the dispute. While literary evidence points towards a more liberal-esque style of reporting, it is apparent that it largely falls in line with the sentiment echoed by the rest of the corpus. Nonetheless, there are a few high sentiment numbers that are readily apparent, such as two successive articles on 4 and 5 August. In this instance, the first of the two articles is tangentially related to the main dispute, while the second focuses on Chinese military successes. Therefore, it can be ascertained that while the positive sentiment may exist, the target of that sentiment may not be towards a peaceful resolution. Closer examination is required to determine that information. This scrutiny will occur in subsequent sections within the Quantitative Discussion and Qualitative Analysis.

5.3.1 Comparative Discussion

As evidenced through the published literature, there are strong indicators that the four analyzed media outlets have inconsistent levels of control placed upon them. The gatekeepers open wider for some than others. The reasons for this are as complex as the system placed to keep them controlled. While Unity and Harmony are espoused by the Government and Party, empirical data suggests there is a long way to go until unity within Chinese media is achieved. However, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that there may be concealed motives behind the unequal gatekeeping, and that the ideal level of harmony that the state wishes to reach has already been achieved. Nonetheless, the comparative levels of reporting on the 2017 Doklam Standoff will hereafter be discussed to find discrepancies and similarities.

5.3.2 Trend Line

This line condenses the data and provides the reader with a general overview of the tonal level each media outlet uses to portray the dispute. The most apparent difference, other than the data points themselves, are the trend lines. While the Y-Axis upon which the trend line finds its variations is small, relatively speaking, single percentage points still allow for a noticeable positive or negative swing. Thus, an analysis of this type is feasible.

The two most tightly party-controlled papers, People's Daily and Xinhua, have trendlines at roughly the same percentage at the onset of the conflict. The negative sentiment discovered through the analysis shows an increase in positivity for both organizations. However, the People's Daily, which is controlled directly by the Party at the national level, shows a marginally larger increase in negativity through the latter half of the conflict. Xinhua, meanwhile, has a more tempered tone. This holds true for the positivity trendline as well. While the line for People's Daily dips downwards, the line for Xinhua holds true. It should be noted that both percentage scores are within one percent of each other, providing an indicator of unity between publishers, as well as implications of high level directives that have been issued to both organizations. The mainstream literature appears to accurately portray the situation that these two papers find themselves in. While the density differs, the overall message, from a quantitative perspective, remains similar.

However, the two other organizations, Global Times and South China Morning Post, differ more significantly than their traditional Party-centered counterparts. While the negative sentiment values of all four papers begin at approximately the same Y-value, the value decreases thereafter, in contrast to the aforementioned publishers. This could be due to the lesser amount of control placed upon these two. In particular, the South China Morning Post has the largest decrease of any within the corpus. While this is occurring, the positive sentiment, likewise, differs from the People's Daily and Xinhua. The Global Times has its starting point at slightly under 6%, in line with the other three mainland publications. However, South China Morning Post has a starting positive sentiment trendline of approximately 4%. While this value increases to close to 5%, it still stays shy of the starting value of the other three. It is evident that the trendline for this publication does not adhere to the standards placed upon by the other three.

5.3.3 Data Density

With the presented data, there are visibly apparent differences between the four graphs with regards to density. While initially this variation may seem to be a hindrance when comparing them, as a dataset of forty points allows for a more thorough analysis than would be available with twenty points, in this instance it can be a boon. It allows for an added perspective if one were to delve deeper into the reasons for the variation. When comparing the densities, the question of “why?” can be addressed. The gatekeepers play a major role in this, which is inferred from the evidence presented in the review of literature.

Beginning in a similar fashion as the previous section, the People’s Daily and Xinhua will be discussed together. These two have twenty four and twenty two articles each, respectively. Excluding the two June articles in the People’s Daily corpus, the grouping of these two are largely similar. There is the initial cluster during 5-10 July, followed by the next grouping centred around 25 July. In August there is another common cluster during the first week. These findings are in line with the previous information discovered. The two papers, with similar control levels, are reporting similarly on this conflict. In fact, there are articles within the corpus that have been published by both organizations, giving credence to this inference.

Differing noticeably from those two are the Global Times and South China Morning Post. These two had more extensive coverage of the conflict, with 48 and 37 articles published during the selected period. It should be noted that Global Times is the earliest of the four to start publishing about this conflict, beating Peoples’ Daily by two days. All three cover the conflict several days prior to Xinhua. Regarding the spacing of the articles, there is the familiar early-July cluster, followed by the early-August one as well. This could be a directive from the Central Party, or a result of developments related to the conflict. Nevertheless, it would seem there is a powerful message being displayed by the density of this data. The looser controls placed on these publishers has allowed them greater leeway with regards to articles related to the conflict. While the semantic nature of all four is similar, in that they are exclusively publishing from the Chinese perspective, the difference in volume of articles being published is evidence supporting the prospect of uneven control, as well as a lack of absolute unity and harmony.

5.4.1 Qualitative Analysis

“The words used to communicate the message(s) of a text – whether about an individual, a group of people, an event, a predicted or *expected* event, a process, a state of affairs or any of the other

subjects and themes of newspaper texts – frame the story in direct and unavoidable ways.” (Richardson, 2009, p.48)

One cannot receive the full truth through a purely quantitative approach, particularly when discussing textual bodies. To do this, a mixed-methods approach must be utilised. What one lacks in depth or breadth, the other fills in the gaps. This section will provide a clearer picture of the purpose and intensity of the semantics utilised by the Chinese media during the Doklam Standoff. Specific articles will be chosen based on the results of the quantitative exploration. The motive behind this is to explore the articles in a thorough, subjective fashion, to find similarities with the previously demonstrated portrayal in mainstream literature.

The formulae behind this section will largely begin with a macro analysis of the articles, followed by an analysis of the paragraph organization, with a micro analysis of individual words and phrases included as necessary. Part of what will be looked at will be the structuring of propositions and clauses within the texts. There are instances when portions of this formula will be altered or skipped to provide emphasis on a certain feature of the text that the quantitative analysis has missed, yet is still important for a full understanding of the meaning behind the writing style.

5.4.2 Xinhua News

As it has been previously shown, there is a cluster of articles within the first ten days of July that exists in all four datasets. Therefore, the article on 10 July, with a negative sentiment value of 8.75% and positive of 5.31%, will hereafter be examined to provide a glimpse into the writing style of this period. Furthermore, a featured article will also be scrutinized in order to provide an insight into the mindset of the Xinhua writers.

10 July (Anon4, 2017)

The Commentary article, titled *India Must Understand Borderline is Bottom Line*, has strong assertions within to reinforce the Chinese perspective on events. The article is broken up into sections comprised of one or two sentences. These alternate between accusatory tones involving India’s actions, and the Chinese right to respond and defend their sovereignty. This is conducted as a back and forth discussion, much like a ‘call and response’ used to dispute Indian actions or

statements. While this article is light on names, which provides a further glimpse into the semantics and objectives of the publishing organization, there is a significant amount of negative propositions that can be analyzed.

The implementation of adjectives and adverbs such as “blatant” and “unconditionally” are optional additions used to fortify their viewpoint. These are words classified under negative sentiment. Having these words in the beginning of the article sends a particular message to its readers. The perspective of right and wrong is unmistakable. The alignment of their viewpoint with the Chinese Government is clear. The picture is painted from the onset, and the reasoning why they feel this way is explained thereafter within the article. This article is one of the aforementioned overlapping articles that are present in both the Xinhua and People’s Daily.

19 August (Xia, 2017)

This article, previously mentioned as a source of high negativity, spotlights selective expert opinions on the border dispute. This Spotlight article is specifically geared to be their top story for that day, thus the moniker *Spotlight*. The narrative painted in this article is intriguing, in that they go to lengths to show international support for the Chinese perspective. Neville Maxwell, one of the first and foremost scholars to write about the Sino-Indian dispute, is cited heavily within. The usage of this scholar as their primary source for the Chinese perspective is a strategic move. They refer to him as “an Australian journalist who was on the ground for the British Daily The Times at the time of the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962.” Referencing him as an Australian journalist, despite his employment as a British journalist, is a peculiar decision on the part of the Xinhua writers. His primary contributions have been during his time with the aforementioned British organization. This could be a soft-power move by China as part of their greater strategic shift towards gaining influence within Australia, or just an innocuous choice due to his Australian citizenship (Reilly, 2012). Moving forward, there are other foreign authors, including a Singapore-based associate professor of law. In this instance, Xinhua provides a summation of statements they made regarding India’s pursuit of regional hegemony. There is a continuous focus on showing that educated individuals, well-respected in Chinese society, believe that India is in the wrong regarding this dispute. The article ends with an interpretation of a quote by Confucious, compounding the scholar-heavy theme. Throughout this article, it is evident that there is a focus on providing relatively lengthy, descriptive titles to the foreign

experts in order to further give credence to their viewpoint. This is an a facet that is not detectable through a purely quantitative approach, yet is important to recognize if one is to understand the methods used by the Chinese media to reinforce their perspective.

5.4.3 People's' Daily

While there is not much variation expected in the writing style between Peoples' Daily and Xinhua news, it is useful to examine the level of similarity between them. Both of these are amongst the centrepieces of Chinese English-language media, and have been demonstrated to have a high level of interconnectedness and overlap. There are articles that have been simultaneously published in both papers, reinforcing this fact. Nevertheless, it is prudent to analyze the writing style of this paper for both the similarities and differences in how they portray sentiment when discussing this tumultuous topic.

6 July (Shuang, 2017)

The article published on this day, titled "*China accuses India legitimizing border incursion in name of protecting Bhutan*", is an example of a baseline article reiterating the main points espoused by the Central Government. The quantitative examination on this article found a 9.43% negative and 4.29% positive sentiment. This is one of the stronger negative values from the early July flurry of articles. The article begins with notable negativity, such as the word "excuse" to describe India's justification for their "incursion" into what is deemed Chinese territory. The familiar short paragraph disposition is present in this article, echoing the tendencies of the Xinhua writing style. Further negativity is present in the third paragraph, with the sentence "By creating disputes in Doklam, India intends to obstruct border negotiations between China and Bhutan, Geng told a routine press briefing." The dependent clause in the start of the sentence sets a negative tone through its use of the phrase "creating disputes", and is further reinforced by the "intends to obstruct". The feeling by a reader that there is malicious intention on the part of India is probable due to the use of these expressions.

One interesting observation is that the author of this article, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, extensively quotes themselves in the third person. Beyond this being a peculiar piece of information, this is direct evidence of involvement by the Government in the media. While

there is no evidence of attempts by China to hide or deny their involvement with the media, the extent to which they involve themselves is often concealed.

24 July (Anon3, 2017)

On this day, an intriguing article was published, citing a South China Morning Post article about an Indian scholar whose viewpoint aligns with the Chinese narrative. This scholar is Sourabh Gupta, listed as a ‘senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington’. Once again, the overall theme is that of a foreign expert weighing in on this issue in a manner that aligns with the Party’s viewpoint. The tonality contained within is relatively balanced, albeit at a higher than average percent for both categories. Positivity is at 7.52% and negativity is 8.62%. While the quantitative showed high levels of both, the qualitative shows that the negativity is largely contained within the quotations of the Indian scholar. These largely reiterate points made in previous articles during the conflict. The purpose of this article is to further reinforce for the target audience, which is English-language readers largely residing outside of China, that the Chinese perspective of events is agreed upon across the spectrum of academic expertise. While the negativity shown in this is of similar verbosity to other articles, the qualitative analysis shines light on the techniques used by the CCP to garner support.

5.4.4 Global Times

The differentiation between the Global Times, an offshoot of the People’s Daily, is evident simply from the density and distribution in the quantitative study. However, it is prudent to see how the data holds up when put under subjective scrutiny. This is especially useful with regards to this organization, where there is empirical evidence for bias and textually charged writing (Larson, 2011). Therefore, the articles chosen for this will be representative of the textual style of the Global Times, with a partial aim of showing how and to what extent their choice of words affects the meaning of the text.

28 June (Anon5, 2017)

This is largely a response to initial Indian statements regarding the dispute. As a whole, this article is structured in a similar style to the previously examined articles. This suggests a level of uniformity with regards to the directives concerning the structure. However, with the content,

one can see it is written in a hyperbolic manner. There are instances where extra phrases are included to inject subjective feelings into the sentences. The negative sentiment occurs at roughly twice the rate as positive in this article. While the quantitative analysis demonstrates a similarity, it is evident from a brief reading that the wording of this is in a ‘looser’ manner than the previously examined publishings. This is in line with the prevailing research into the Global Times. Specific descriptive terms such as “the usually low-profile Chinese authorities” provide direction and an indicator to the reader as to how they should feel about this particular matter. This occurs throughout the article, with mentionings such as “time and again” when referring to Indian media hype that is said to be driven by the Indian military.

An additional point of interest is the counterpoint that is given. While presented with a Chinese slant, this nonetheless provides an explanation for India’s actions. It goes so far as to explain the basic geo-political makeup of the region, with a ‘circle’ of containment involving the US, Japan, and India. However, this section is not excluded from the negative sentiment, with the verb ‘indulge’ used to describe India’s alleged newfound assertiveness due to their rising power status.

While the Indian side is presented, the author ensures that each mini-paragraph ends with the pro-Chinese slant. This culminates in the final paragraph of a notably longer length that delves into the reasoning behind the superiority of Chinese geopolitical stratagem, as well as an assertion of China’s peaceful intentions in the region.

29 August (Yang, 2017)

This article is chosen due to its unusually high positive tonality, as well as its topic of discussion. There is a 9.50% positive sentiment with a 5.41% negative. While surprising, clarity can be provided when the issue at hand is one that benefits both sides. The title, *India Removes troops from China’s territory in Doklam*, is a welcome development that is evidenced through the quantitative analysis. Therefore, it is prudent to look at how the Global Times handles this significant moment. There is a focus throughout the article on how China will effectively and efficiently move forward while maintaining their regional sovereignty. This is displayed as a victory for China. While the outlook for Sino-Indian relations is cautious, there is a modicum of optimism displayed, which is where the positive sentiment largely lies. Statements in this article are focused upon the diplomatic achievements of the Chinese state and not the Indian actions.

For instance, “...China can convince its people that based on its powerful national strength, China is capable of using diplomatic measures to solve border issues and safeguard its sovereignty.” is a statement by associate professor Chu Yin.

Regarding the negative sentiment, the lower number is partially a result of the omission of adverbs and descriptive terms for their foe. The neutral tonality displayed towards them is a reflection of the cautious optimism towards the future, balanced with the need to impress upon the reader the unwavering willpower of China to defend what it considers to be its sovereign territory.

5.4.5 South China Morning Post

This Hong-Kong based publication has long been seen as a final bastion of free press within China. However, that has been changing since the reacquisition of Hong Kong into the Chinese fold in 1997. Since then, there is evidence that the CCP is chipping away at the freedom of the press in the SCMP. There is a particular image that the CCP wishes to portray to the outside world, and having all newspapers, including the seemingly loosely controlled ones in Hong Kong, under their umbrella of control is crucial to the soft power outreach towards the non-Chinese speaking globe.

July 7 (Lau, 2017)

From a brief glance at this article, it is apparent that this is a wholly different publication than its mainland counterparts. The publishing in question, which focuses on the background and reasoning for the dispute, is written with larger paragraphs, with subheadings breaking up the main sections. No longer does it have an overtly apparent slant towards one side. It takes delving into the sentiment to find bias. Overall the objectivity of this article is noteworthy. There is a distinct lack of subjective descriptive words that provide a solid indicator to the reader of how they should feel. In fact, without a solid grasp of the historical underpinning that has led to this conflict, one would view this particular article as an all-encompassing objective overview of the conflict. However, they closely follow the assertions by Neville Maxwell, who is a commonly cited figure when discussing the 1962 conflict. His belief is that India is the aggressor, which is in line with the Chinese government and Party’s view of events (Friese, 2012). On to the wording of the article, there is scant overt sentiment in this paper. However, the quantitative

picked up both strong negativity and weak, which has resulted in the high negativity rating. Words such as ‘contention’, ‘never’, and ‘inviolable’ would all create a point in the negative category. Together, these words developed into a Sino-centric narrative that explains the conflict from the Chinese point of view, while avoiding the strong negativity that is associated with the writings of the Global Times and the stringency imposed upon The People’s Daily and Xinhua.

4 August (Wong, 2017)

This article has the distinction of having the highest positive rating amongst the South China Morning Post corpus. This was chosen partly for that reason, as well as its corresponding low negative sentiment (3.04%). Looking into the source of the high positivity, one can see several quotes about Chinese responses to Indian actions. In previously examined articles, these have raised negative sentiment. However, in this instance, the quotes are in relation to diplomatic efforts on the part of China to defuse the conflict. One such quote, “We know that as we are on the historic mission towards the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, encountering nuisances is inevitable...” puts an optimistic tone on the conflict, while also downplaying the significance of this issue. This positive tone continues with a focus on the easing of tensions throughout, without a focus on the need to remain vigilant and cautious with regards to potential future Indian actions in the border region. This article even shows how China is acquiescing, albeit in relatively minor ways, to Indian demands. This is a shift away from the status quo adhered to by the other publications. Overall, this article is in line with South China Morning Post’s willingness to push the boundary as to acceptable angles to portray on this tumultuous dispute.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

The goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate the extent to which unity and harmony, long espoused as tenets of Chinese philosophy that guides the leadership, show themselves in the presentation of news by the State-controlled media. To accomplish this, the mainstay of communications research theory, the concept of the gatekeeper, has been utilized as the guiding framework for this research. However, it would have been remiss to exclude the aforementioned uniquely Chinese concepts. Therefore, a combination of these two was amalgamated, resulting in the research that has just been presented. It has shown that the media, while displaying levels of unity between them, still has large variances that should be reconciled if the goal is to achieve

harmony. However, the argument of whether this is in fact the long-term goal of the Chinese state is debatable, but outside of the delimitations of the study. The mainstream scholarly evidence points towards this being a recurring trending tenet presented by the contemporary Chinese leadership.

As presented at the outset of the paper, the question being asked is *to what extent has the CCP unified the level of control over the various state-owned media apparati with regards to their English-language publications?*

The results have shown that there are obvious commonalities regarding the control placed on the media within China. Cross-comparisons show simultaneous surges in the publishing frequency, indicative of CCP's guiding hand unifying their coverage. In particular, the People's Daily and Xinhua news have significant similarities, with entire articles transplanted between the two. However, the ebbs and flows do not coincide as significantly when discussing the South China Morning Post and Global Times. As the former is only recently coming largely under the CCP's umbrella of control, and the latter is acting as intended, which is a hawkish People's Daily, it was anticipated that these two would provide for an interesting analysis. Indeed they have proven so, with the SCMP giving an unusual positive trendline and the Global Times showing they are as hawkish as the literature on them proclaims them to be, with high negative scores. Overall, the results have shown that there is still significant variation between the examined news agencies. The opinion of some of an 'omnipresent', micromanaging government does not hold up under scrutiny.

As far as this author has found, the Chinese-based English-language State-controlled media has not been analyzed in this manner prior to this study. While this is precisely what a budding researcher hopes to uncover, there is an unfortunate consequence of this. *Ipsa facto*, there is no prior research to validate these results. This is uncharted territory. Sentiment analysis is a well-defined field of research, however it has not yet been applied, that the author is aware of, in any significant manner towards state-controlled media. Ideally, the author hopes a larger scale study could be conducted to analyze the progression of sentiment throughout a longer period. This would be useful to juxtapose with directives or statements issued by the Ministry or Chinese Government. While the data gathered here is useful to provide a snapshot into the Chinese Media at that particular moment, it will have greater relevance if the examined period

could be expanded. Nevertheless, as the importance of China in the geopolitical arena increases over the coming years, so to will the various arms of the CCP in the scrutinous eyes of academic researchers.

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